INDIA TODAY

VOL. 10
1985
No. 11 — 24
Pt. 2

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Hardwar

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Passage to the West

For the next 18 months, the US is going to receive India's answer to blue jeans and hamburgers, bubble gum and Coca-Cola. The Festival of India promises to electrify Americans into a radically changed awareness of the reality of India.

COVER STORY 90

Message to Moscow

The long-lasting love affair between the Soviets and the Nehru family continued during Rajiv's visit to Moscow last fortnight. But the visit also provided a rare opportunity to see how the new prime minister tackled his first foreign policy test.

SPECIAL REPORT 20

Feuding Factions

As the first anniversary of Operation Bluestar approaches, the Akali leadership is still locked in an internecine power struggle. While Longowal appealed for peace, there was concern over the communal colour of recent incidents of violence.

CURRENT EVENTS 26

Confessions of a Terrorist

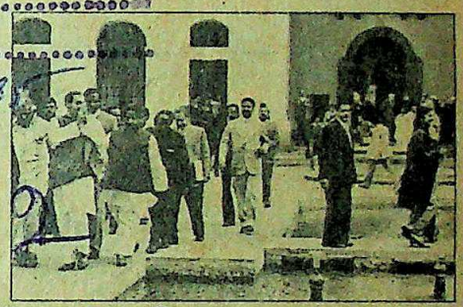
One year after Operation Bluestar, doubts still persist on the modus operandi of terrorists based in the Golden Temple complex. Chilling details are now available from the confessions of Virsa Singh Valtoha, an AISSF activist now in custody.

CRIME 62

Sinister Designs

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation scored a telling blow for improved Indo-US ties by busting a US-based Sikh extremist assassination ring that had targeted Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as well as other leading Indian politicians.

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON 66



Meaning Business

Despite the overwhelming majority the ruling party enjoys, the mood in the just-adjourned Lok Sabha indicates that the positive and constructive atmosphere leaves the Opposition little room for complaint. And MP's are taking their jobs seriously.

SPECIAL FEATURE 132

CONTENTS

COMMENT 7
VOICES 10
INDIANOTES 15
SPECIAL REPORT
Rajiv Gandhi: Message to Moscow 20
USSR: A Separate Reality 24
CURRENT EVENTS
Akali Dal: Feuding Factions 26
Sikh Terrorists: A Foiled Plot 29
The President: Trouble at the Top 30
Assassination Trial: A Slow Process 33
Gujarat: Strife Torn 35
Congress(S): Winds of Change 36
Antulay Case: Halfway off the Hook 41
Bihar: Allegations of Murder 42
Bihar: Cornering Contractors 48
Kerala: Power Tussle 50
Andhra Pradesh: The Food Fiasco 52
West Bengal: Civic Discontent 56
CRIME
Confessions of a Terrorist 62
LETTER FROM WASHINGTON
Terrorist Plot: Sinister Designs 66
LETTER FROM PARIS
Indo-French Ties: Behind the Glitter 72
NEIGHBOURS
Sri Lanka: Unbridled Terror 77
PERSPECTIVE
Indo-US Ties: The Key Issues 87
COVER STORY
Festival of India: Passage to the West 90
EDUCATION
Bihar: Confusion Reigns 104
TRADE WINDS 109
BUSINESS
Drugs Policy: The Elusive Formula 110
Banking: A Dramatic Turn 115
DCM: Controversial Move 116
FICCI: Unseemly Quarrel 123
Economy Monitor 124
The Market: Raging Bulls 129
SPECIAL FEATURE
Parliament: Meaning Business 132
LAW
Appointments: Flouted Guidelines 140
SCIENCE
Power Generation: Building up Energy 144
RELIGION
Guruvayoor: Trouble In the Temple 150
ENVIRONMENT
Neora Valley: Out of the Woods 155
THE ARTS
Jaipur: Ancient Images 158
EYE-CATCHERS 164

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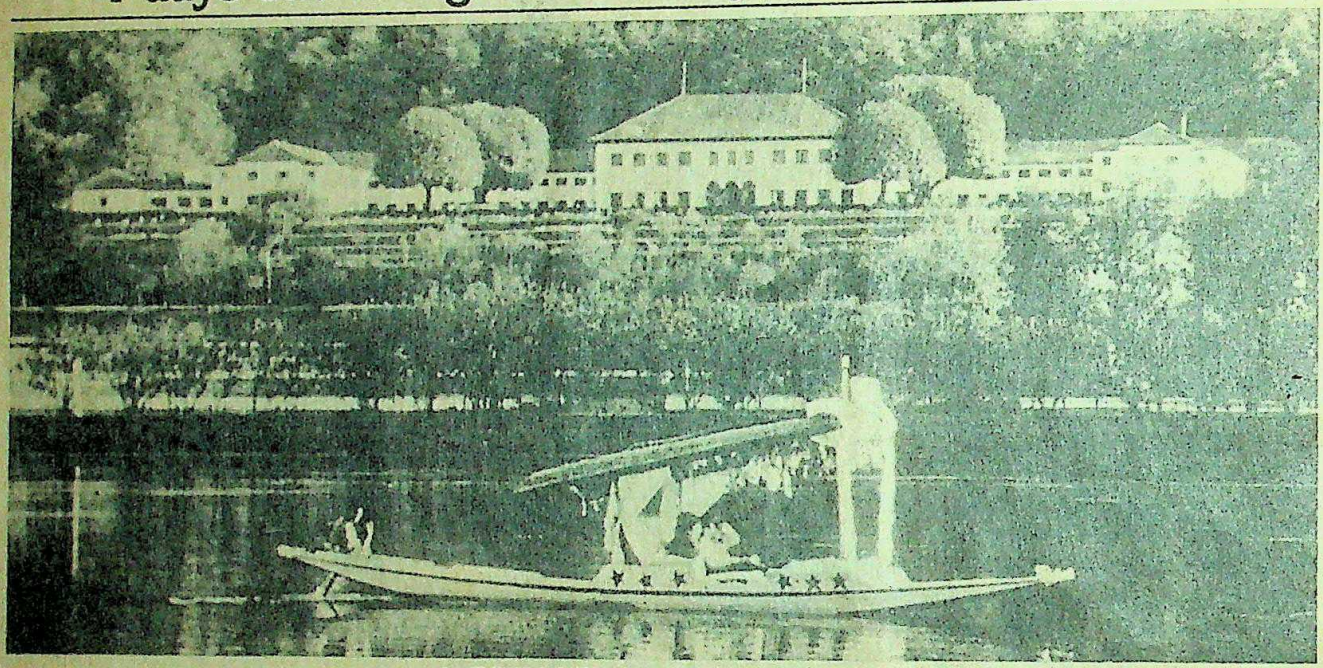

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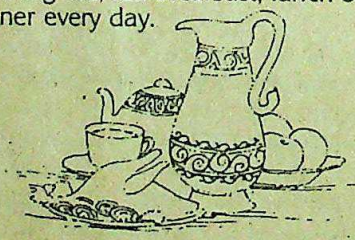

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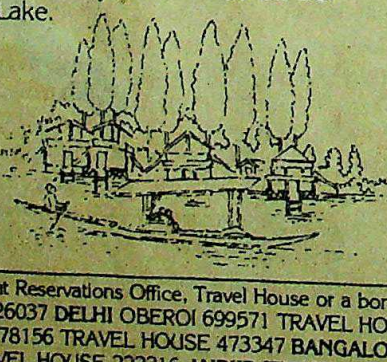

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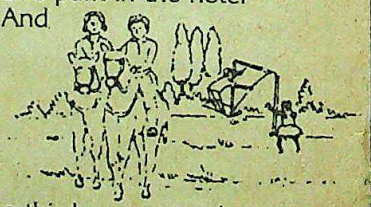

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME X NUMBER 11
FOR THE FORTNIGHT JUNE 1-15, 1985

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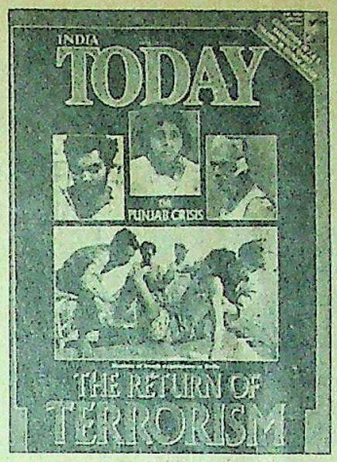
LETTERS



UNEXPLAINED MADNESS

Congratulations for your cover story 'Return of Terrorism' (May 31). You have taught millions of Indians how simple it is to be a terrorist. All we need do is follow B.K. Sharma's diagram of the anatomy of a bomb. No doubt more sophisticated technology can be obtained from any college or library. But it is still indiscreet for a magazine of your standing to publish it. I wish that in these times of crisis your editorial staff will exercise some discretion.

Secunderbad **J. FRANKLIN**

■ The cover story makes compelling reading. It is sad to know that a few individuals, divorced of reason, are perpetrating such heinous crimes in the name of religion. Sadder is the fact that the Sikh high priests, who did not take much time in declaring the President and Union Minister Buta Singh as "non-Sikhs" have not even condemned the terrorists.

The Sikh high priests should stop taking politically motivated steps. If they are really men of god, they should fearlessly condemn all acts of extremism and excommunicate such individuals from the *panth*. This step would go a long way to stem the rising tide of Sikh extremism and solve the Punjab problem. At the same time the Government should also take strong steps to safeguard the life and property of citizens.

Chandigarh **GURPRATAP SINGH VIRK**

■ Now we find a fresh change in the general Sikh outlook. Many Sikh intellectuals, leaders and others have clearly and unequivocally disassociated themselves from these terrorists and are even questioning their right to be called true Sikhs. Even Sikhs who till now covertly sided with terrorist activities have started to voice their concern, and non-Sikhs too do not any longer attribute the acts of a handful of terrorists to the entire community. This feeling, though belated, is a healthy sign and a good omen for solving the Punjab crisis.

Chandigarh **RAVI KANT**

■ The series of bomb explosions in north India is an obvious attempt by extremists to spread hatred among two communities. A small group of terrorists must not be allowed to spread a reign of terror and hold the entire country to ransom. The Government must not bow down to threats from hardliners who are dominating the affairs of the Akali Dal. The introduction of the Anti-Terrorist Bill is welcome and it is hoped that terrorists will now be dealt with more effectively.

Jaipur **V. BALA KRISHNAN**

EYE-OPENER

Your article "Trading in Blood" (May 31), will serve as an eye-opener for those who are not familiar with the avoidable hazards of blood transfusion. A stoppage to these malpractices is essential for restricting the diseased blood from going into the veins of sick people. One fails to understand why we are so indifferent in implementing the recommendations of the WHO and other international agencies.

Silchar, Assam **DR SUNDAR LAL PATOA**

RESERVATION DEBATE

I am shocked by the perverted logic of Gujarat Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki ('I'm confident I'll stay on', May 15) when he argues: "What about the non-reserved students who go off to Karnataka and get admissions in private colleges by paying huge capitation fees and then come back as doctors with very low marks? Is their merit ever doubted?"

There is no point in defending such students. Certainly they are doing wrong. Does Mr Solanki want to justify an evil by citing the example of another evil?

Ahmedabad **RATILAL THAKKAR**

The assumption that the agitation in Gujarat is totally pointless with regard to the amount of unfilled seats in the reserved quota in both engineering and medical colleges is totally illogical and profoundly astonishing. Perhaps your correspondent could explain how the Government could, in the first place, increase the quota of reservation without considering the basic law of supply and demand. When the Government does not have the vision to do so, how can we expect the agitators to look at the number

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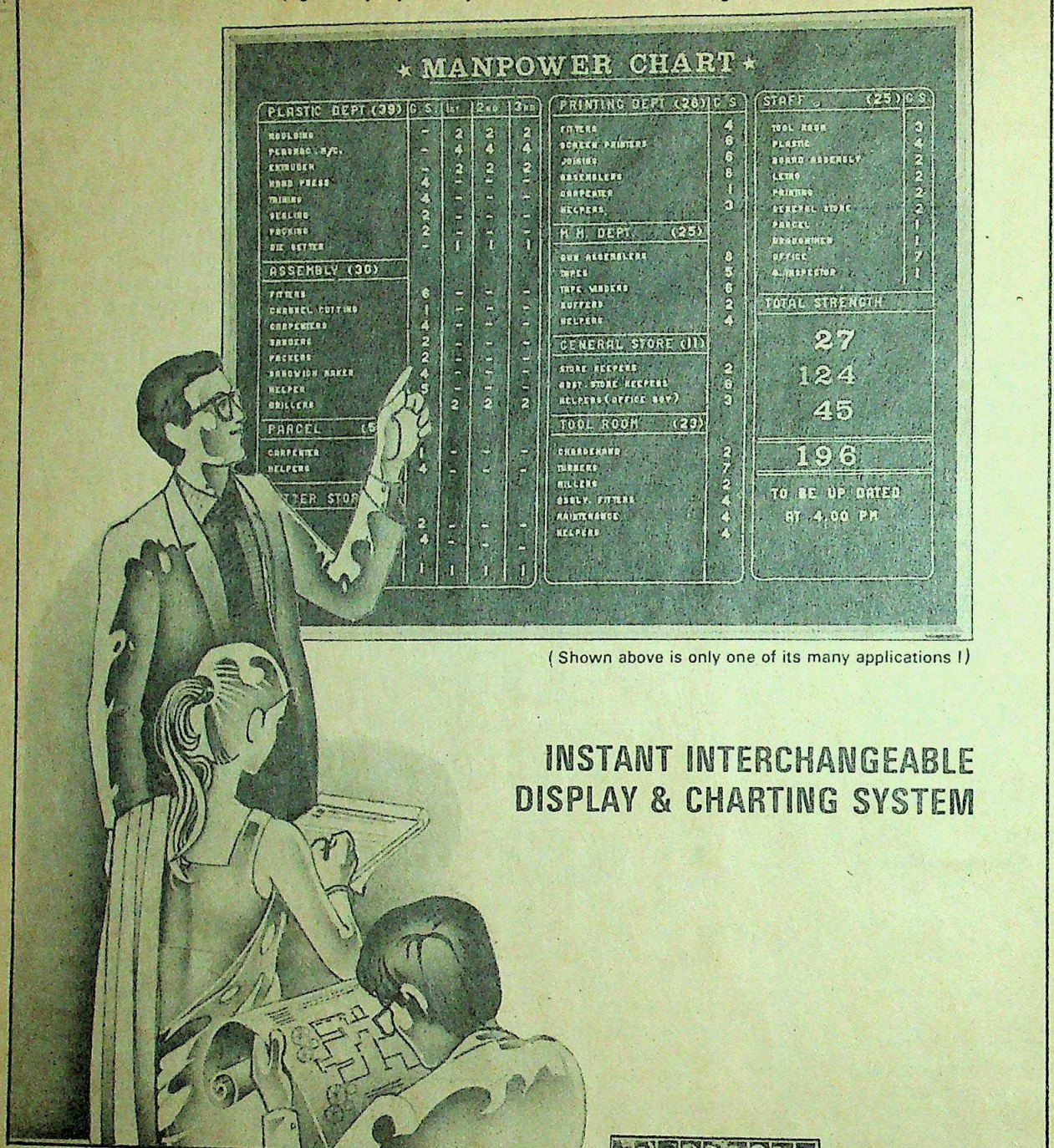

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of unfilled seats in the reserved quota for professional courses?

Mysore B.K. KUMAR

UNFAIR REPORT

Your report "Tarnished Image" (May 31) was an eye-opener and gave us a real insight into the Shah Government's corrupt practices. Every day we learn more of the growing discrimination and malpractices that this puppet government has resorted to. I am sorry to say that G.M. Shah has drawn a blank even in controlling the law and order situation, the springboard which catapulted him to the chief ministership last year. Clamping of curfew in Srinagar city is a normal occurrence and people have begun to live with the police harassment and baton charges.

It is time to think about whether the Shah Government has a moral right, let along a legal right, to run this sensitive state.

Srinagar SANDEEP CHOWDHRY

GUNS AND GOONS

The law and order situation in Bombay may be depressing (Crackdown in Bombay, May 15) but thank God that for every Varadarajan Mudaliar, Yusuf Patel, Vasantrao Patil and Haji Mastan on that side, the Bombayite has a Julio Ribeiro, Yadunath Pawar, G.R. Khairnar and Arun Bhatia on this side.

Bombay JAYESH B. MEHTA

BOOMING BANKS

Apropos of your report ('Banking on a Boom', May 15) the complacency of the Government as well as the RBI is beyond comprehension. The only remedy is to amend the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, in a suitable manner so as to prevent vested interests from taking advantage of semantic quibbles.

Bassein, Maharashtra PRABHAKARAN N.

CHAOTIC SYSTEM

Your Comment (Misusing the Army, May 15) is well made. I do not see the problem as a failure of the police to cope with the situation, but as the failure of the governments to keep the police force in a good mood. Policemen are ill-paid, made to work in a hostile atmosphere, and exposed to excessive political interference. Until policemen are freed from these shackles, they will be no better than ordinary people.

In an atmosphere of escalating violence all over the country, we need a police force that can withstand the pressures from both the rulers and the people. We have a tendency to make them the scapegoats for all failures. Unless we treat them as human beings, as part of society and give them their due share by way of better working conditions and pay, they will continue to fail to meet crises. And that will see to it that the army will have to be called in every time.

Belgaum GANAPAYYA B.

DISPUTED DEED

This is with reference to your report on Shaw Wallace ('The Acquisition Enigma', May 15). It has been suggested that I elicited the aid of a south Indian businessman, G. Venkateswaran and his investment companies and also that when the Income Tax Department seized the transfer documents lodged by these investment companies, it put the Shaw Wallace management in a bit of a spot.

Mr Venkateswaran is totally unknown to the undersigned or to Shaw Wallace & Co Ltd, who brought to the notice of the Government of India the facts of these purchases and the subsequent action of the Income Tax Department in Madras. Your correspondent states that the nominees of the financial institutions were present at an "unofficial board meeting in New Delhi". No nominee of any financial institution has been present at any discussion amongst any of the directors.

New Delhi S.P. ACHARYA
(chairman,) Shaw Wallace & Co Ltd

Mr Acharya refused to meet our correspondent despite repeated efforts.

Editor

MOVING HOUSE

There has been a lot of discussion with regard to the permanent residence of the prime minister. From all considerations of security, the best bet would be Teen Murti House. It is even more sheltered than Rashtrapati Bhavan, and should be made the permanent residence of the Indian prime minister for all time. After all, we cannot go on converting various residences into monuments in memory of all the leaders we love.

New Delhi B.P. NIGAM

CHEAPER SOLUTION

Your story ('Crippling Scourge', May 15) brings to the notice of the common man in Rajasthan the problem of fluorosis. However, several agencies in the state have already been working for over a decade in the field and have achieved considerable success.

While the Defence Laboratory Institute, (DLI) Jodhpur, boasts of its deflouridation technique costing Rs 100 for every six litres of water, the NEERI, (a subsidiary of the CSIR) has developed the same (Nalgonda technique) at the cost of just a few rupees a bucketful. The public health engineering department of Rajasthan has changed the water supply system and installed it afresh in several villages due to this very problem. Community defluoridation experiments were also undertaken in villages like Shivadaspur of Chaksu tehsil and Lacchipura of Nagore, but they could not achieve their goals due to the non-cooperation of villagers arising from their illiteracy.

Ajmer DR SHIV CHANDRA

■ The report on fluorosis makes pathetic reading especially when the proven technology of Reverse Osmosis (RO) is available locally.

The Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB) has already embarked on a scheme to provide potable water to the rural population with the help of RO plants at a cost of about Rs 5 per 1,000 litres compared to the Rs 100 per six litres for the DLI kit. The Rajasthan Government should investigate the GWSSB's scheme.

Bombay R.P. DESAI

FADING STAR

It is not a simple task to fully assess the genius of Kishore Kumar ('The Last Encore', May 15). And it is certainly not health reasons or income tax raids that have forced the singer to announce his retirement.

A genius loves healthy competition. Kishore's competition ended when Mohammad Rafi died in 1980. Besides, with composers producing such trite stuff, most of the songs Kishore has been getting are less than mediocre. Indian film music has been decaying since the mid-'70s. In this period, the more melodious songs went to Rafi because Kishore has the rare ability to raise the trashiest of tunes to a level acceptable to the masses. That was enough for the producers and composers—but not for Kishore. Not any more. And he has taken the right decision by announcing his retirement for he has etched a permanent place in the hearts of music lovers.

New Delhi MUKUL N. TRIVEDI

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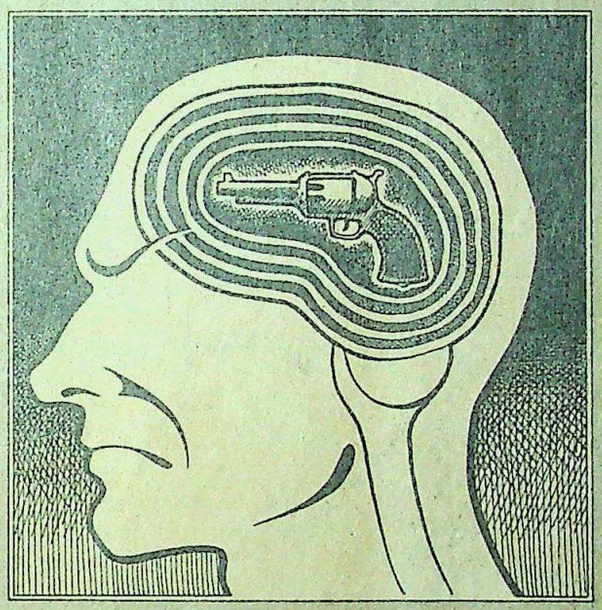
Embittered Minds

VIOLENCE brutalises both its victims and its perpetrators, as recent events have shown. And a society which doesn't confront this fact will sooner or later lose touch with the norms of acceptable, civilised behaviour.

The men responsible for the bomb blasts and killings that rocked Delhi and other northern cities last month deserve the most rigorous punishment that can be dealt to them---but in accordance with the law. There can be no justification for the death in custody of Mohinder Singh Khalsa. No matter what the police say, it is plain that the man was tortured to death, an example not only of the unnecessary crudity of the police's interrogation methods but also of its ineptness in protecting a potential source of information. The remarkable thing is not that it happened. Police brutality and torture in custody are, sadly enough, not uncommon in this country. What was perhaps without precedence was the lack of a public outcry. When the Bihar police blinded its captives in Bhagalpur five years ago, there was angry protest even though the victims were criminals, some of them notorious for the viciousness of their crimes. Death by police encounter usually elicits protest from the media and civil liberties groups and, indeed, it is such exposures which ultimately put an end to staged encounters in Uttar Pradesh three years ago.



This time round, there has been less than a whimper of protest. This shows up many things. The public, appalled at the devastation caused by Sikh terrorists, isn't any longer willing to give them any quarter. The popular perception is simply that the man deserved what he got. This is understandable but unacceptable. It indicates a dangerous slide away from civilised behaviour which lays down the inviolable principle that however heinous a crime, the criminal has to be dealt with according to the law.

Today it is a despised maker of bombs that kill innocent people. But tomorrow it could be a political opponent, an inconvenient activist, an unrelenting critic of authority, anybody whose continued existence is perceived as a threat to the powers that be. If this sounds far-fetched, it is worth remembering the enormous powers that have been given to the authorities in the new anti-terrorist legislation. It cannot be overstated that the authorities need all the help, encouragement and muscle they need in combating this menace. Equally, it cannot be over-emphasised that with such power goes a concomitant responsibility to not misuse that power. Killing Mohinder in custody is ultimately counter-productive and makes the task of keeping society civilised that much more difficult.

If it were merely a matter of the Government simply ordering the police to stop torturing its captives to death, that would be the end of it. Unfortunately, such deeds merely reflect the decay of social values that has been accelerated in the climate of violence generated by the Punjab problem. The lionising of the relatives of two men charged with the assassination of a prime minister by some Sikhs is an equally despicable act. It is not a question of approving or disapproving of Mrs Gandhi's handling of the Punjab crisis and her government's decision to send the army into the Golden Temple. No civilised society, no religion, sanctions assassination and anyone who believes that Bhindranwale and his cohorts were not terrorists and whose death had to be avenged by the murder of Indira Gandhi is at best guilty of self-delusion.

Unfortunately, the rot is so deep that rational argument makes no impact. This explains why the country is being treated to the sorry spectacle of Bhindranwale's father setting up a so-called Akali committee comprising men charged with serious crimes who are either locked up in jail or on the run from the police. And like the lack of a public outcry against Mohinder's death in custody, the evidently widespread acceptance of such a committee and the attempt to make martyrs of two assassins indicates how far gone is the decay of civilised behaviour.

It is time to stop and think. If peace is to return, if the headlong rush towards confrontation is to be stopped then people on both sides of the Hindu-Sikh divide must face up to these realities. There's no time to lose because the first anniversary of Operation Bluestar in early June could easily be marked by a fresh round of violence. There is no dearth of hotheads on either side who believe either that their honour lies in vengeance or that the violence of the terrorist calls for a fitting reply in kind.

Having publicly called for a 'genocide week', the Akali leaders are obviously in no position to call it off. But they can at least contain the extent of the folly by making sure that it is restrained in its observance. On its part, the Government must not only keep the peace, it should seriously consider such radical steps as the cancellation of all private arms licences to flush out weapons and a crackdown on the cottage arms industry that flourishes in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and elsewherein the country. Ultimately, however, the onus lies wholly on the people at large to refuse to be drawn into a communal cauldron, to resist provocation from wherever it comes, and to stop the rot that removes sanity from their minds and makes animals out of men.

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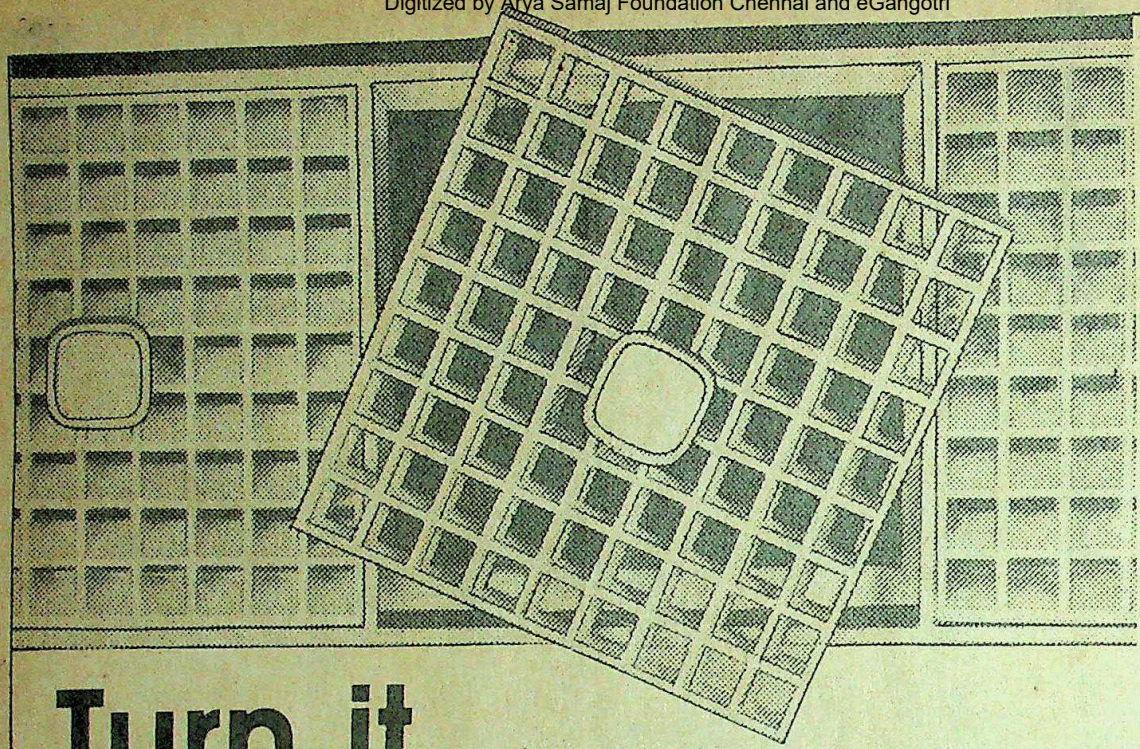

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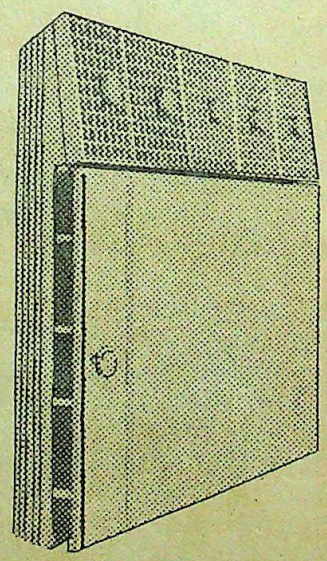

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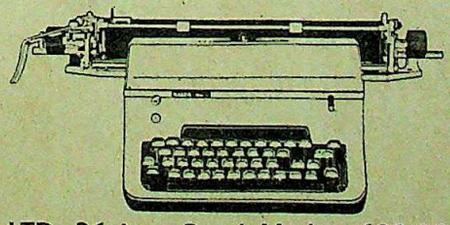

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The Times of India

● *It is entirely their business. If they (the* SGPC*) want to build 24 storeys, they are welcome to do it, provided the municipal laws permit it.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI commenting on the proposal to reconstruct the Akal Takht

● *The chief minister's gaddi is not my personal jagir. If the people and my party ask me to go I shall not hesitate. I may even use the opportunity to read the hundreds of books that I have.*

■ MADHAVSINH SOLANKI in *Onlooker*

● *Mr Gandhi's slow motion dance around the Sikh problem has assisted the return of the wild ones, just as his mother's dithering uncorked the evil genie of the Golden Temple.*

■ Editorial comment in *The Economist*

● *I shall pray that India can resolve the Sikh problem, because Sikhs as you know and I know it, are a very emotional people. They feel they have been hurt.*

■ PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ in *Sunday*

● *The Congress is where the Nehru family is.*

■ KAMLAPATI TRIPATHI AICC(I) working president at the AICC(I) meet

● *Not many people have the chance to be in the middle of a mess like this one (Bhopal tragedy) and come out of it.*

■ WARREN ANDERSON, chairman of Union Carbide, in *The New York Times*

● *The Bhagwad Gita is easier to understand after just one reading, but the more you read tax laws they seem more different.*

■ N.K.P. SALVE in Rajya Sabha

● *I am a diplomat now.... My challenges have now changed too. I have to overcome mountains of papers and my route is littered with the hazards of frequent cocktail parties.*

■ SIR EDMUND HILLARY addressing the Third Himalayan Mountaineering and Tourism meet

● *Books were my only companions.... I have described myself as a book lying amongst books.*

■ AMRITA PRITAM in *Gentleman*

● *Today playing cricket is similar to performing on the stage or even on screen.*

■ RAVI SHASTRI in *The Sunday Observer*

● *I'm fed up of this 'nice guy image'. I'm not a nice guy. I'm different from the rest of the industry.*

■ JACKIE SHROFF in *Star & Style*

● *For me life is a tragedy when I feel and a comedy when I think.*

■ DILIP KUMAR quoted in *Filmfare*

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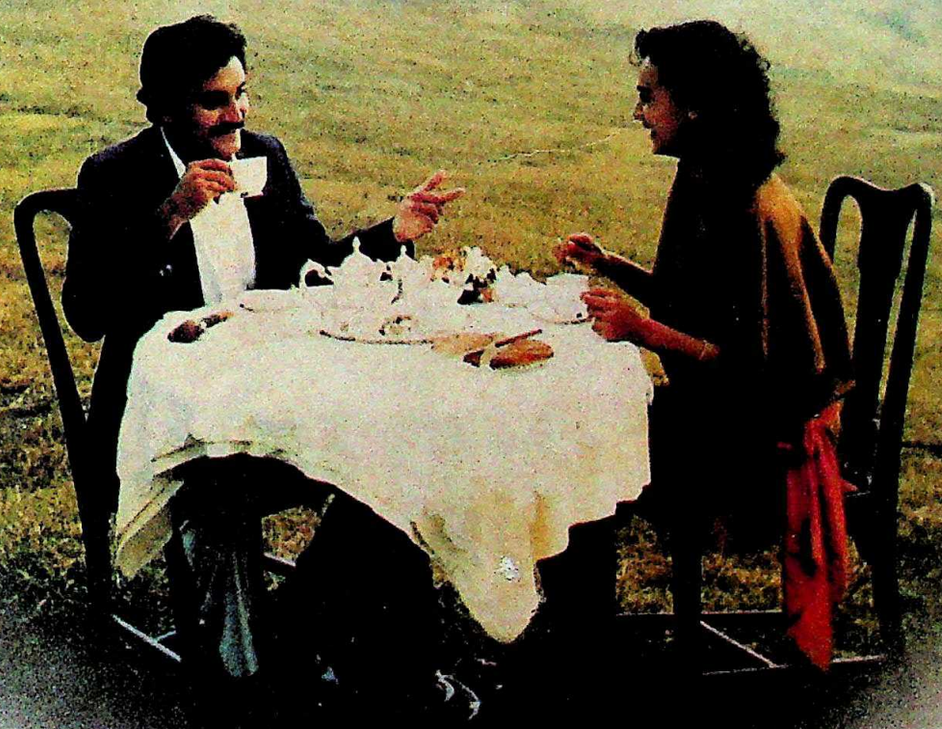
Bring out the flavour
Bring out the Gold



Brooke Bond
GOLD LABEL
The matchless Darjeeling tea

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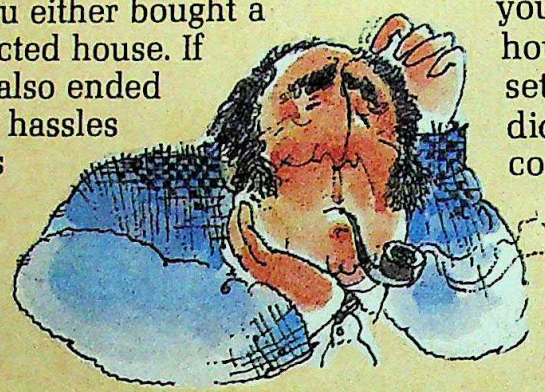
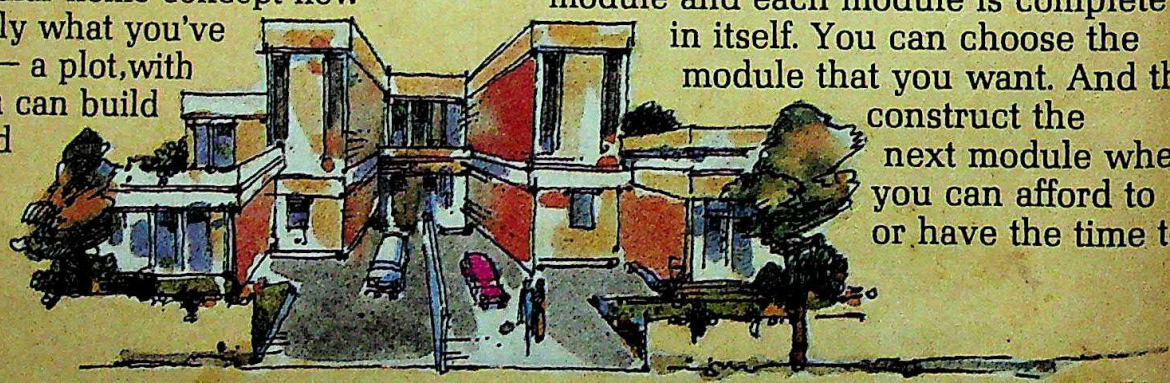
A modular home. What it is. What makes it so different. And why it's been such a runaway success.

Until now & right through the ages investing in real estate meant you either bought a plot, or a fully-constructed house. If you bought a plot, you also ended up buying the onerous hassles of construction, besides penalties for non-construction and the chances of encroachment on your property. And if you bought a house, you'd probably have had to settle for a match box that you really didn't want anyway. All because you couldn't put together the money that a nice spacious home costs.



Enter the Modular Home.

DLF's new modular home concept now gives you exactly what you've always wanted – a plot, with a home that you can build in stages. As and when you can afford to. Each stage is a module and each module is complete in itself. You can choose the module that you want. And then construct the next module when you can afford to or have the time to.



DLF MODULAR HOMES at DLF Qutab Enclave

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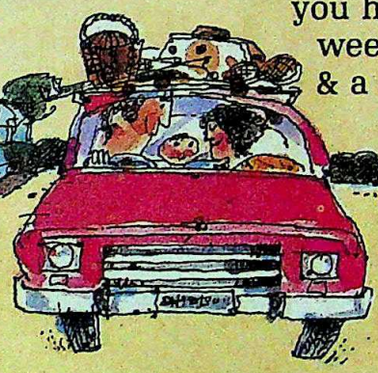
The first module — what it costs.

In the first module, you get a large drawing-dining, a kitchen and a bathroom. With large lawns at the rear and in the front. With the facia completely finished. All this for almost half the amount you'd pay for a full house. And even this is payable over several years.

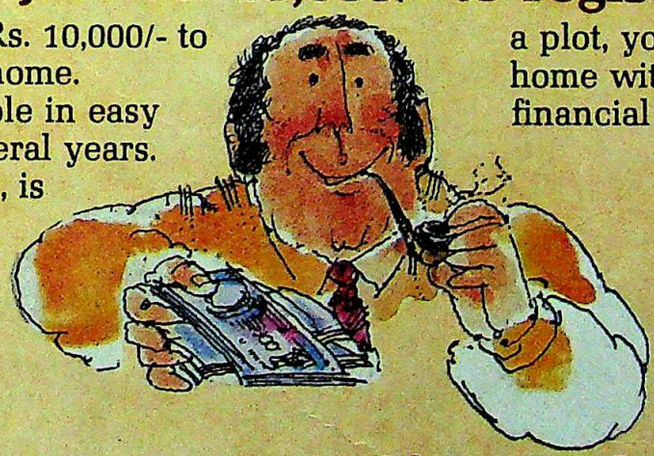
What else do you get? — a weekend home.

Your modular home is your ideal weekend retreat. The wide open spaces, fresh air, sprawling lawns and preferential club membership make it a dream getaway from the hustle & bustle of city life. Construction of the club has already commenced. So instead of packing your bags & going to the hills to get away from it all, all you have to do is drive to your own weekend home with swimming, tennis & a drink thrown in. Besides, the large lawns that your children can sport in. In other words, even though you might ultimately shift to DLF Qutab Enclave much later, your modular home is usable much earlier.



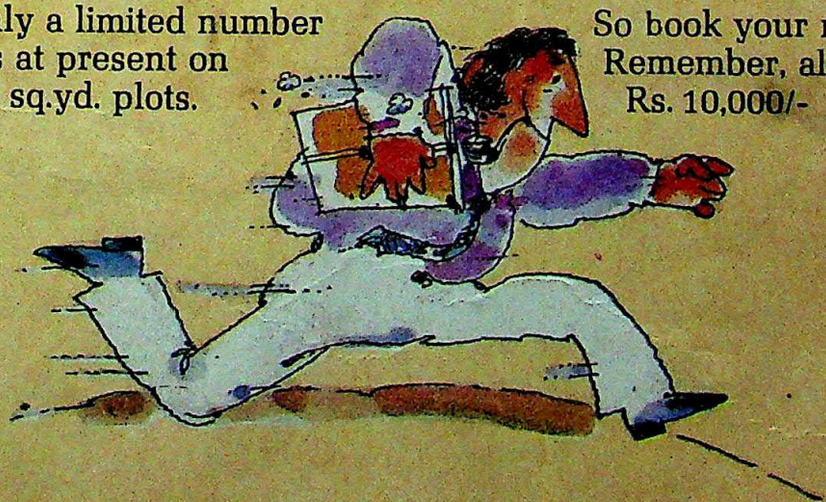
An easy payment plan. With institutional finance also available. Just Rs. 10,000/- to register.

All you need is just Rs. 10,000/- to book your modular home. The balance is payable in easy instalments over several years. And what's best of all, is that unlike a plot, you can finance your modular home with help from various financial institutions.



The homes are going fast. So book today.

DLF is offering only a limited number of modular homes at present on 200,215,251 &400 sq.yd. plots. So book your modular home today. Remember, all you need is just Rs. 10,000/-



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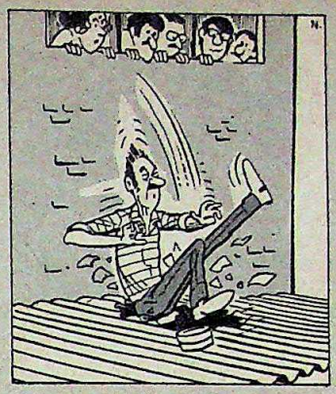
SOAP OPERA

■ Chivalry was the code of the Middle Ages: knights and lords would do anything for the lady of their heart for a look or something more. Can such devotion be alive in the material-obsessed world of today? Yes, as a lady in the Bombay Municipal Corporation will testify.

After having lunch, she got to talking with her colleagues and by and by the conversation became a little like modern theatre: all gesture. One particularly wide sweep of her hand pushed the tiffin box out of the window onto a corrugated roof 10 ft below. Upon which the lady called helplessly for help.

It was not long in coming, in the shape of a lean and eager man. He got onto



the window sill, pushed away a dozen or so people who tried to get him to use a ladder, and leapt. He leapt well but not wisely for he hit the roof, broke through it, and landed with an agonising thud. But chivalry triumphed: as he was being carried away to the hospital with a broken ankle, he handed over the tiffin box to the grateful lady.

COSTLY CAPER

■ The pot of gold is as elusive as ever for most of us toilers, but sometimes it comes to the doorstep of a favoured few and one of the favoured few happens to live in Pune, Maharashtra.

He had spare money on his hands and thought he would buy a video recorder. Being a prudent man, he purchased a unit from a shop where they sell customs-confiscated

goods. Taking it home, he discovered it did not work and on opening the back-plate found, besides the gadgetry, three cakes of soap, neatly and attractively wrapped. It was an extremely angry young man who took the VCR back to the shop and an even angrier one who returned with the salesman's suave "Sorry, goods once sold cannot be taken back" ringing loudly in his ears.

Being a thrifty person, his wife advised her fuming husband to take the thing to a repairman first thing in the morning. Meanwhile, they might as well use the soap. She unwrapped one, stared for a second, then dropped to the floor in a dead faint. The young man rushed to her, then forgot all about her as he tore away the other two wrappers and started prancing around the room with three gold biscuits in his trembling hands.

TEST CASE

■ Examinations in India are exciting things: invigilators get knifed, students turn up with the story of Aurangzeb tattooed in strategically located spots, papers get mixed up and so on. A student of the Mohanlal Sukhadia University in Jaipur has just added a pioneering exploit to that lore.

He was sitting for his M. Com. examination and had prepared thoroughly for it: not in the orthodox sense, but in quite another way. Strapped to his leg was a microcassette recorder and just inside the cuff of his shirt was taped the earphone. A supply of pre-recorded micro-cassettes was in the custody of a friend outside. While he wrote his paper, he put his head on his arm in the classic *Renoir* pose of the student, listened and started copying. Every once in a while, he

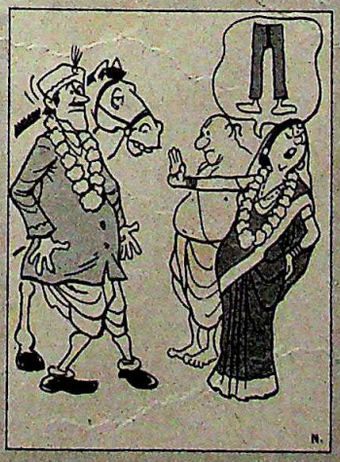
would go out of the examination hall on some pretext insert a fresh cassette and return with renewed confidence.

The invigilator could not understand how anybody could write for so long in that "relaxed" pose. He went closer, suspecting the worst, frisked the student and his eyes popped open when he saw the intricate machinery in position. Thus did the age of electronic copying furnish its first martyr.

HOLY WEDLOCK

■ Marriages are made in heaven. That's what everybody believes but in fact they are made on earth after a lot of sweat and bother over who should marry whom, when, how and how much. But even after nothing has been left to chance a small grain of sand can gum up the works.

A dhoti-clad bridegroom was centre-piece of a *baraat* in a village in Uttar Pradesh.



Consternation! The girl, it appeared, was refusing to marry and her relatives were supporting her: the reason was that they didn't want a dhoti-clad son-in-law but preferred a 'mod' someone who wore trousers. On that small point, incredible as it may sound the wedding was halted, the bride retired to brood inside and the groom got ready to go home and mope about his curious fate.

But stories should have a happy ending. On the way back the erstwhile groom's party met another party which, as fate would have had it, included a comely girl who, when she heard of the poor man's experience said she had nothing against dhotis and promised to marry him. Amid much rejoicing the marriage was solemnised as soon as it was decently possible. Perhaps marriages are made in heaven.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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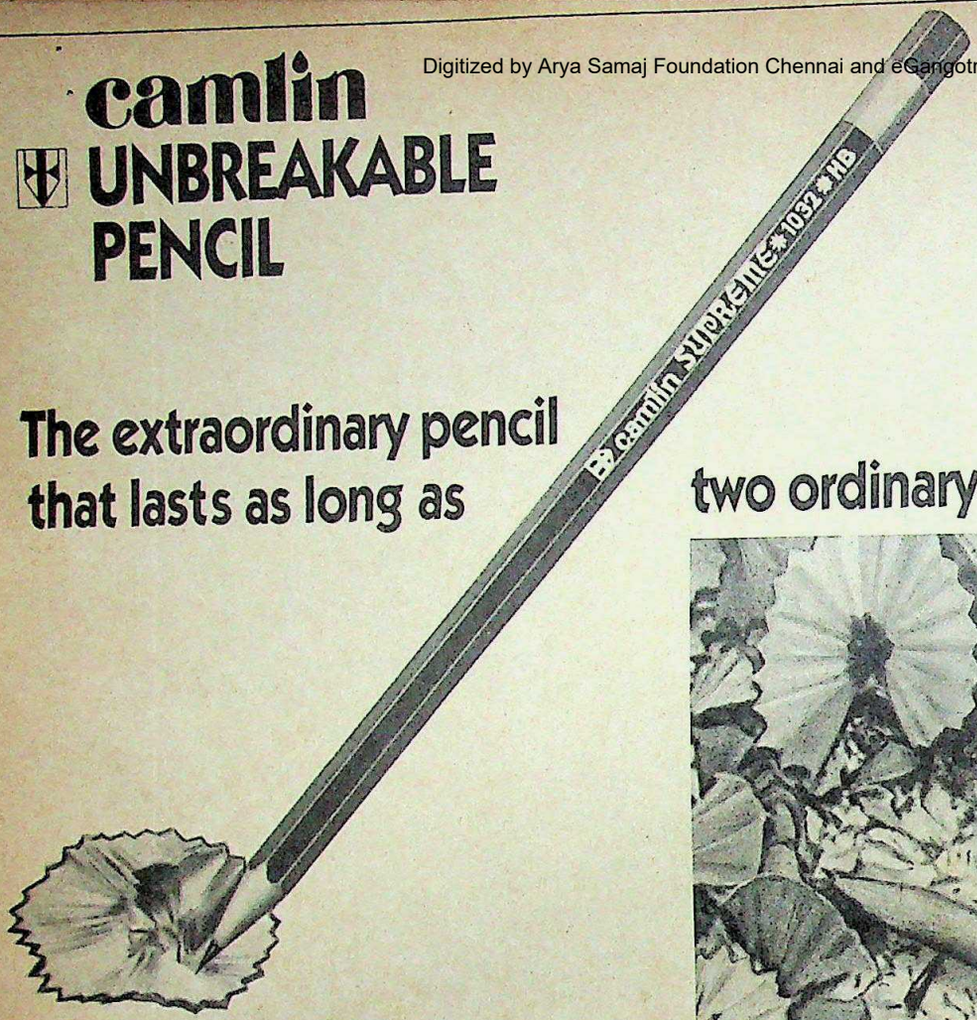
camlin UNBREAKABLE PENCIL



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"Four years ago my mother tempted me to enter the kitchen, with a Gopi.

Yet today, I'm an expert cook... thanks to the super helpmate I have in Gopi."

"Gopi is all the help I need in my kitchen.

And do you know why?

Gopi offers me the latest technology and three jars with the basic machine — not just one. All at no extra cost.

So only Gopi lets me switch from blending... to dry grinding... to wet grinding to whatever... in seconds. With no hassles, such as fiddling with sharp blades.

Gopi also gives me the widest choice of optional attachments for special jobs. Each self-enclosed.

Come to think of it, Gopi does the work of a food processor, blender, juicer and grinder. Imagine the money I save by not having to buy them individually!

What's more, Gopi's heavy duty motor makes it the best machine for Indian conditions. In fact, I run it as long as I want. And the operating instructions are so easy to follow.

The Gopi machine is so good, you get a 5 year guarantee (including the motor) and lifetime free service.

What more could any woman want?

No wonder, with Gopi around I almost feel like a superwoman in the kitchen!"

GOPI

Kitchen Machine

The better looking, better designed kitchen machine with a 5 year guarantee.

Insist on Gopi by name — buy from authorised dealers only.

Optional attachments

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The swift pick-up from 0 to 60 kph in just 9 seconds.
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Effortlessly, confidently, securely.
Pulsating. Thrilling. Exciting.
That's the sensation of Suzuki.
Come, feel its dynamic features.

- 100 cc 2-stroke engine output 8.25 bhp at 6500 rpm.
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- Fuel efficiency: 65 km/litre.

Unmatched performance and several exclusive features, put the Ind-Suzuki AX 100 in a class all its own.

It incorporates a sophisticated instrument panel with indicating and warning lights; rear view mirrors; turn signal indicators; steering, helmet and fuel tank locks.

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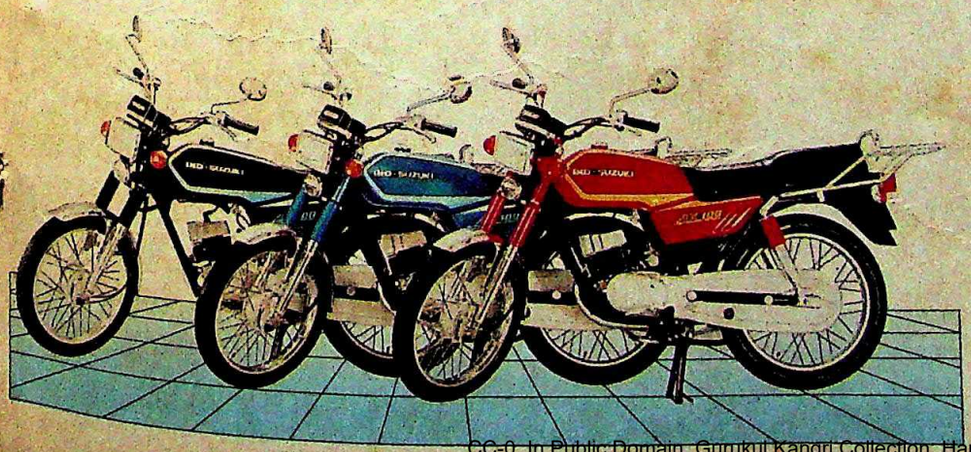

A creation of India's most dynamic Indo-Japanese venture.

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AX 100

Watch it take over the Indian roads.

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RAJIV GANDHI

The Message to Moscow

RAJIV GANDHI set some kind of a record on last fortnight's visit to the Soviet Union. At every city on his schedule, he deplaned in unseasonal rain. When he left, it was in brilliant sunshine. But there was a symbolism in the meteorological phenomena. On his first official visit since becoming prime minister, Rajiv managed to firmly consolidate the durable love affair between the Soviet Union and the Nehru family. But though the visit was a clear indication of the future direction of Indian foreign policy, it also offered a rare and intimate glimpse of the prime minister's operating style, his interaction with his close aides and advisers and their place in the current Indian power structure. Associate Editor DILIP BOBB *was on board the Boeing that carried Rajiv and his entourage to Moscow and back. His report:*

Photographs by TASS

FOR VISITORS to the Soviet Union, the most-sought-after souvenir after Stolichnaya vodka is a stout wooden doll that opens in the middle to reveal another and yet another till the last one, tinier than a thumbnail. In many ways, the multiple doll symbolises more than anything else, the problems of probing the collective mind of the Soviet leadership in bilateral exchanges: strip one layer, and another appears in its place. In that context, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi didn't quite get down to uncovering the last miniscule doll during last fortnight's whirlwind visit to the Soviet Union, but he came as close to it as was politically and humanly possible.

That, in itself, was the single most creditable achievement of his high-profile five-day tour that succeeded in elevating Indo-Soviet relations to a new and more mutually beneficial plateau after a period of relative uncertainty and edginess on both sides. In fact, when Air-India's Boeing 707, Annapurna, carrying the

(Anticlock wise from top left) Rajiv receiving the Lenin Peace Prize on behalf of his late mother; with Soviet leaders before leaving Moscow, and Sonia visiting a museum in Moscow

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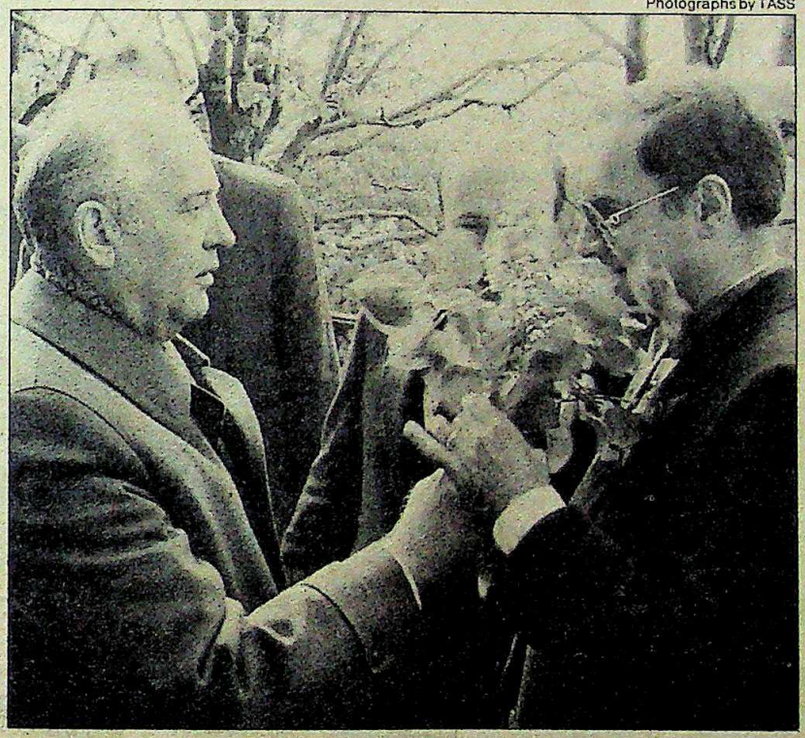
prime minister and his 31-member official entourage touched down at Moscow's Sheremetiavo-1 Airport in driving rain and a bone-chilling wind, senior aides on board were still unclear as to whether or not the reception would match the weather. "We really had no indication of how they were going to treat the visit. We had been preparing for it for weeks but in all our discussions they gave us absolutely no clue as to what their thinking was," said a top official.

In the end, the worries and uncertainty cleared as abruptly as the drizzle and the long-lasting love affair between the Soviets and the Nehru family passed on to the newest member of the clan. Despite his relative inexperience and lack of exposure, Rajiv's boyish good looks, his natural charm and seeming sincerity exerts a powerful pull. The day before his arrival, a young Russian woman interviewed on Soviet television was asked why she sounded so enthusiastic about seeing Rajiv. Her answer: "Because he is the most handsome leader in the world." Though superficial and trite, it was nonetheless a response that manifested itself in remarkable ways and over the widest possible spectrum of straight-laced Soviet society.

In an interview shortly before the visit, the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachov, had remarked that "Indian leaders are received with a special feeling here" and it was clearly no hollow platitude. All along the broad and lengthy expanse of Gorky Street, Moscow's main boulevard, hundreds of people of all ages and both sexes braved the daunting weather to grab a glimpse of the young Indian leader and greet him with shouts of *'Miree, Druzbah'* (peace, friendship) as he flashed past in his bullet-proof Zil limousine flanked by an impressive wedge of motorcycle outriders.

For the next two days, as Rajiv and his close aides closetted themselves in the historic and stunningly beautiful innards of the Kremlin with Soviet leaders, *Miree, Druzbah* continued to remain the dominant theme. Outside, the winter thaw had given way to the first flush of a Moscow spring when the apple blossoms, lilacs and tulips that offer welcome and colourful contrast to the drab and depressing architecture of the buildings and condominiums, are in full and glorious bloom. Inside, the first flush of the Indo-Soviet spring was experiencing an equally luxuriant flowering. Not since the intimate affinity between Jawaharlal Nehru and Nikita Khruschev have leaders of the two countries forged such an instant and visible rapport as did Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachov, a rapport that was already tentatively established during their first meeting at the funeral of Gorbachov's predecessor, Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko, earlier this year.

Photographs by TASS



Gorbachov presenting Rajiv a lilac blossom on their Kremlin stroll

The official schedule, in fact, was a mere formality. Details of the two economic agreements signed in Moscow under the glittering chandeliers of the Kremlin's historic Vladimir Hall had already been worked out between the two sides well in advance of the visit. One gives India, Soviet credit to the tune of one billion roubles (Rs 1,400 crore) to finance a wide range of projects, mainly in power, coal, oil, machine-building and ferrous technology with the low interest credit to be used for Soviet purchase of Indian goods. The other, more wide-ranging agreement, is set in a longer-term perspective and chalks out the directions of economic, scientific and technical cooperation till the year 2000. But eventually, it was the shadows rather than the substance that proved to be of infinitely more import and significance.

Kremlin-watchers were quick to note the many ways in which Gorbachov deliberately broke protocol, much to the annoyance of his stolid and straight-jacketed security guards, during the two days that he and Rajiv were together. On the morning that the private talks between the two leaders were to start, Gorbachov arrived unannounced and certainly unscheduled at the Kremlin apartment where Rajiv and his family were staying ten minutes before they were officially supposed to meet. In what Soviet officials admit is a rare and unusual gesture, Gorbachov informed his bemused Indian counterpart that it was too beautiful a day to waste and rather than drive to the block where the talks were scheduled in curtained limousines, they would do better to walk. While security procedures were thrown out of synch, Gorbachov, stout and muscular with a livid scar across his broad forehead and Rajiv, slim and elegant in his Nehru jacket and tasselled Gucci shoes, linked arms and strolled through the Kremlin gardens. At one point, during the walk Gorbachov stopped, broke off a branch of lilac and presented it to Rajiv with an impish flourish.

Later, the two leaders kept the entire Politburo waiting half an hour for the official signing of the agreements because, as Gorbachov later said with a laugh, "we forgot to look at our watches". Clearly, the talks between the two leaders were emboldened by the rapport that they had already struck. In retrospect, it was, in a way, inevitable. Gorbachov and Rajiv have much that is in common. Both are young—at 55 Gorbachov is the youngest leader the Soviets have had and certainly the most unconventional. Both have embarked on a massive reorientation programme in their respective countries, a programme that has its base in a new approach to issues, the workings of the Government and the induction of new technology from the West. More important, in conversations with Soviets, it is apparent that Gorbachov like Rajiv in India, symbolises a new hope and optimism for his

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people and their future.

But despite the genuine warmth and affinity displayed by both leaders, there were shortfalls in expectations. The Soviets have been making a concerted effort to get a commitment from India on an extension of the 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1971 between Mrs Gandhi and Leonid Brezhnev which expires in 1991. The Indian side has so far been hedging and stalling and the Soviets were clearly expecting a firm commitment during the visit. The fact that it was not forthcoming indicates that the Indian Government is not interested in renewing the treaty. Similarly, the Soviets were overly keen to get a definite yes from India on the purchase of the MiG-29 which they have been plugging as a counter to Pakistan's F-16s. Instead, they got a *nyet*, or rather, a not yet.

But clearly the disappointments were more than offset by the gains. Soviet worries that Rajiv's pro-western image and outlook would take India even further on the divergent path that started with the country's arms diversification programme in the late '70s were soon dispelled by Rajiv's strident and in fact, excessive criticism of the US during his visit. In diplomatic terms, it seemed an imprudent and negative approach considering the recent upturn in Indo-US relations, his programme to induct state-of-the-art technology available only in the US and its ally, Japan, and the fact that he is scheduled to visit that country next month. His statements are certain to upset the occupants of the White House and Capitol Hill.

Yet, the fact that he deliberately embarked on such a course is clear indication that the edifice of India's future foreign policy will rest heavily on the firm foundations of India's relationship with the Soviet Union. At his crowded press conference in Moscow, Rajiv, when asked why he had chosen Moscow for his first official tour as prime minister, jokingly replied that "I had to start somewhere and it so happens that the Soviets asked me first". But senior foreign office officials accompanying the prime minister confirmed that whatever wooing was done as far as the West was concerned, the two top priorities in India's foreign policy will be the Soviet Union and India's neighbours. In fact, while in the middle of his talks in Moscow, Rajiv summoned Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari and instructed him to take off for Sri Lanka on their return to ensure that Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene makes a visit to New Delhi before the first week of June.

In Moscow, there were other indications of India's policy to maintain close links with the Soviets. The joint communique issued at the end of the visit was only remarkable for the issues that were left unsaid, namely Afghanistan and Kampuchea, two areas where India has been consistently criticised for its rather lonely pro-Soviet stand, specially since it is the Soviet presence in Afghanistan that offers the US a tailor-made excuse to pour arms into Pakistan. But obviously the success of Rajiv's visit depended on bending with the breeze without actually breaking. "The Soviets know full well that we disapprove of their presence, a fact we have impressed upon them in private before. But we also appreciate that they will not leave till they are absolutely sure of leaving behind a pro-Soviet regime that faces no threat from the Mujahedeen. The solution is a political one and not a military one," said a senior member of the Indian delegation in Moscow.

BUT whatever the perceptions, Rajiv's visit was not an absolutely unqualified success from the Indian point of view and that seemed more a matter of bad planning than any diplomatic gaffes on his part. For one, it was clearly clumsy policy to arrange his visits to the Soviet Union and the US so close together, knowing that in Moscow he would be compelled to adopt an anti-US stand which would hamstring his subsequent dealings with the US Government during his visit to the United States.

Secondly, it seemed surprising that he should have spent three days out of five visiting monuments in Minsk or watching a slushy equestrian display in Issyk-kul in Khirgizia on the Chinese border when he would have been better served getting acquainted with the Soviet leadership in Moscow, specially if the Soviet Union is to play a pivotal role in Indian foreign policy. Informal chats with Soviet leaders like the wily and experienced Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko would have been far more constructive than exchanging pleasantries with the first secretary of the communist party of Khirgizia in faraway Frunze.

The cooing and billing apart, Rajiv's Russian rendezvous contained a significance that extended well beyond the confines of Indo-Soviet ties. As his first official visit since becoming prime minister, it offered, for one, a rare opportunity to observe at close and intimate quarters how Rajiv tackled his first foreign policy test, his relationship with his close aides and advisers and where they stood in the new hierarchy, and his operating style. It proved a revealing exercise.

Despite his deceptively youthful demeanour—at times it is difficult to accept the fact that he is prime minister of the world's largest democracy—Rajiv radiates a subtle charisma. In Moscow, on his first couple of engagements, he appeared a bit nervous and unsure of himself. But as the visit progressed, his confidence grew visibly and by the end he was performing like he had been doing it all his life. He displayed a casual and relaxed style that was strangely appealing, specially in the stifingly bureaucratic atmosphere of Moscow. Despite the efforts of Soviet security personnel to hustle him along whenever there were crowds present, Rajiv made a point to exchange words with bystanders or wave and smile in appreciation of the fact that they had come out in inclement weather to see him, even on the most solemn of occasions.

Gorbachov and Rajiv signing the economic agreement in the Kremlin with key Indian officials and Politburo members ranged behind

The fact that his meeting with Gorbachov extended well beyond the deadline indicated that even without his aides, he can hold his own with the second most

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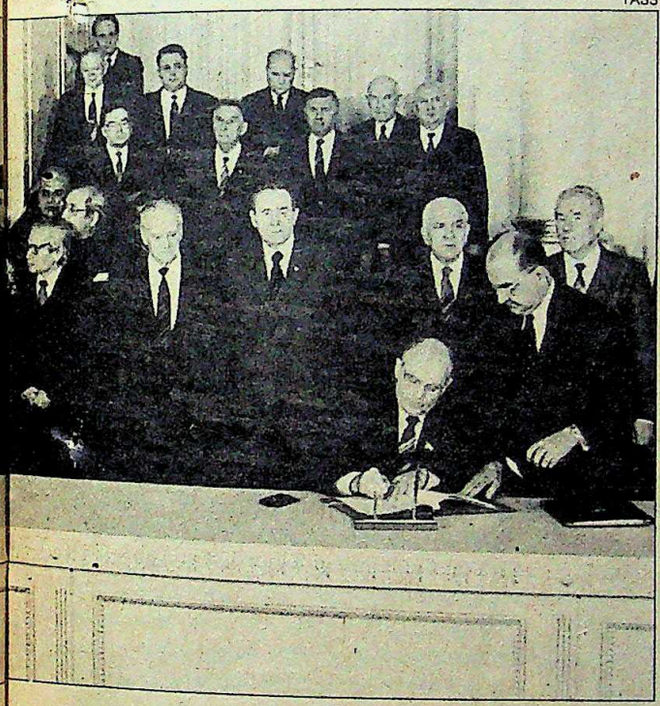
powerful man on earth and also a man who worships a different ideological deity. At no time, even ranged alongside the stern and aged members of the Soviet Politburo, did he look uncomfortable and out of place. The job is obviously growing on him and vice versa.

Alongside his attractive wife Sonia, they project the same romantic appeal that has endeared Britain's Prince Charles and Lady Diana to millions. Sonia, however, has a lot to learn from her husband. A person who has long shunned the limelight and is obviously uncomfortable in it, she seemed unable to overcome her diffidence throughout the trip. It clearly had little to do with security. In no other country could India's First Family have been safer. Yet on more than one occasion on her separate schedule, she brushed past onlookers who had waited for hours to see her, and at one point an accompanying journalist gently suggested that a wave or *namaste* would do her image no harm.

But the situation was saved by the most unlikeliest of ambassadors—her two children Rahul and Priyanka. Unspoilt and attractive, they have a vulnerability that is intensely appealing. Their casual attire and their friendly nature only adds to the appeal. On the special flight to Moscow, restive in the confines of the plush cabin up front reserved for the prime minister's family, they wandered around the plane joking with their security personnel or in polite conversation with their father's aides. The Soviets have a great fondness for children, as is apparent from the many advantages and privileges for the young, and Rahul and Priyanka, despite the presence of more seasoned performers, went a long way in winning friends and influencing the Soviet people.

The curious composition of the delegation was, in fact, even more of a revelation. Whether by deliberate design or by accident, the prime minister's party was made up of the current movers and shakers, the men, or most of the men, who now hold India's destiny in their untried hands. The laid back informality between most members of the party—a strikingly new element in Indian bureaucracy—was of the kind that exists only in people who wear power well and without fear or favour. That, more than anything else, is a reflection on Rajiv's style more than theirs for they represent the people he trusts more than anybody else and are those who he can relate to.

TASS



THOUGH number five in terms of protocol, the top dog is obviously Rajiv's close friend and Parliamentary Secretary Arun Singh. Despite the presence of more senior officials like Finance Minister V.P. Singh, G. Parthasarathi, chairman of the policy planning committee, and Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari, Arun Singh is obviously The Man when it comes to taking decisions, and he takes them instantly, secure in the knowledge that he is doing just what Rajiv would want him to do. His authority, despite his inexperience, is unquestioned. Unlike the abrasive Arun Nehru who likes hogging the limelight, Arun Singh prefers to stay in the background, hands in his pockets, quietly observing the scene and issuing rapid-fire instructions when required, especially on matters concerning the security of the First Family. And, for a man in his position and influence, he is surprisingly accessible and open, with none of the arrogant imperiousness of people who have their first taste of power.

Another man who maintains a low profile and yet has Rajiv's ear and trust is Finance Minister V.P. Singh. His conversations with Rajiv seem more those of a friend and valued adviser than a politician who holds a crucial portfolio. The fact that he has a clean image is what perhaps endears him to Rajiv and lends an easy familiarity to their relationship. As finance minister, his was a crucial role in Moscow considering that the agreements signed were mainly economic but not for one moment did he behave like he had more right to be there than any of the others, a trait that seems to be in short supply among the rest of his more stodgy ministerial colleagues.

Rajiv also seems to have a good equation with Romesh Bhandari, perhaps because of the very characteristics that some of Bhandari's colleagues in the Indian Foreign Service are highly critical of—his casual and informal approach and his dovish, make-love-not-war image. But Bhandari's relaxed and informal style is certainly a welcome change from the rigid and overly conservative attitude of some of his more illustrious predecessors. Certainly, none of them would have replied the way he did to the question of what it was like working for Rajiv. "I'll give you the answer in one word," he said, "exhilarating."

Of Rajiv's other aides, Oscar Fernandes clearly has the edge over the others present in Moscow like Gopi Arora and C.R. Gharekhan, in terms of access to the prime minister and delegation of authority. At the official banquets and get-togethers with their Soviet counterparts, old-timers like G. Parthasarathi seemed to be anachronisms, there for protocol reasons rather than their place in the new scheme of things. What was in evidence was a tightly-knit team, inexperienced and perhaps unacquainted with the devious ways of the world they now inhabit, but still a team.

In that sense, Rajiv's visit to the Soviet Union was more indicative of the new Indian powerhouse than the one that sits in the gilded halls of the Kremlin. The Soviets have traditionally had a soft corner for the Indian people and the Indian leadership, one of whom actually breathed his last in one of their cities. Three days after Rajiv left Moscow with his entourage, his official business well behind him, the Soviet press and television channels were still giving him top billing and the crowds at his non-official stops, even more enthusiastic. How long the affair lasts will depend on events beyond his control. But whether it was the overpowering atmosphere of Moscow, the genteel elegance of Minsk or the coarseness of Khirgizia, he left behind a lasting impression of warmth and sincerity and above all, a dedication to ideals that, strangely enough, suddenly seemed much more attainable.

—DILIP BOBB with the Prime Minister's party

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USSR

A Separate Reality

LIFE behind the Iron Curtain is a far cry from the apocryphal image that is painted so vigorously in the west, as Associate Editor DILIP BOBB *discovered on his recent visit to that country, during which he met a wide cross section of Soviet society. His report:*

A JEANS-CLAD couple is locked in amorous embrace in a park framed by the russet splendour of a late setting sun. A few hundred yards away, more elegantly dressed couples gyrate to the husky, breathless voice of Tina Turner in a strobe-patterned basement discotheque. Higher up, on the slopes of the city, a young man glides along on a skateboard, oblivious to the track-suited joggers around him Paris? London? Washington? The answer, surprising as it may seem to some, is Moscow.

Thanks to the hyperactive imagination of spy fiction writers and the lack of objectivity in much of the western media, the popular image of the Soviet Union is of a dark and depressing dungeon peopled by Homburg-hatted apparatchiks and grimy, ill-clad workers bowed down with the weight of an overbearing and stifling system. The truth, apparent even on the briefest of visits to that country, is somewhat different. The Soviet Union may not be the workers' paradise that party propagandists extol so tortuously, but it is still a distant whimper from the dank and gloomy portrait that is so often painted.

The only visibly depressing feature is the heavy, Gothic facade of the older buildings. But the less populated parts of Moscow, like the Lenin Hills, with its orderly rows of apple blossom trees and well-manicured lawns, is as beautiful and inspiring as any comparable feature in the west. The people, especially the young, are gaily and fashionably dressed, though jeans predominate and are still very much a status symbol.

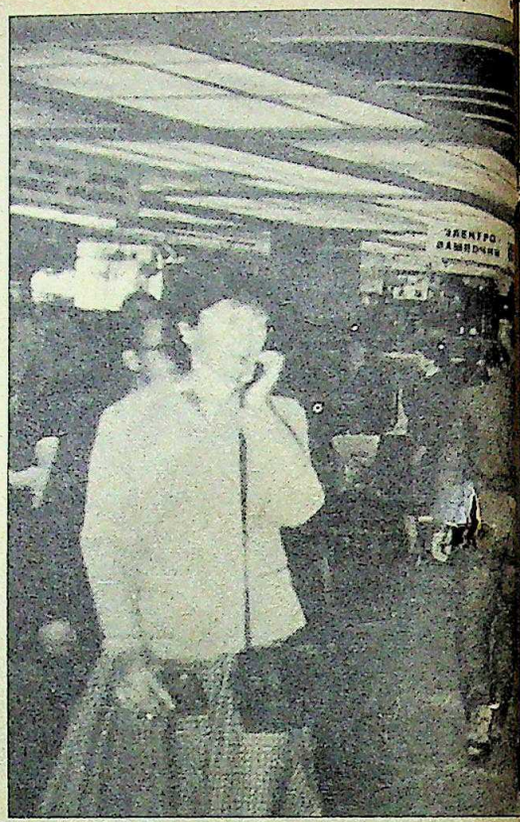
The GUM (pronounced Ghoom) and other department stores are laid out like their western counterparts with escalators leading to different departments and are well stocked with East European products which, though not as varied and imaginatively packed and displayed as their western equivalents, are adequate for a society unbombarded with television advertising and unworshipful of conspicuous consumption.

But even for those who are and can afford the premium prices, there are the so-called "dollar shops" which sell Japanese electronic goods, French perfume, German television sets and Italian footwear. Though officially meant for tourists, the fact that the dollar on the flourishing black market fetches around four roubles as against the official price of virtual parity (one rouble = Rs 14) is enough indication that, even in the Soviet Union, where there is a will, there will be a way.

Contrary to popular myth, Soviet citizens can—and do—own their own apartments through a cooperative housing system, though all land is state-owned. For the last few years, housing and city planning has been given top priority and the massive condominiums that dominate the skylines of most Soviet cities are the most enduring image of the country. To ensure that population does not outpace availability, there are laws that prevent citizens of one city from migrating to another though there are no restrictions on them visiting other cities. Rents are controlled and cheap. A three-room apartment in Moscow with a kitchen, bathroom, central heating, gas and other basic amenities costs around 20 roubles a month while a two-room apartment goes for around nine roubles. The average wage for a skilled worker is well over 200 roubles a month. Incentives and bonuses are additional. The only tax Soviets pay is a direct income tax which is 8 per cent for those earning 150 roubles and less and 13 per cent for those earning more than that amount.

The Soviet Union may not be the workers' paradise that party propagandists extol, but it is still a distant cry from the dank and gloomy portrait that is so often painted.

The Soviet system is based on social pricing which ensures that the costs of necessities like bread and foodstuffs are kept to a minimum and have been for the last decade. Beef, the most popular dish in a Soviet house—the Soviet appetite and capacity for meat is as prodigious as their consumption of vodka—costs just over two roubles a kilo while chicken and mutton cost slightly more. There are, again contrary to popular myth, no serpentine queues in front of food stores and only a very few items are in seasonal short supply. The Soviets produce champagne and cognac that is as good as anything produced in the French regions they are named after and their ice cream and confectionery, especially cakes and chocolates, are comparable to the best.



Travel by public transport must be the cheapest in the world and the streets are well-maintained and clean. On the famed and awe-inspiring Moscow Metro stations which are more like museums with chandeliers and ancient statues and frescoes, an all-day ticket is 50 kopeks (half a rouble) and has been for the last three decades. The ticket also entitles the holder to travel on any other form of public transport like buses, trams or electric trolley cars, all very efficiently run. The Moscow Metro celebrated its 50th anniversary last fortnight and it is a tribute to its engineering that the only accident on the system in all that time was when a newly-installed escalator collapsed. The state airline, Aeroflot, must be constantly in the red considering the ridiculously low air fares. A ticket from Moscow to Tashkent, a distance of almost 3,500 kilometres, is around 60 roubles. Airports around the country are, not surprisingly,

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DILIP BOBB

Soviet shoppers in a department store

fairly crowded with travellers. An additional incentive is the fact that hotel accommodation, for locals, is dirt cheap. A hotel room that would set a foreign tourist back by 40 roubles a night costs a Soviet citizen a mere four or five roubles.

Few Soviet citizens feel the need for their own transport though there are an increasing number of private cars on city streets. The choice, however, is limited and relatively expensive. The cheapest car, a Fiat built in collaboration with the Italians costs 9,000 roubles while the only other car available on the open market is the sturdy Volga which carries a price tag of 14,000 roubles. The other two cars produced in the country, the Zil and the Chaika, the former made in a tank factory from bullet-proof material are only available to top officials. The cost of petrol has only recently been raised to around 40 kopeks a litre from its original rate of a mere 25 kopeks.

Every Soviet citizen, from the head of state down to the lowest worker, is decreed by law to take a month's vacation after every 11 months of work. The country is dotted with holiday camps and sanatoriums which cost virtually nothing and are free for children. All education and medical treatment is free for everybody, with the result that most Soviet salaries are spent in buying food or clothes and the rate of savings is one of the highest in the world.

The new Soviet leadership under Gorbachov is obviously bent on relaxing the stranglehold of the state over the citizenry. All over the country, churches and cathedrals are being lovingly restored, an indication that religion is no longer the cardinal crime it was earlier. Even the newer buildings and apartment houses are of a different architecture with more emphasis on colour and design.

The Soviet system is based on social pricing which ensures costs of all basic necessities like bread and foodstuffs are kept to a minimum and have been for the last decade

But there is bad news around the corner, esspecially for Soviet males. Gorbachov has embarked on a serious crackdown on drinking and the anti-alcohol campaign was to start officially from June 1. But its effects are already being felt. For the first time in the history of the Kremlin, no vodka was served at the official banquet given for Rajiv Gandhi and his delegation and the low spirits of Soviet officials indicates that the crackdown has already begun as far as official receptions are concerned.

Gorbachov, however, is obviously justified in his campaign. Though Soviet statistics are unavailable or deceptive, alcoholism is undoubtedly a major problem—the country's per capita consumption of spirits is one of the highest in the world. It has led to a serious drop in industrial productivity and is the single biggest cause of divorce and traffic accidents. The new alcohol-related laws introduce stiffer penalties for drink-related accidents or criminal activities.

The Soviets also have a curious fascination and curiosity about India. Indians living in the Soviet Union—there are 600 in Moscow alone—are treated with special affection and respect. Every Indian one meets has a story to relate of how strangers came up to them in the streets after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and embraced them with tears in their eyes and words of genuine sorrow and regret. It is an obsession that manifests itself in strange and heart-warming ways. In Minsk, a pretty 18-year-old Soviet girl gave a highly creditable performance of Bharatanatyam at a reception for journalists accompanying the prime minister. Later, it transpired that she had never been to India, never had a single lesson in her life and only learnt from watching documentaries and Indian films. Her real name is Marina but she insists that people call her Mira. In the apartment she shares with her mother, a plump, cheerful and hospitable woman, every available space is plastered with pictures she has painted herself and posters relating to India or figurines of Indian gods and goddesses. She has a stack of Indian records and every book on India ever printed in the Soviet Union. Her mother, like mothers anywhere in the world, expresses justifiable concern. "She is such a talented girl but she doesn't want to go to college. All she wants to do is dance. She dances two hours every day and she has only Indian friends. What am I to do with her?" But the exasperation is tinged with a certain pride in her daughter as well.

Other than her daughter's future, the mother has little else to complain about and most Soviet citizens one meets seem fairly happy and content with their lot. Certainly, the Soviet socialist system has what would be considered serious drawbacks in western and democratic societies in terms of freedom and choice, but it is a system that works and works fairly well —after a fashion.

—DILIP BOBB in Moscow

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AKALI DAL

Feuding Factions

WITH the first anniversary of Operation Bluestar approaching, the air in Punjab and neighbouring states was thick with fear and uncertainty. Where and how would the extremists strike next? This question worried many who expected some violent demonstration of the extremists' anger over last year's attack on the Golden Temple. And it was likely that the failure of Baba Joginder Singh's effort to wrest control of the Akali Dal from the party's traditional leadership, had added to the extremists' frustration.

The Akali power struggle dominated Punjab events last fortnight. The tortuous unity talks between Baba Joginder Singh and the Akali moderates led by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal came to naught, setting the stage for a confrontation in which the Longowal camp appeared to have come out on top, at least for the time being. Longowal's earlier resignation from the Dal presidentship, misconstrued by newspapers and others as capitulation to the extremists, served notice that Longowal was no longer willing to be used as cat's-paw by the extremists. At the same time it spurred the party delegates into taking an open stand against Baba Joginder Singh's committee and the forces it appeared to represent.

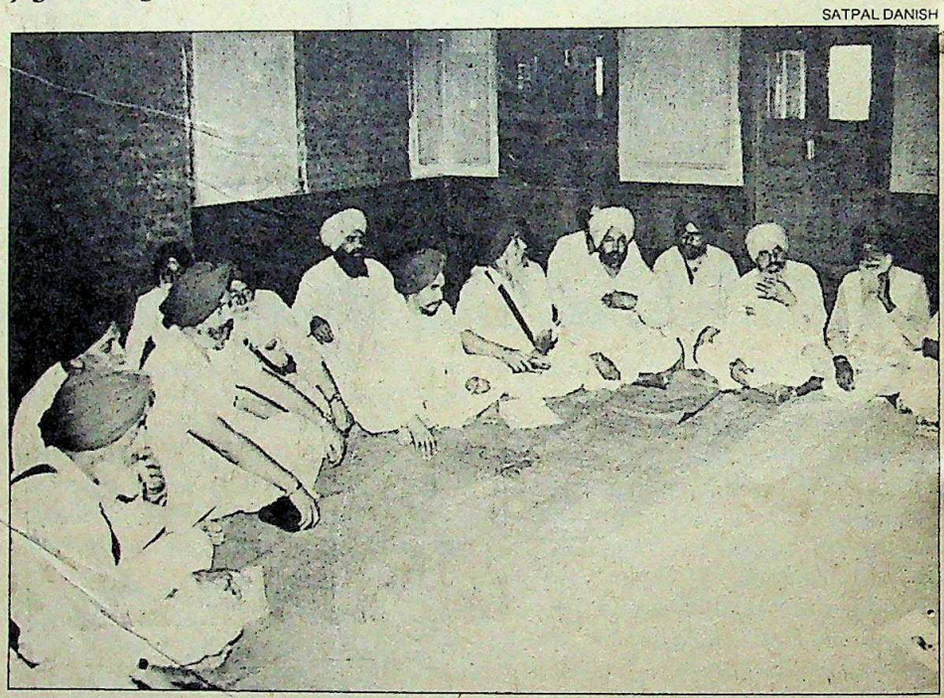
In the long run this development may prove to be a watershed in the Akali Dal's recent history. In the first few days after his resignation it had seemed that Longowal had bought trouble. This was because no one was sure whether SGPC chief G.S. Tohra and former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal would support him in the face of threats by the extremists. Badal in fact stayed away from many meetings addressed by Longowal, particularly a party conference at Bhawanigarh in Sangrur, where Tohra made it clear from the stage that he had thrown his lot with Longowal. The vacillating Badal declared his hand only after the Amritsar meeting on May 22 in which 23 out of 26 district jathedars rejected Longowal's resignation and spurned the ad hoc committee. "No single individual has a right to dissolve the Akali Dal," said the jathedars in a resolution. Confided Badal to INDIA TODAY a week later: "I cannot think of joining Baba's group, I would rather renounce politics and stay home. I cannot align myself with those whose politics I do not share. I did not go to Bhindranwale even when others were crowding around him." But Badal made it clear that he had high personal regard for Baba Joginder Singh.

Jathedars' meet in Amritsar; and (bottom) Joginder Singh with his ad hoc committee

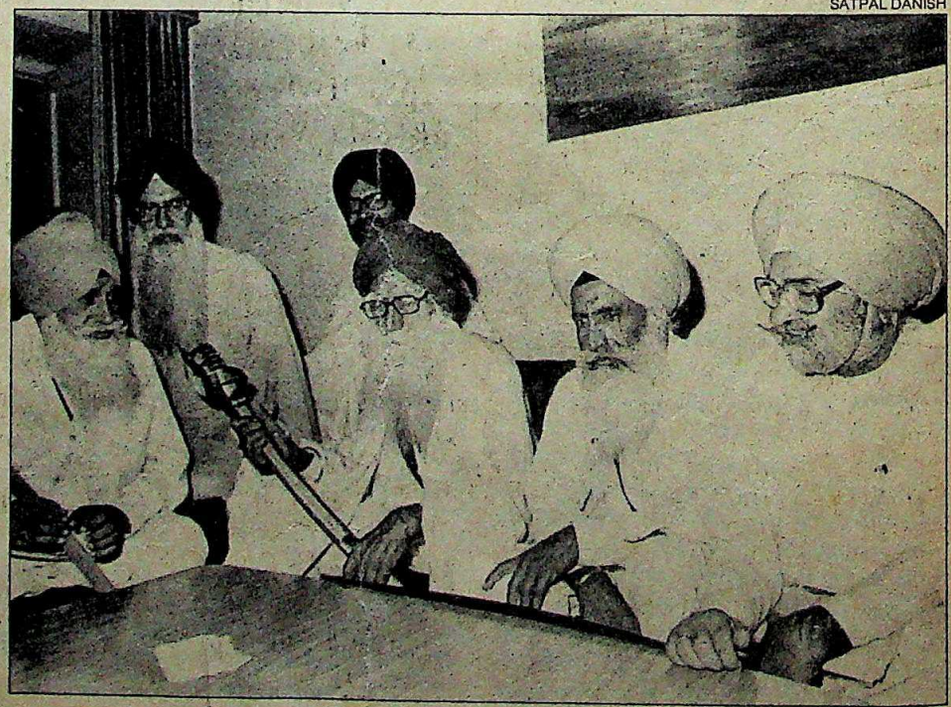
The Baba himself responded to the challenge by calling a meeting of the truncated ad hoc committee and chastising the moderates for betraying the panth for petty gains. He expanded the committee and included many of Badal's former supporters, some MLA's and two former army generals. But very soon cracks became apparent and dissonant voices were heard from a faction of the All India Sikh Students Federation and the Damdami Taksal (which Bhindranwale had headed) against some members named by the Baba on the expanded committee.

This parting of ways between Baba Joginder Singh and Longowal's moderates

SATPAL DANISH



SATPAL DANISH



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BABA JOGINDER SINGH

"God will grant us sense"

FOR ALL intents and purposes he looks a sturdy, simple farmer well past his ploughing days. And he behaves like any crusty octogenarian would in a Punjab village. But there the resemblance ends. Baba Joginder Singh, 83, who was recently catapulted centre stage in Akali politics, is no ordinary peasant. He is the inheritor of a tumultuous legacy left behind by his son Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In a dynastic reversal he has stepped into his son's shoes and in the process created innumerable problems for the traditional Akali leadership, much as his son Jarnail Singh had done in his lifetime. In a bloodless coup, the Baba ousted the moderate Akali President Harchand Singh Longowal and named himself acting head of an ad hoc committee dominated by followers of the Bhindranwale creed.

But this time the Akali leaders decided to fight back and forced the party to take a stand against the hardliners. Longowal resigned, and so did former chief minister P.S. Badal and SGPC *chief G.S. Tohra. But district jathedars of the Akali Dal rejected Sant Longowal's resignation, as did the* SGPC *working committee with Tohra's. Badal too was directed to stay on as leader of the Akali legislature party. In this way the moderate sections of the Akali Dal made it clear they would not buckle under threats of extremists and hardliners who have had Punjab at gunpoint these past few months. The ball was now back in the extremist court and the people of Punjab waited to see how the Baba and his committee would react to this unexpected challenge from the moderate camp. Correspondent* GOBIND THUKRAL *met Baba Joginder Singh twice in Amritsar to elicit his views on the challenge from the moderates. Excerpts:*

Q. *Was it proper for you to dissolve the two Akali Dals and form an ad hoc committee under your own stewardship?*

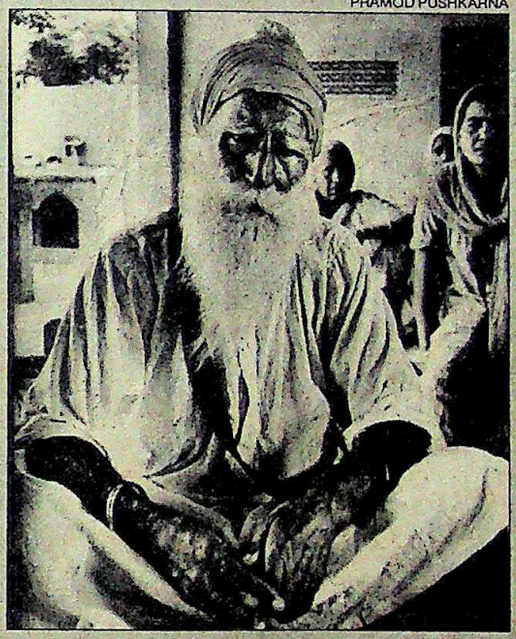
A. Both Longowal and Talwandi had given me in writing that they would take whatever steps I thought best to bring unity in the panth at this critical and crucial hour and I decided to merge these two Dals and form a real Akali Dal, an organisation of martyrs and not self-seekers. I included all major leaders in the committee whose convenor was former IPS officer Simranjit Singh Mann.

Q. *Why are these leaders staying away from this committee?*

A. It is their smallness. They will realise their mistake soon.

Q. *But what is the reason behind their rejecting your committee?*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



> "How can we shake hands with a person whose hands are soaked in our blood"

A. You ask them. How would I know it?

Q. *The meeting of district and state presidents of the Akali Dal have rejected your ad hoc committee.*

A. This meeting of the district leaders was not proper. They could not take up the issue of resignation of Longowal or the ad hoc committee after I merged the two Dals and formed the ad hoc committee. These leaders had ceased to hold their offices. They have no locus standi. Longowal and Talwandi had ceased to be presidents of their respective Dals after I merged them and announced the ad hoc committee.

Q. *Do you think your efforts to unite the Akali leaders will succeed?*

A. I have tried but with no success. It is painful. The chances of unity are not much but I have not given up. God will grant us some sense.

Q. *District presidents have appealed to you to join the Sikh mainstream and work for the glory of the panth.*

A. I am already in the mainstream. Ever since I remember I have been in the service of the panth, participating in the morchas in my own humble way and what else am I doing now?

Q. *You had a long meeting with Akali leaders at Chandigarh. Did anything come out of it?*

A. Nothing.

Q. *Why?*

A. Many of them are sticklers for their positions. They wanted me to dissolve the committee and accept their faction as the sole Akali Dal.

Q. *Will you hold more meetings with them?*

A. I do not mind meeting anybody but these should not be talking sessions. We must realise the gravity of the situation which the Sikhs and the country face.

Q. *What is your political programme?*

A. *Khalse da bolbala Khalse di charhdi kala* (Glory to the Sikhs).

Q. *I am asking about your political programme.*

A. Justice and peace in the country and the struggle for the acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib resolution.

Q. *If the Government invites you for talks, will you go?*

A. (After a pause) Are you pleading the case of the Government? How can I tell you?

Q. *What is the way out to solve the Punjab problem? Don't you agree that issues can be best resolved through talks and not otherwise?*

A. Only justice can ensure peace. How can one talk to an oppressor? The Delhi Government has indulged in the genocide of Sikhs. How can we shake hands with a person whose hands are soaked in our blood? Let the Government do us justice and the situation will normalise.

Q. *What exactly should the Government do?*

A. I say it should do justice and stop oppression.

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came after two abortive meetings in which various formulae for unity were discussed. One proposal was to run the party by a five-member presidium comprising Longowal, Tohra, Badal, Talwandi and the Baba's son, Jagjit Singh Rode. This was not acceptable. The emerging confrontation in Akali politics seemed to move even a newspaper like the *Akali Patrika* of Jalandhar to anger. The paper which had once leant powerful support to Bhindranwale, complained editorially that "people who have no standing among the Sikhs have encircled the Baba and are using him for their own nefarious ends". This barb was apparently aimed at Jagdev Singh Talwandi who is believed to be the brain behind the move to "merge" the two Akali factions and sideline Longowal. Talwandi was not the only one accused of using the Baba. A similar charge was being made against former chief minister Darbara Singh and some other Congress (I) leaders, including Zora Singh Brar, Tarlochan Singh Riyasti and a former bureaucrat N.S. Meetha. The latter met the Baba's son Jagjit Singh in jail a couple of days before he was released. Jagjit Singh had then rushed to Amritsar to be present at the May 1 formation of the ad hoc committee which was set up to replace the Akali Dal.

But last fortnight Longowal proved his support in the party and distanced himself from the hardliners giving the Central Government a chance to think about resuming negotiations on the Punjab problem. A Central leader admitted that the Government had to wait for the Akali squabble to settle down before it took the next step. Recovering from gunshot wounds in Amritsar, AICC (I) General Secretary Raghunandan Lal Bhatia echoed the same thought: "All we want is that Akali politics should be settled. As long as it remains fluid the Punjab problem cannot be solved."

But this policy of waiting for the Akalis to sort out their differences did not find favour with Punjabi Forum leader I.K. Gujral. "The Government is asking for trouble if it adopts an attitude of sitting back and letting the gladiators fight it out. The trouble between the extremists and Akali moderates will continue and this should not delay any steps the Centre is prepared to take to solve the Punjab problem." Agreed Punjabi writer and academician Dr Attar Singh: "With people dilly-dallying, the situation is slipping out of hand every day."

He and others in Punjab are worried about the communal turn that incidents of terrorist violence are beginning to take. This happened when Hindus in Hindu-majority towns of Dhariwal and Hoshiarpur, retaliated against Sikhs following extremist attacks on Hindu leaders of the Congress(I) and Lok Dal. Hoshiarpur remained tense and under curfew more than a week after the May 10 shooting of Lok Dal leader Balbir Singh. This was followed by some violence at Ludhiana in which property was looted and damaged. The fragile communal peace that had prevailed in Punjab even after the November 1984 killings in Delhi, was beginning to crack.

Part of the reason is that militant bodies like the Punjab Shiv Sena have been distributing trishuls and other arms to the youth to confront terrorists. "We too are raising squads to match the terrorists," the fiery Shiv Sena chief tells his audiences. This reverse Bhindranwaleism may not daunt the terrorists but it creates adversarial feelings which erupt into the kind of communal incidents witnessed at Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur and Dhariwal.

Asserts Gujral: "The feeling of insecurity of Hindus in Punjab and Sikhs outside have reached a stage where unified action is now needed. The majority community inside and outside Punjab has to play a greater role to assure the security and dignity of the minority."

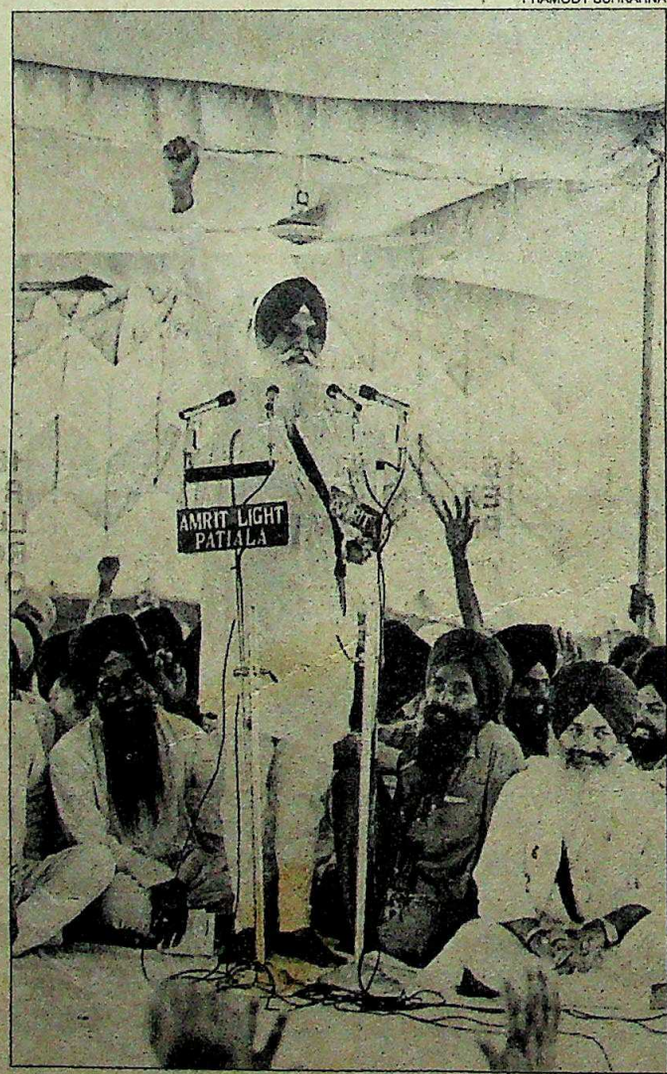
Amidst all this the one thing that keeps hope of a solution alive are the statements of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that the Government would go to any length to find a way out of the morass that is Punjab. "But declarations are not enough," says Gujral. "He must see to it that his decisions are implemented. Rajiv had seized the political initiative, now he is losing it." It was unclear whether Rajiv would take the initiative again in the brief period between his return from Moscow and his departure for France and the United States in early June. But just before embarking on his Soviet tour, he had called in former external affairs minister Swaran Singh for a long discussion. Singh on his part would not say what transpired at the meeting. But he did come away with the impression that Rajiv appeared to be genuinely keen on a speedy settlement.

Meanwhile most people realised that the terrorists could be waiting to strike again in the first week of June. So did Longowal who in an appeal for peace asked all Akalis only to organise prayers at home and gurudwaras in memory of Sikhs killed during and after Operation Bluestar. "At no cost provoke or get provoked," he warned. Longowal ended his appeal with a significant sentence: "I want to tell the people of the world that we go only by the directive of the Gurus—all are brothers here. There is no outsider among us." The message was clear, as also the direction in which it was aimed.

—RAMINDAR SINGH with GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

Tohra expresses support for Longowal (extreme right) at Bhawanigarh

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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SIKH TERRORISTS

Foiled Plot

MURDER and mayhem are no strangers to the world of the Punjab extremist. But if police reports are to be believed, one group of terrorists was recently thwarted in its plans to deal what by any standards would have been a deadly blow: attempts on the lives of President Zail Singh and other top Central leaders. According to a confessional statement of a suspect, the attack on the President was to be made in Patiala, which he was scheduled to visit in March to attend a grandson's wedding. The visit was called off and the plot fell through.

According to intelligence sources, the plot came to light when the police arrested one Ram Singh of Chandigarh last fortnight. He was picked up for his alleged connections with Gurinder Singh, a suspected terrorist who was arrested on May 4. Gurinder, who later died in Chandigarh's Post-Graduate Medical Institute apparently after being tortured by the police, was a prime suspect in the killing of Bharatiya Janata Party leader K.L. Manchanda on March 24. Gurinder's interrogation led to the subsequent arrest of Ram Singh, Kulwant Singh and two others.

According to information received in Delhi, Ram Singh at first seemed to have little information of value. But then, put under pressure by police officials specially sent from Delhi, he disclosed that the group had plans to do away with the President and other important leaders. Ram Singh's confessional statement was sent by the Punjab police to the special branch of Delhi police and has led to the tightening up of security around the President and others.

The report says: "Ram Singh admitted to being a member of the extremist group led by Gurinder Singh alias Sander Singh who was arrested by the Chandigarh police." Kulwant Singh had earlier told his interrogators that the group had plans to kill various VIP's but Ram Singh refers specifically to a plot to "assassinate the President of India". According to the police report, Ram Singh is said to have admitted that he and his associates carried several firearms including a Sten gun, three pistols and four hand-grenades on a reconnoitering trip to Patiala and had decided to make their attempt when he passed beneath a welcome gate erected near the rest-house of the Public Works Department.

The confessional statement also talks about terrorist contacts in the Punjab police when it says that the "Sten gun was to be operated by Harjit Singh, a police constable from Ludhiana, who was to be on duty in police uniform near the gate". It is not clear whether Harjit was a policeman or was to masquerade as one.

Although the President has, along with others, been on the extremist hit list, no concrete evidence of any plans had come to light so far. Even so, it has been felt unsafe for him to travel to Punjab and he was obliged to miss the Patiala wedding on the insistence of security officials. Obviously the caution was justified. The first inkling came in a daily bulletin of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) soon after the arrest of Gurinder Singh and his fellow conspirators. The IB, which has made some inroads into the extremist network in Punjab, had reported the possibility of a terrorist attempt on the President's life.

HARI OM GULATI

Ram Singh disclosed that the group had plans to do away with the President and other important leaders.

Ram Singh's disclosures have already created problems in the faction-ridden Punjab Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (PPCC-I). A section of the PPCC(I), led by the state's Youth Congress president, Pratap Singh Bajwa, has already alleged in public that Gurinder Singh was a known protege of PPCC(I) chief Santokh Singh Randhawa. Bajwa and his men last month made a representation to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi alleging that the two—Gurinder and Randhawa—were very close. Randhawa has denied these allegations as being baseless.

But, four of Gurinder's associates rushed to New Delhi soon after his arrest in what is interpreted to be an attempt to get a top functionary of the Congress(I) to intercede with the police on his behalf. The four not only found themselves a room in Punjab Bhawan, they were also seen at a meeting of the All India Congress(I) Committee which was then in plenary session. Although their presence was spotted by an AICC(I) office-bearer, they were able to get away without any problem.

The Bajwa faction alleged in its memorandum that the Gurinder gang was all set to weed out those Congressmen who were against the ruling faction within the PPCC(I) which is led by Randhawa. In a countermove, the Randhawa group has charged the Bajwa faction of harbouring terrorists and, indeed, admitting them into the party's youth wing. The allegations and counter-allegations have not been taken lightly by the party which has instructed Governor Arjun Singh to look into them.

This is the first time that such accusations have been traded by the ruling party's opposing factions. Interestingly, the police suspects that the ammunition used by Gurinder's gang in an encounter with the police on May 4, when two constables were killed, was similar to the ammunition recovered after the attempt on the life of AICC(I) General Secretary R.L. Bhatia on April 19 in Amritsar. According to a statement made by Jalandhar police chief S. Virk, the constables were killed by .45 Colts. Similar bullets were recovered after the attack on Bhatia and the murder of three others the same day.

The Akali Dal led by Harchand Singh Longowal has been demanding a judicial inquiry into the role of the Congress(I) in the recent killings in Punjab, convinced that they are a result of its internal squabbles. The ruling party will have to do more than offer platitudes if these bizarre allegations are to be properly refuted.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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THE PRESIDENT

A Communication Gap

FOR WEEKS, the two had not met, and the press had begun to speculate on the reasons. Now Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was getting ready to visit the Soviet Union. President Zail Singh seemed to expect that the prime minister would come calling before the visit, for he left some gaps in his daily calendar of appointments. But no meeting materialised.

This is not the first time that a prime minister has gone on a state visit without first calling on the President: Mrs Gandhi did it a couple of times. But then she made up by reporting to the President after the visits. And the question now lingered: would Rajiv Gandhi ask for a meeting after he was back in Delhi?

Whether he does or doesn't, all the signs point to a lack of proper communication, perhaps even a rift, between the head of state and the head of government. The last time they met before their chance coming together at a function to mark the 21st death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru was in late March, at the formal swearing-in of Chandrashekhar Singh as textile minister. And the last time Rajiv formally called on the President was even further back in history, in mid-February. Since then, a great deal has happened in the country: the failure of Rajiv's Baisakhi initiative, the bomb blasts in north India, the Government's foreign policy initiative in relation to its neighbours, and the budget session of Parliament. On none of these, it seemed, had the prime minister considered it necessary to personally brief the President.

To add grist to the mill, Zail Singh's state visit to Zimbabwe and Zambia in mid-May had been called off at the Government's initiative, but Rajiv had merely spoken to the President on the telephone and sent Minister of State for External Affairs Khurshid Alam Khan to inform the President of the reasons for this decision. The decision itself was taken on May 8, but announced only two days later, on the evening of the bomb blasts. And the official reason, first disclosed as "reasons of state", was subsequently changed to "urgent affairs of state"—a terminological shift whose final significance remains quite obscure.

The use of Khurshid Alam Khan as an emissary fits into a pattern, for Rajiv's normal channel of communication with the President in other contexts has been his Parliamentary Secretary, Arun Singh. And on the Punjab issue, K.C. Pant briefed the President once on May 13. But the President can hardly be happy with a situation where he has to deal with the prime minister's aides, and not the prime minister himself. And Pant is no substitute for the Punjab Governor, Arjun Singh, who has yet to call on the President after he was sworn in last March.

Other unreported events have contributed to the growing pile of evidence suggesting that all is not well between Rashtrapati Bhavan and South Block. Zail Singh had hoped to visit Udhagamangalam in Tamil Nadu and Darjeeling in West Bengal, but the arrangements were not made promptly enough, and he had to give up his travel plans. The only exception to this list of aborted trips was the President's planned visit to Mount Abu from May 29 to 31. But the nagging question remained: why was the Government seemingly anxious to keep the President in New Delhi?

> **All the signs point to a lack of proper communication, perhaps even a rift, between the head of state and head of government.**

Several conjectures have been made in the press about the reasons for the apparent rift. Zail Singh was upset at the fact that while bravery awards were being given to defence personnel the official press release referred to the role played by some of them in Operation Bluestar. This was despite such a mention being removed from the formal citation. Zail Singh complained to Rajiv Gandhi on this issue, but no convincing explanation has apparently been forthcoming.

From the South Block point of view, media reports have mentioned allegations that politicians close to Zail Singh visited Bhindranwale's step-brother, Jagjit Singh Rode, in Sangrur jail before the formation of the ad hoc committee headed by Baba Joginder Singh, Bhindranwale's father. There is also the case cited of Inderjit Singh Sekhon, initially appointed secretary of the committee, who had in the past been Zail Singh's election agent and who in his application for release from detention under the National Security Act had detailed his "services" to the Congress(I) and Zail Singh.

Whether these mean anything or not is of course far from clear. Any Punjab politician is bound to have numerous historical links with people whose current alliances may be less than desirable. And the President has told his confidants that many of the people who are supposed to be acting on his behalf had turned against him some time ago, including Sekhon. Some of them had in fact submitted memorandums against Zail Singh to Mrs Gandhi. One presidential aide added that extremists cannot be visited in jail without government permission. Nevertheless, the President has been sufficiently worried by the rumours about him to instruct the Government that he does not want to see any intelligence reports on Punjab. This may or may not have something to do with the charges aired privately and in the media that information was in fact being leaked out from Rashtrapati Bhavan to various elements in Punjab.

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Sources close to the President say that the rift with the prime minister has little to do with Punjab, on which issue Zail Singh is in the unenviable position of being denounced by the Akalis as being a government stooge, and by some people in government for having promoted Bhindranwale in the past. By this account, the rift relates to what is apparently an underlying lack of trust.

The President is known to have attributed the lack of mutual trust to the activities of some prime ministerial aides. As for the pinpricks, one example is the Government's refusal to extend the term in Delhi of I.S. Bindra, joint secretary to the President. Zail Singh asked for the extension three times, but the Government has stuck to its guns and argued that Bindra's five-year term in Delhi is over, and that he should now revert to his Punjab cadre. Matters have not been improved by the Government's clearing of the extension by a year of the services of the Secretary to the President, A.C. Bandhopadhyaya.

But the issue that has brought matters to a boil is the debate in the Lok Sabha on two overseas Sikhs with alleged pro-Khalistan views who were supposed to have stayed in Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1983 as Zail Singh's guests (INDIA TODAY, May 15). The President is understood to have listened to the comments in Parliament on the direct microphone system linked to Rashtrapati Bhavan, then waited for the official transcripts of the speeches, and then complained to the prime minister. Reliable sources say the President felt that the debate should not have been allowed to take place, and that on a similar occasion in the past when Parliament wanted to discuss the conduct of then President N. Sanjiva Reddy, he (Zail Singh) as home minister had prevailed on Mrs Gandhi to prevent such a debate. He is also believed to have pointed out that the question did not relate to Zail Singh as a person but to the institution of the presidency, which should be kept above controversy.

The prime minister's response to this extraordinary and perhaps unprecedented complaint was curt, and apparently delayed. Rajiv Gandhi merely pointed out that he could not stifle parliamentary debate, and that MP's were free to speak their mind. That could hardly have improved relations between the two, though Rajiv later told the President that K.K. Tiwari, the Congress(I) MP who raised the issue, had been advised not to repeat his performance.

Meanwhile, advisers with access to Rajiv Gandhi have taken note of the fact that the President was meeting numerous leaders of the ruling party, especially old Sanjay Gandhi loyalists. The suspicion may well have arisen as to whether the President was winning the confidence of Congress(I) "dissidents".

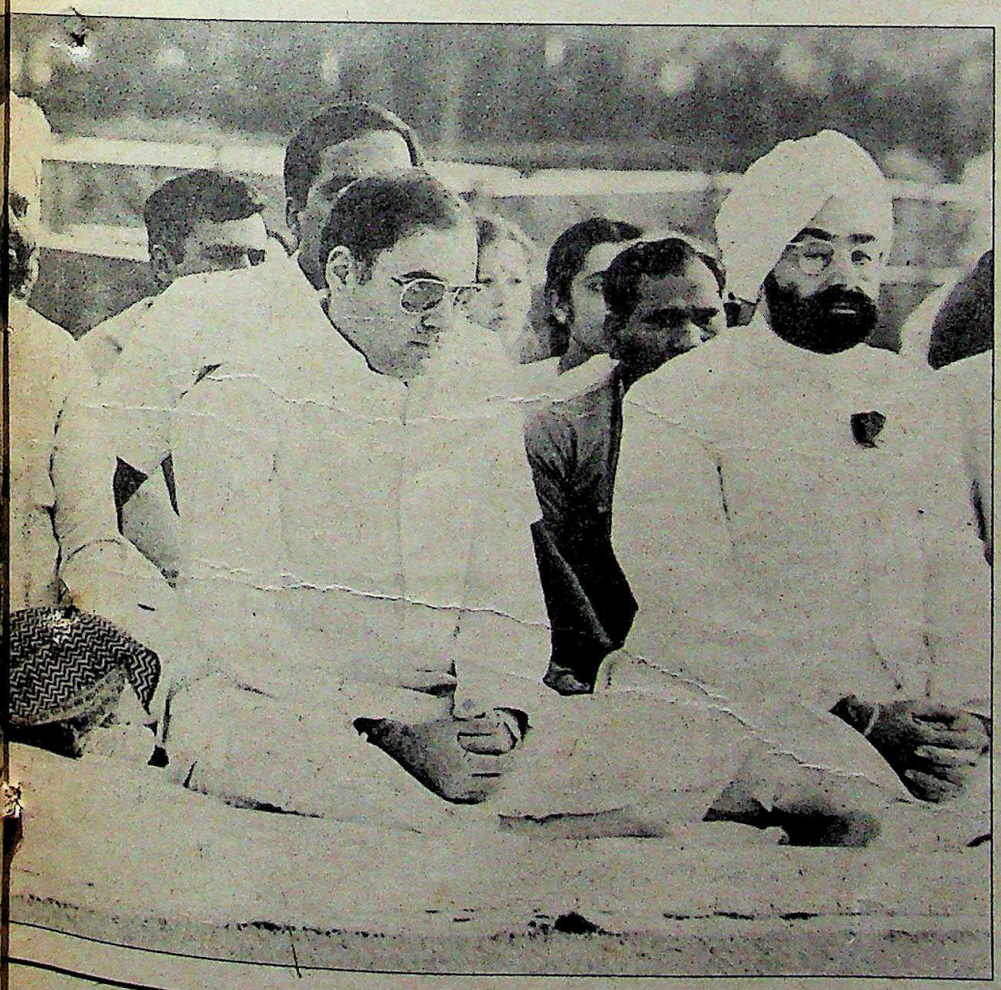
In Zail Singh's defence, it is argued that he has from the beginning made himself accessible to hopeful callers, and that his meetings with members of Parliament are no more than a part of this consciously adopted presidential style. Nevertheless, the interpretations being given to his meetings with Congress(I) leaders have clearly reached Zail Singh, for suddenly he has reduced his meetings with MP's from the ruling party. His daily list of appointments makes the change in attitude abundantly clear.

While some aides close to the President have given an indication of Zail Singh's mind on these and other issues, what the prime minister thinks remains a secret. Nevertheless, stray remarks by Rajiv Gandhi's aides indicate that the prime minister may have revised his understanding of the role being played by the President in current affairs.

If the conclusion is inescapable that there is trouble at the top, there is as yet no indication of how serious it is, or whether the relationship between the two might yet take a turn for the better. This is not the first time that a President and prime minister have had their differences: Rajendra Prasad had a sharp conflict of views with Nehru on the changes in Hindu personal law, Mrs Gandhi bridled at some of the advice given to her by S. Radhakrishnan, and there was little love lost between N. Sanjiva Reddy and Morarji Desai in the closing months of the Janata Government. In the immediate context, a President with a rustic background who has had a long innings as a politician of the old school may also find himself out of step with a government run essentially by urban sophisticates. Whether the current differences and suspicions relate to something beyond such inconsequential circumstances and whether it surpasses the level of differences between earlier presidents and prime ministers is now the key question. So the always delicate relationship between the head of state and the head of government in a still evolving democracy might well make for more headlines in the coming weeks.

—PRABHU CHAWLA and RAJU SANTHANAM

Rajiv and Zail Singh at Shanti Vana: drifting apart



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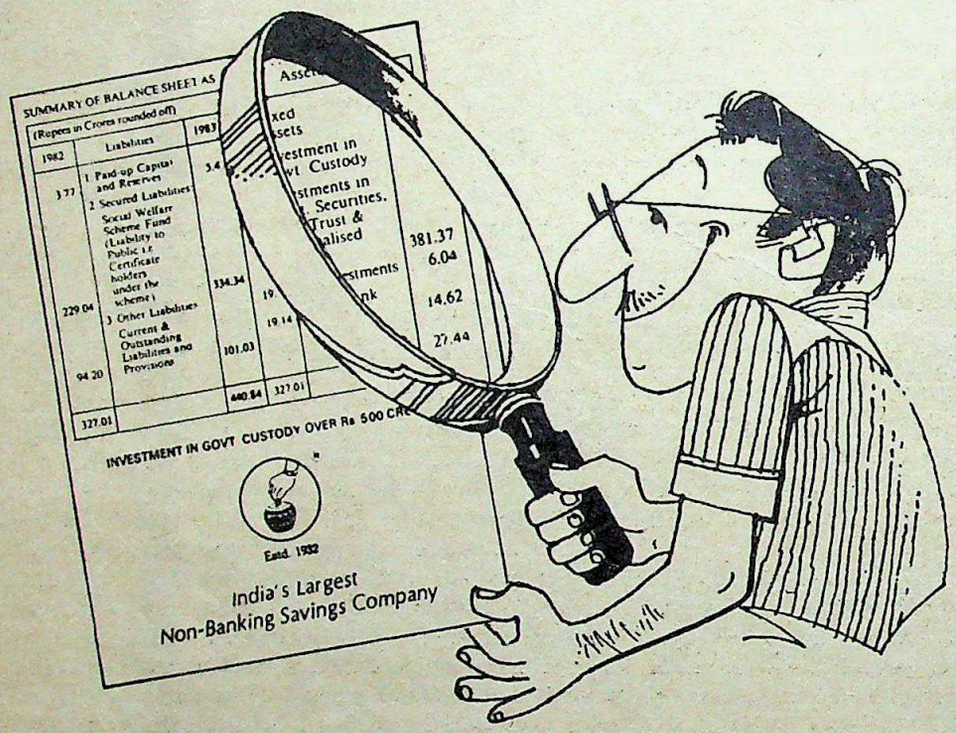

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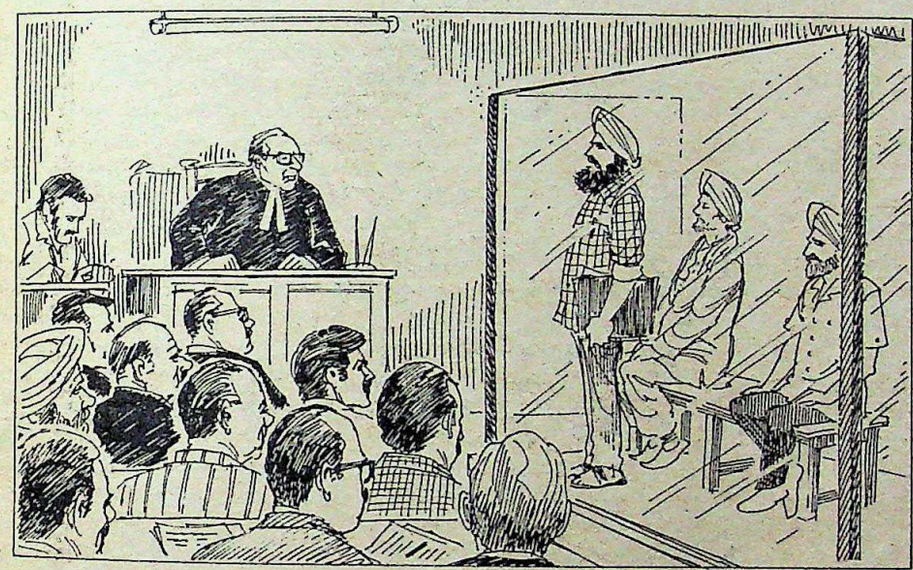
ASSASSINATION TRIAL

A Slow Process

THEY were a study in contrasts as they sat on a bench inside the bullet-proof booth. At one end was constable Satwant Singh, alleged assassin of Mrs Gandhi, looking younger than his 22 years, with tufts of hair around his chin in an otherwise clean face. His blue *pugree* and flowing cream Pathan-style salwar-kameez were striking enough but what held the eye was an open saffron *pugree* draped around his neck. His intense eyes kept darting around the courtroom and were not afraid to look people in the eye, but he still seemed restless and bored. His knowledge of English is known to be fragmentary but he was following enough of what was being said to occasionally call his lawyer, P.N. Lekhi, and whisper something in his ears. When he got up he moved so effortlessly it seemed his body had adjusted to the one bullet still lodged in his spine.



In the middle was Delhi Police sub-inspector Balbir Singh. Dressed in a check bush shirt, he had allowed his beard to grow into an unruly mop which made his stout face look even bigger and gave his eyes a fierce look. Language was no problem with him—on the third day he addressed the judge in faultless English, but he was clearly living in a world of his own. He carried with him a file containing a sheaf of papers on which he was constantly scribbling away furiously. (Tihar jail sources say he has been writing tomes on the 'maltreatment' of Sikhs.)

Sitting a little away from the two, dressed in a nondescript old shirt and trousers, was Kehar Singh, uncle of Beant Singh, the other assassin of Mrs Gandhi who was killed. Sitting more upright than most at his age can manage, he was keenly watching the proceedings and appeared to be the only one of the three who was following the trend of arguments in court.

For a court that is to try those accused of killing a prime minister, even the conditions were anything but regal. Security reasons dictated that the trial had to be held inside maximum security prison No. 3 in the Tihar jail, where the undertrials are lodged. A box-like room, barely 400 sq ft, with three windows which too remain shut for security reasons, was converted into a makeshift courtroom. When the Additional Sessions Judge, Mahesh Chandra, the battery of lawyers, relatives of the accused and media representatives—40 people on an average each day, took their place in the small room it seemed to further shrink in size.

Clearly, the authorities were taking no chances. A truck-load of policemen were stationed at the inner gate of the jail premises. A plainclothesman took down the addresses and names and collected copies of photographs of reporters allowed to attend the trial. Every vehicle entering the jail premises was stopped and thoroughly checked. Everybody was frisked at the door of the courtroom and then checked by a metal detector. In the courtroom, the three accused were herded into a bullet-proof booth, approximately 24 sq ft, with a narrow entrance from the end facing the wall to the left of the judge.

The setting was striking enough but the beginning of the trial into the assassination of Mrs Gandhi was bogged down in procedural wranglings. Four hearings were held last fortnight but the prosecution did not even get the chance to show its hand. Still, drama was not lacking. When security men objected to the presence of Satwant's father, Tirlochan Singh, and were preventing him from entering the courtroom on the first day of the hearings, Lekhi too refused to enter the court in protest till Singh was allowed in. "Let them hold the trial without me," he railed.

That day the court sat for barely 20 minutes, Chandra having to adjourn the proceedings because no lawyer seemed ready to defend Balbir Singh. But the little time was enough for Lekhi to show that he was going to try every trick in the trade. First he brought to the attention of the court that he had not been served with a formal notice indicating the start of the proceedings. When Chandra offered to issue a fresh notice, Lekhi shot back: "The court is ignorant about the rules." Then he moved an application on Satwant's behalf arguing that Satwant and the others should be discharged because Desraj Kakkar, member of the CBI team headed by Anand Ram investigating the case, had not been appointed to the team through a gazette notification nor under the relevant section of the Delhi Police Act of 1978. The prosecution lawyers successfully countered the charge but it was clear that Lekhi would be looking for every possible legal loophole.

When the court met a week later, Balbir was still to get a lawyer. Asked by Chandra whether he had decided on a lawyer, Balbir replied: "I do not trust strangers." The court wrote to the registrar to appoint a lawyer but Balbir had still not got one and it seemed the issue could become intractable.

On the third day of the proceedings, Kehar Singh's wife moved an application that her son, Rajinder Singh, had been wrongfully detained under the National Security Act. Kehar Singh's lawyer, P.P. Grover, pleaded that the court should initiate contempt of court proceedings against three officials of the Anand Ram team on the grounds that

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Rajinder Singh had been detained on the basis of a "forged" order.

Lekhi has clearly decided that offence is the best defence. Early last month Satwant Singh filed an application denying having made a confession on December 1, 1984, and claiming that his signature had been forged on the statement. Charging the prosecution with fabricating evidence, he said: "The bullets came from many directions. But the prosecution does not look into other directions. I am surprised." Lekhi also told pressmen that he was going to raise the issue of a "missing" assassin and that he would be contesting the authenticity of the post-mortem on Mrs Gandhi. Even the media was not spared: Lekhi also castigated the press for referring to Satwant as the "lone surviving assassin of Mrs Gandhi". Indicating his perception of the case, Lekhi later said: "We are now entered in a regular trial of a classic murder like that of Kennedy, Gandhi, Liaquat Ali," and then quaintly added, "and also Lord Krishna who died of a political murder 3,000 years ago about which nobody knows."

It is unlikely, however, that Lekhi is going to reopen such an old case: his hands are going to be full in trying to demolish the official version of the assassination. When the hot and cramped courtroom comes alive in the coming weeks it is certain that Satwant will take an even greater interest in the court proceedings.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

GUJARAT

Strife Torn

AS THE turmoil in Gujarat continued for the fourth straight month, the death toll crossed 120—the highest ever in any agitation; even the 1974 Navnirman stir had, at 104, claimed fewer lives. The agitation had started off as a protest against increased reservations but by last fortnight there was no focus to the violence—stray stabbings and arson were the rule. The army was still out in Ahmedabad and Baroda but the violence had spread to Surat, Viramgam, Godhra, Anand, Nadiad, and Kadi and Sidhpur in Mehsana district which has a history of tension between the *savarnas* (higher castes) and Harijans.

Nor was any end to the strife in sight. Negotiations between the Vali Mahamandal and the Navrachna Samiti, leading the anti-reservation agitation, and the Madhavsinh Solanki Government failed as the former insisted on the ordering of a judicial inquiry into police atrocities as a pre-condition for any talks. Asked Dr Gaurang Shah, spokesman of the Samiti: "If the Government is as innocent as it makes itself out to be, why does it hesitate to order an inquiry?" It is certain that there will be trouble when schools reopen in early June.

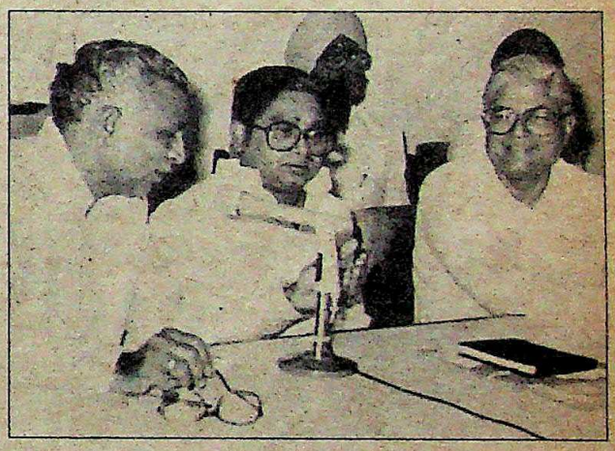
Nor is that all. Barely had the Government heaved a sigh of relief when the panchayat employees and junior doctors called off their strike, when the 3.6 lakh state government employees threatened to go on an indefinite strike from June 7. The employees are demanding abolition of the roster system which gives accelerated promotion to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) employees. In an entirely expected backlash, SC/ST employees filed a writ in the high court asking for a stay of the reported government decision to implement the main recommendations of the Sadhwani Commission, appointed to look into anomalies in the roster system. The commission's findings have gone against the interests of the SC/ST employees.

The long agitation has taken various forms—a caste war, a communal conflict, a people versus the police war—and it was clear that people were taking no chances. Intelligence agencies reported that illegal arms were flooding the state and confirmation of this came quickly as caches of private arms were seized from Ahmedabad, Jamnagar, Porbandar and several small towns in Mehsana district. When fire brigade men rushed to douse an entire slum in the eastern Ahmedabad suburb of Saraspur which was up in flames, they were taken aback when the battling communities opened up a fusillade of bullets. This is the first time that firearms have been used by rioters in Ahmedabad and the police feel that they still had to make many major catches.

The state Government sought to seize the initiative by promulgating an "anti-goonda" ordinance, which gives it powers to detain antisocial elements for one year. The ordinance was welcomed by the people even as some opposition parties made muted protests.

Meanwhile, there was hectic political activity also though most of it went around in predictable circles. In Delhi, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi held a meeting with Gujarat MP's, including from the Opposition, to seek "concrete suggestions". Most of the MP's pleaded for a political solution and some Congress(I) MP's even reportedly made bold to say that Solanki should go. A delegation of opposition MP's, led by Janata Party's Madhu Dandavate, which paid a brief visit to Ahmedabad, also demanded Solanki's dismissal.

Solanki's detractors in Gujarat also turned the heat on him. Jinabhai Darji, once Solanki's political mentor and now leader of the dissidents, wired Rajiv to impose President's rule. Close on his heels, former health minister Manoharsinh Jadeja and former minister of state for education Balwant Munawar lashed out against the Government's sloppy handling of the situation and hinted that Solanki should go. But AICC(I) general secretary Chandulal Chandrakar reiterated that the high command was not thinking on those lines.



Solanki (right) at a meeting with anti-reservationists

Trade and industry were still at a standstill in Ahmedabad as the estimated business loss crossed Rs 350 crore. Fear and distrust still ruled. And perhaps the saddest example of the senseless violence was the death of six-year-old Bina Jhala. Daughter of an accident surveyor in the General Insurance Company, Bina was playing in the centre room of their two-room tenement in Naranpura, when a stray bullet fired by a jawan of the Kerala Armed Police hit her and killed her on the spot. The state of Gujarat was just as pitiable as that of Bina's parents.

—RAMESH MENON

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CONGRESS(S)

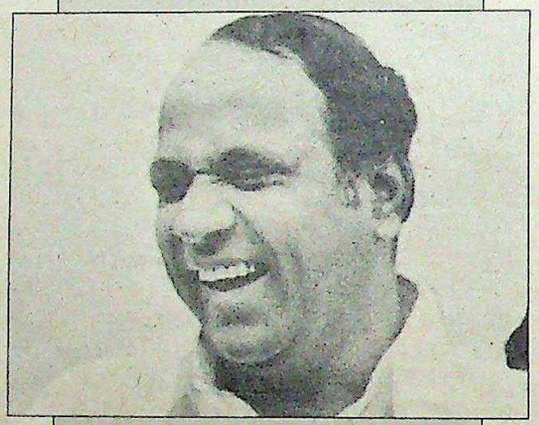
Winds of Change

IN ITS short life of seven-odd years the Congress(S) has been weakened by four splits. Today, it has a bare three MP's in the Lok Sabha and two in the Rajya Sabha. Yet, if the party is still relevant nationally, the credit for this goes largely to its charismatic president, 44-year-old Sharad Govindrao Pawar. But last fortnight it seemed the very future of the party was in question as speculation hit political circles that Pawar was to join the Congress (I) and his party merge into the ruling party. The Congress (S) Working Committee even met to discuss the twin issues (officially, only the "overall political situation in the country" was discussed) but a sharp division within its ranks prevented any decision. Seemingly, the issue will now be decided after a meeting of district-level office-bearers in June. Pawar himself flew off for a three-week trip abroad but it was increasingly evident that Pawar's leaving the party was only a matter of time.

Publicly, of course, the party's leaders were denying any such possibility. When press speculation about this first appeared last month, party Secretary K.P. Unnikrishnan called a press conference to deride the media for carrying "Congress(I)-inspired speculative stories" and announced categorically: "I want to emphatically deny the news appearing in a section of the press that Sharad Pawar has been having talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi or any other Congress (I) leader or that he is going to accept any office." Pawar himself, as cagey as ever, told the media after the working committee meeting on May 18: "I am enjoying the reports about my joining the Congress(I). There is no question because neither have I received any such offer nor have I thought about it."

Rumours about the possible merger were set off by Pawar himself. Speaking at a social function at Pune in April, Pawar asserted that it was only "Congress culture" that could save the country from fragmentation and went on to say that Rajiv Gandhi should be supported by all in solving national problems. INDIA TODAY learns that moves towards a merger originated within the party even earlier. Soon after the Pawar-led Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) failed to dislodge the Congress (I) in the March Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Pawar's followers in the state led by Rajya Sabha MP Suresh Kalmadi started pressurising him to join the Congress (I). Kalmadi, a former Indian Air Force pilot known to have contacts with Rajiv's advisers (Gandhi's parliamentary Secretary, Arun Singh, who rarely accepts invitations from politicians was conspicuous by his presence last month at a dinner hosted by Kalmadi) even got the Congress (I) to extend an offer to Pawar.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Pawar's flirtation with the Congress(I) is based on his conviction that it is futile to plough a lonely furrow.

A senior Congress (S) leader revealed that Pawar has had five meetings with Gandhi since the assembly poll, the latest of which took place on May 1 and lasted for over an hour. Pawar does not deny the meetings but characteristically maintained that they only discussed various national problems.

According to Congress (S) insiders, Pawar's decision to throw the question of his party's identity open for debate is based on his conviction that it is futile to plough a lonely furrow. In the last year Pawar has emerged as one of the leading opposition leaders in the country but power still continues to elude him even though the PDF gave the Congress (I) a fright by finishing with 106 MLA's to the latter's 162 in the 288-member house. Pawar then attempted, in vain, to woo over the 50-odd MLAs he would need to form a government. Said a senior Congress (S) leader from Maharashtra: "We have two options in Maharashtra: remain in the PDF and wait for it to die a natural death or join the Congress (I). Obviously the latter is more judicious."

Pawar began drifting away from opposition parties after his efforts to forge issues-based opposition unity failed. He was particularly upset when the PDF collapsed within two months, letting the Shiv Sena stage a come-back in the Bombay municipal elections in late April. Admitted a Congress (S) leader from Kerala: "Pawar cannot become an accepted national opposition leader so why should he allow his Maharashtra base to be eroded by wasting his time in fruitless national politics?"

But Pawar's inclination to change took concrete shape after the Congress (I) dangled the carrot of the chief ministership of Maharashtra. He was given to understand that relations between Vasantrao Patil and Gandhi were strained and, had an alternative been available, Patil would have been replaced. Pawar's emissaries have made it clear to Gandhi that they would come over only if Pawar was made the chief minister and the Congress (I) agreed to stop treating the state as a fiefdom of New Delhi.

That, however, was not the only reason for the delay. Pawar wants to strengthen his base in Maharashtra even further by sweeping the zilla parishad elections due in September. Moreover, a section in the party, led by Unnikrishnan, is opposed to the merger. Unnikrishnan, Kerala Congress (S) President P.C. Chacko and S.C. Sinha, former Assam chief minister, warned against the merger at the working committee meeting. But since none of the other leaders has a mass base like Pawar, their views are unlikely to prevail.

Officially, the Congress (I) also was keeping mum on the confabulations. But Maharashtra Finance Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde, known to be a close friend of Pawar, declared in Pune that Pawar would soon join the Congress (I) without any preconditions. Shinde also clarified that he was merely expressing the views of Rajiv Gandhi. Till late last fortnight, the minister's version had not been denied.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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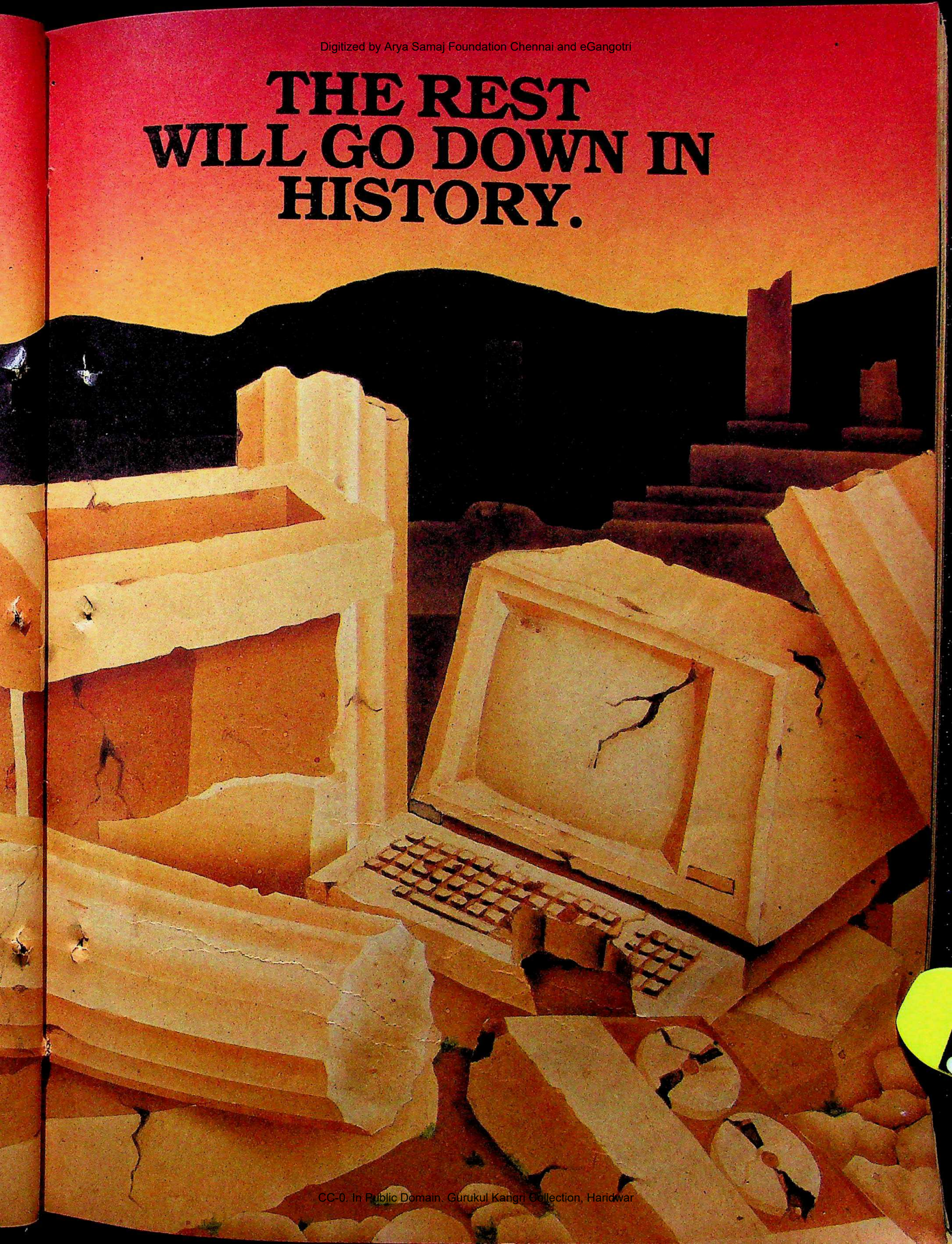

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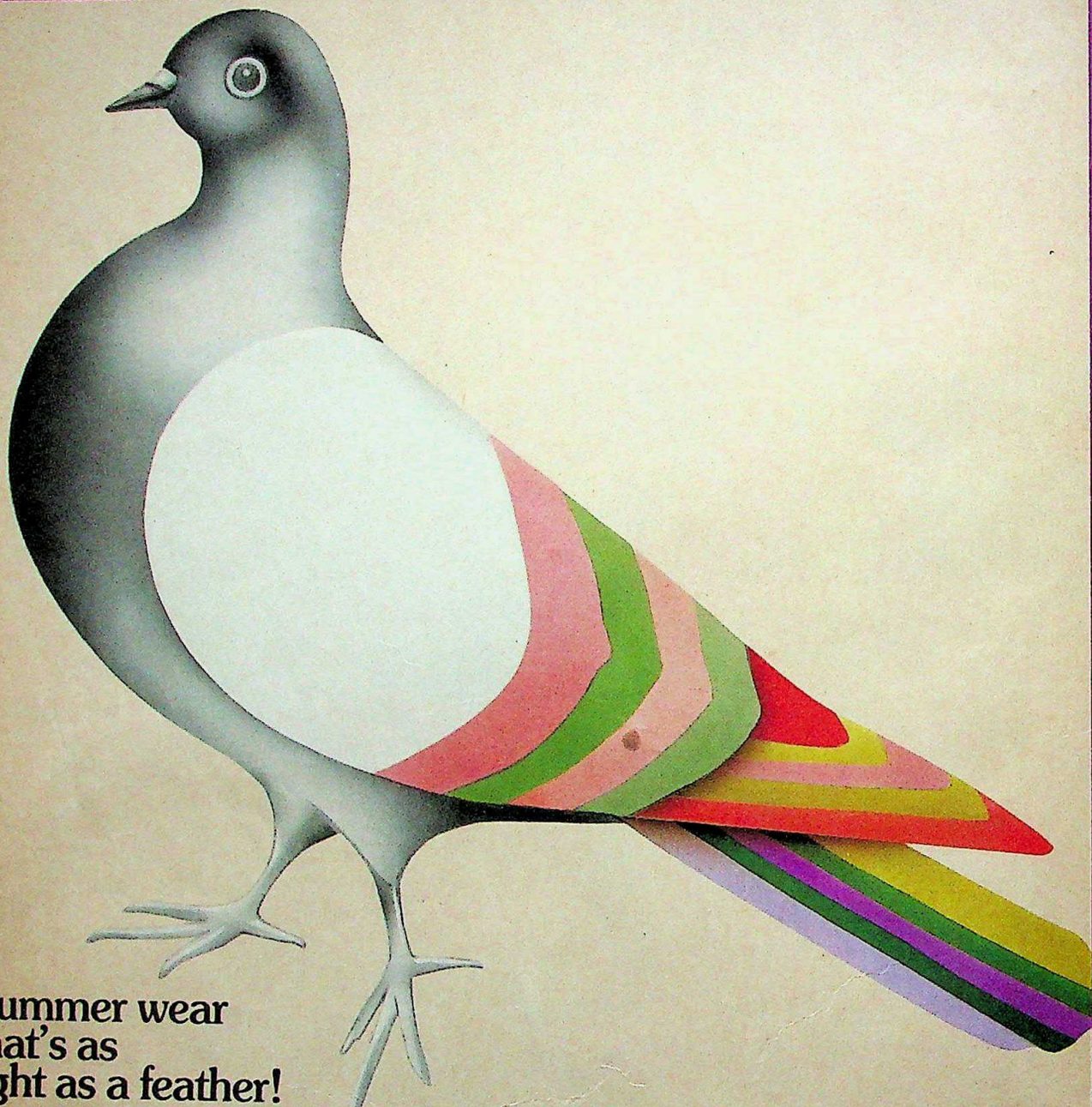

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ANTULAY CASE

Halfway Off the Hook

THOUGH the case began with a spectacular bang in the Bombay High Court last March, the gist of the final order of Justice Dinshaw Mehta last month as to whether criminal cases could be framed against A.R. Antulay suggested that it might peter out in a whimper. It seemed Antulay was halfway off the hook already.

Defence lawyers were jubilant. Said Nitin Pradhan: "It is a major victory," while Rajendra Desai added, "Most of the charges levelled by the press have proved baseless." Antulay himself, recuperating in London from a triple coronary bypass operation, expressed his happiness over the phone to his lawyers and announced that he would be back in Bombay when the court opens after vacation on June 10.

Ramdas Nayak, BJP corporater who is the first private citizen to take action under the Prevention of Corruption Act, insisted, however, that the "order was a victory for the judiciary. Even if one case is upheld our stand is vindicated." But prosecution lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani announced that they would be appealing in the Supreme Court.

Rejecting the prosecution's draft criminal charges of cheating under section 420 IPC, extortion (384 IPC) and conspiracy (120 IPC), Justice Mehta held that only charges relating to misuse of office under section 161 and 165 of the IPC read along with section of the Prevention of Corruption Act could be framed against Antulay. Besides, the charges will be only in regard to 18 cases of cement allotment and three relating to the alleged nexus between restoring a cut in manufacturing industrial alcohol by sugar mills and donations to the trusts.

The prosecution's most publicised draft charge concerning the sugar cooperatives' claim that they had been duped into believing that the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan (IGPP) was a government trust and that the money had been extorted under false pretences was rejected. The prosecution's star witness, Shalinitai Patil, described by Mehta as "no ordinary housewife but a lawyer by training...and, it is safe to assume, a shrewd politician", had testified that she realised that the IGPP was a private trust only in August 1981, whereas there was evidence that she was well aware of the position much earlier being the then state revenue minister.

A bigger blow was the rejection of the draft charges relating to the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) donation and the granting of no objection certificate (NOC) to Nanubhai Jewellers for renting out its premises. The prosecution saw these as watertight cases and had hoped to indict Ajit Kerkar, managing director of Tata's Indian Hotels and a trustee of the IGPP, as a co-accused. But Justice Mehta found no nexus between the payment of Rs 26 lakh on March 31, 1981 to the trust by the NCPA and a government resolution of May 6, 1981, since the resolution did not support the proposal suggested by Kerkar for increasing the floor space index (FSI) of the NCPA plot. The prosecution held that Kerkar's intention was established even if the deed fell through.

(From top) Jethmalani, Antulay and Justice Mehta: anti-climax

HARI OM GULATI

NAMAS BHOJANI

In the NOC matter, the testimony of witness Ramesh Merchant of Nanubhai Jewellers—that though Antulay had asked him to donate to his trusts, he had made clear that the NOC would be obtained only in the normal course—greatly strengthened the defence's hand.

Even while accepting that there was prima facie evidence of a nexus in 18 cement allotments, Justice Mehta rejected the conspiracy charge. The crux of Nayak's complaint had been that Antulay had systematically devised a scheme for disbursement of government largesse in return for payment to the trust and that others such as P.G. Gavai, Ram Batra, Pesi Tata, Ajit Kerkar and N.M. Tidke were part of the conspiracy.

Though the builders' cheques found their way into the trust coffers, the cement allotment orders do not bear Antulay's signature. Nor did the builders—the Rehejas, Govanis, Ladhanis and Navketan—have direct dealings with Antulay. They testified that they were approached by one Pesi Tata for donations in return for cement and that they had handed their cheques to Tata. Tata, is, however, dead, and so is Ram Batra, a former sheriff, also alleged to have been a middle man.

From the evidence presented so far all that is established is that Tata was in the liquor business, a Parsi, with no connection with the Tata firm. He wore a safari suit, carried a Dupont pen, drove a Mercedes, and was a member of the exclusive Willingdon Gymkhana. Some witnesses claim that they saw him in the former chief minister's waiting room, others in the Mantralaya corridors, but so far the link with Antulay remains nebulous. The closest to establishing a relationship was the testimony of the then secretary of food and civil supplies, V.T. Chari, who had noted on a cement file on June 24, 1981, that Antulay had informed him that one P.D. Tata would be handing over to him a list of 58 cement applications indicating the quantity of cement to be sanctioned. There is, however, a counter-note from

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Antulay asking Chari to withdraw the noting. The prosecution had unsuccessfully tried to prove that the Antulay writing was inserted much later. Chari's original noting on the file is now missing and only a photocopy remains. Tata, was also the link man, according to Anil Kumar Ruia, in restoring the cut of 20 per cent industrial alcohol for the Kolhapur Sugar Mills, Kolhapur Sugarcane Works and United Agencies.

Last fortnight Justice Mehta's order was still not officially released but he announced the gist in court. After the vacation Mehta will start hearings on the preliminary charges against Antulay framed by former Janata MLA P.B. Samant. These include the state Government's donation of Rs 2 crore to the trust under false pretences.

An unpleasant aspect of the hearings has been the partisan and indecorous attitude adopted by both sides. While the defence has charged that it has been a trial by the irresponsible press, Antulay accused the Supreme Court of "descending to an obscenity" by transferring his case directly to the high court and claimed it had "bent the law to accommodate its own particular wish in a particular case against a particular individual". Jethmalani similarly upset the judiciary's feeling when he demanded the removal of Justice S.N. Khatri on the grounds that he had lost confidence after discovering that Khatri happened to be deputy law secretary when Antulay was law minister.

Jethmalani, who has made the case his mission for the last four years, has provided his services free in the interest of establishing that no man is above the law, and Antulay symbolised the corruption of the system. But his moral stand has lost some edge considering the roster of his clients who have successfully staved off conviction—Manu Narang, Haji Mastan and Yusuf Patel.

Inevitably comparisons are being made between the Antulay case and other show trials such as the Shah Commission and "Kissa Kursi Ka" which, eventually led to no conviction.

While the Antulay criminal charges are receiving all the attention the civil case against him went almost unnoticed when it came up in the Supreme Court in January this year. The Court upheld Justice Lentin's contention that quid pro quo had been established in the cement allotment. "That in itself should be enough indictment against any political figure," feels legal luminary Ashok Desai.

—COOMI KAPOOR

BIHAR

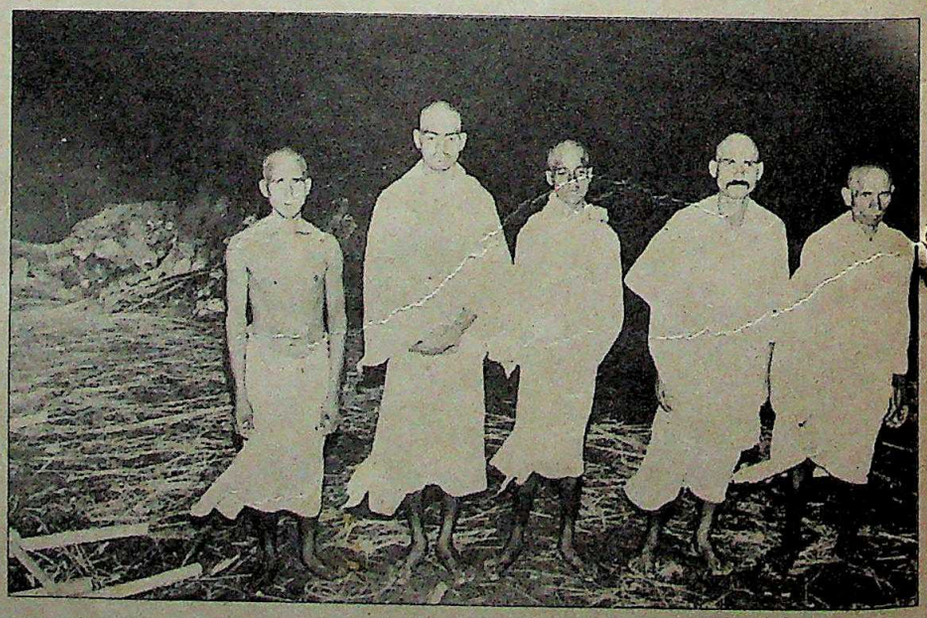
Allegations of Murder

POLITICAL killings are so common in Bihar that they no longer make news unless some political heavyweights are dragged into it. The murder of five Communist Party of India (CPI) men at Modanganj in Gaya district would not have hit the headlines had the party not accused 'King' Mahendra Prasad, controversial Congress(I) MP, of ordering the killing. Prasad had lost in the Lok Sabha election to the CPI's Ramashray Prasad Singh and the CPI alleged that the killings were part of Prasad's plan to avenge his defeat. The episode even had an echo in Delhi with the CPI leaders petitioning Rajiv Gandhi for Prasad's arrest.

Prasad, however, was equally vehement in denying any involvement. Sitting in the thickly-carpeted drawing-room of his MP's bungalow in Delhi (he was later elected to the Rajya Sabha), Prasad told INDIA TODAY that he had been framed in this "ghastly episode" as a result of a conspiracy hatched by his political opponents. Prasad alleged that a Bihar minister opposed to him had plotted along with a lawyer who is the minister's brother and a CPI sympathiser and the CPI MP, Ramashray Prasad Singh. "It's below my dignity to fight with a small man like Singh," said Prasad, and added, "if I wanted to take revenge why should I get these poor people killed and not Singh who is supposed to be my political opponent?"

Prasad alleges that the Indian People's Front (IPF), a Naxalite organisation which draws its strength mainly from the Harijans, is behind the killings. A fortnight ago, said Prasad, some Yadavs had killed a Dusadh Harijan, who was in the IPF, in nearby Maima village. The Modanganj killing, Prasad maintains, was the IPF's revenge—all those killed were Yadavs.

The police, who are now swarming the area, are weighing all the possibilities. "We have not closed our mind to the allegations regarding Mahendra Prasad," said Anil Kumar Pandey, DIG, who has been touring the area to defuse the tension. But the police do not rule out



Sharma, Prasad and relatives of the victims at the cremation

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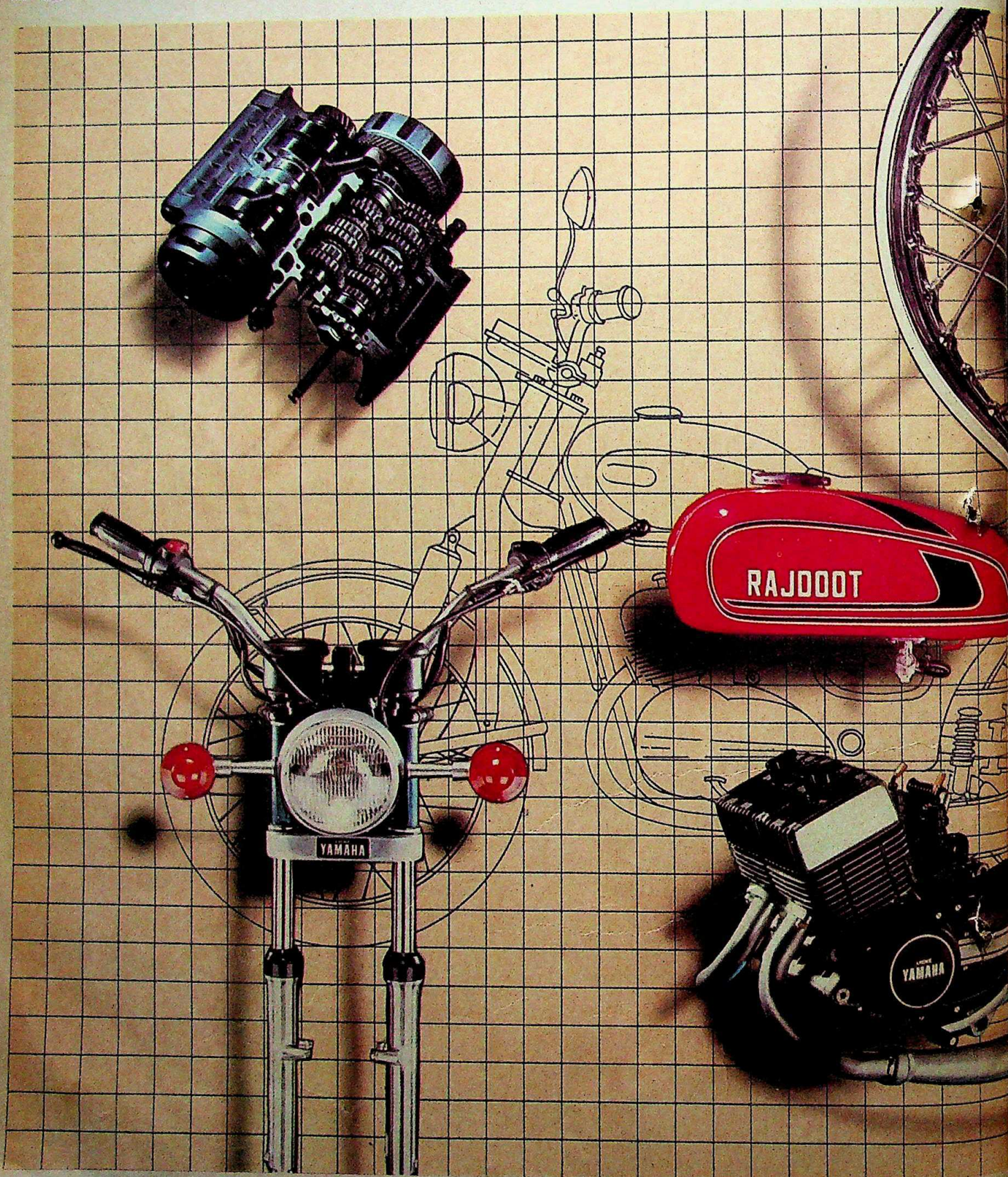
JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY IS NEWS FOR EVERYONE EXCE



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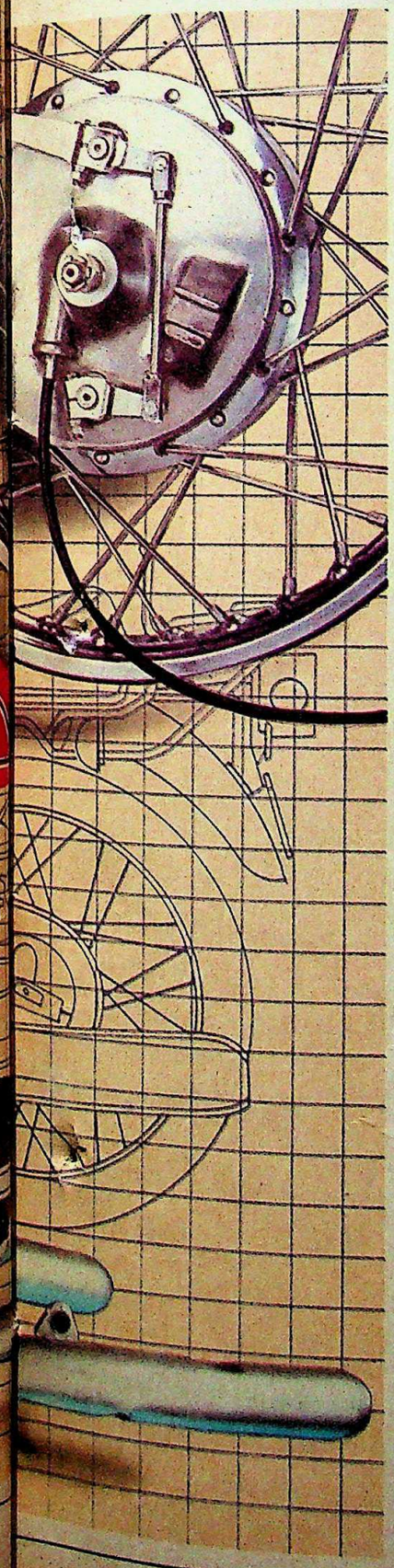
FOR INDIAN BIKES EXCEPT RAJDOOT

ESCORTS



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Which means that there's a lot of Japanese know-how making the Rajdoot a very efficient machine.

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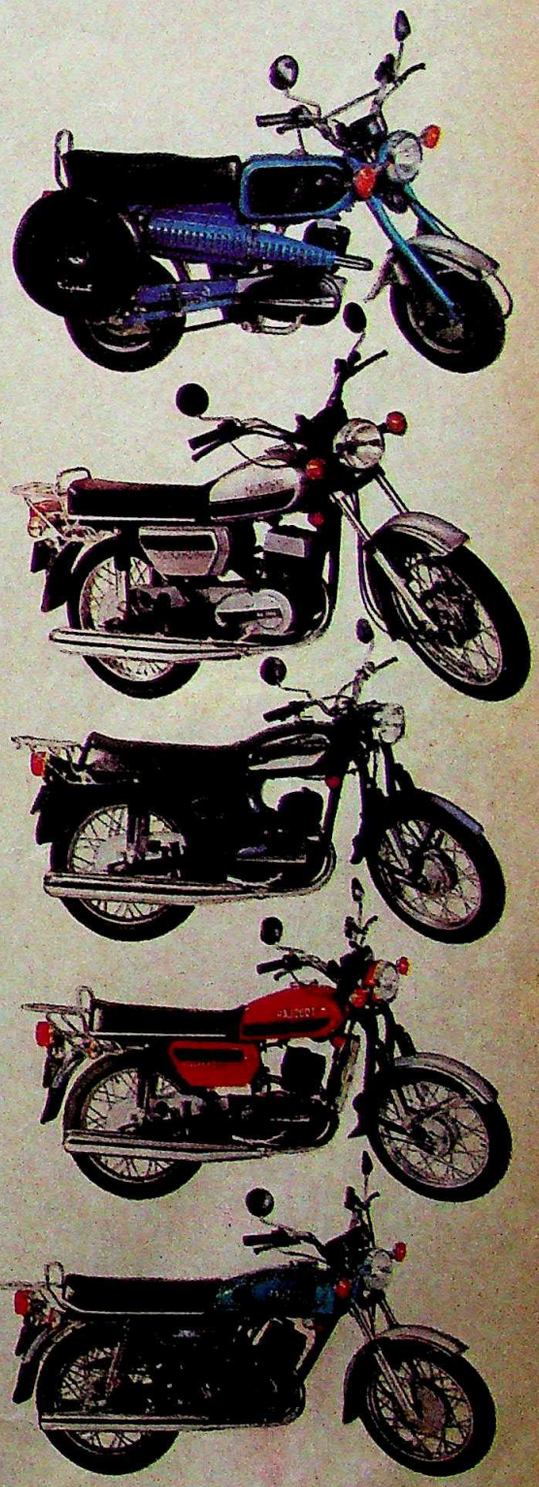
Yes, the foresight is paying off. Because today, one of every two bikes on the road is a Rajdoot.

Which, incidentally, is not very surprising news.



RAJDOOT

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A LEADER

ESC-8615

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the caste factor either. As Pandey pointed out, all the deceased are of one caste while all the accused are Bhumihars, like Prasad.

But the CPI rejects the caste theory. The FIR, it points out, has named five men all supposed to be close to Prasad: Rambachan Singh, 'commander' of the Bramharsi Sena (a private 'army' of Bhumihar landlords), Dilkeshwar Singh, Chandrika Singh, and Shanker Singh and Dinesh Singh, supposed to be Prasad's bodyguards. Further, says the CPI, two days before the massacre, Jagdish Sharma, Congress (I) MLA from Ghosi and a follower of Prasad, had met with other followers of Prasad at a feast at the house of Surendra Singh, Sharma's brother-in-law, where the mass murder plan was subsequently drawn up.

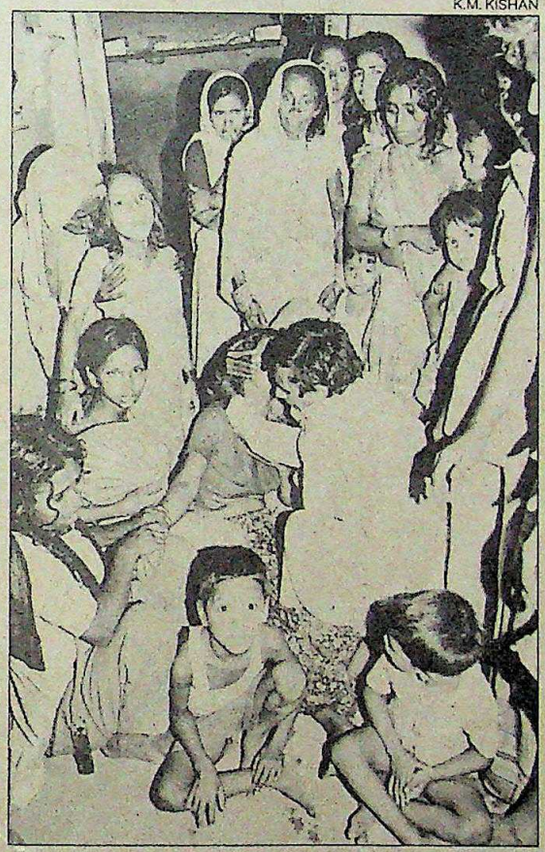
But Prasad says of the five named he knows only Dinesh Singh and Shanker Singh who are not his bodyguards but Congress(I) workers. He alleges that their names were added as an afterthought in the FIR which, curiously enough, was filed the next day even though the Ghosi police station is barely 4 km away. As for the meeting, both Prasad and Surendra Singh point out that Sharma was then in Delhi, along with many other state MLA's who had stayed on after the AICC(I) session.

The CPI's sense of outrage was understandable. Modanganj (population: approximately 3,000) is considered the strongest CPI base in the state with almost the entire population, comprising marginal farmers or landless labourers, being CPI sympathisers. All five killed were hard core party workers. Jagdish Prasad was the *mukhiya* of Modanganj panchayat and secretary of the Ghosi Anchal CPI; Ramswaroop Prasad and Chandrika Prasad were the secretary and assistant secretary, of the Modanganj unit, while Chhote Sau and Brajnandan were active members of the local unit.

The CPI and the Congress have long been rivals in the area. Jehanabad constituency had seen the bloodiest violence in Bihar during the Lok Sabha elections; officially 12 were killed but unofficial estimates had put the figure at thrice the number. In the assembly elections two months later, eight people were killed in the Ghosi constituency alone. Pramod Kumar, member of the Gaya district council of the CPI, alleged that when Prasad and Sharma had launched their campaign their supporters had vowed to "play Holi with the communists' blood". Prasad of course, denies the charge.

The caste factor adds to the tension. All the major caste groups in the area have their own private armies. Jehanabad subdivision, under which Modanganj comes, has been the battlefield for an ongoing war between IPF extremists, mostly Harijans, the Bhumi Sena of landlords of the backward castes (like the Yadavs) and the Bramharsi Sena of the Bhumihars. Over 250 people have

K.M. KISHAN



CPI leaders consoling a bereaved family

already been killed in the three-cornered war. Shifting political alignments confound matters. The IPF had supported the CPI in the Lok Sabha poll but contested the assembly polls against their erstwhile allies. Prasad and his men say the fall-out is another reason for the IPF-CPI rivalry.

Undeniably, however, it was Prasad's alleged involvement which drew attention to the killing. Local people, CPI leaders and even some newspapers have painted Prasad in lurid terms: born into a family of landless labourers, he is said to have started his political career in the CPI(M) by organising the landless against big landowners from his caste. The latter retaliated by poisoning to death seven members of his family. Prasad, who survived, then disappeared and reappeared two years later with wads of currency notes which he distributed to the poor and earned the sobriquet he carries. He is supposed to have made his money in a pharmaceutical company but his detractors say the real source was Nepal, from where smuggling into Bihar is rampant.

According to Prasad, the reality is dramatically different. Born into a family owning about 50 *bighas* of land, he went to Patna to do his higher studies where he admits he was attracted to the Left, but not so much as to join any communist party. He admits the poison story but claims this was the result of an intra-family dispute. He never disappeared, he says, but merely spent more time in Delhi and Aurangabad where he and his friends started a small pharmaceutical company 18 years ago. He had put Rs 50,000 in it (from his family wealth) and this sum had now grown to maintain him in some luxury and allow him to indulge in his hobby of gardening (his garden routinely wins prizes in Delhi). A long-time Congressman, he came close to Mrs Gandhi when he stood by her in the Janata days. He was rewarded for his loyalty with a ticket in 1980 from Jehanabad. He won then and would have won again this time had, he says, party elements not sabotaged his campaign. "I have nothing against the CPI," he says, "my enemies are within the Congress (I)."

For his part, Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey, who cancelled a trip to Delhi after the massacre, has vowed that the killers will not be spared. "My first priority is to free Bihar from the grip of criminals, political gangsters and mafia leaders and I am ready to pay any price for this," he told INDIA TODAY.

Among those who will be happy if Dubey carries out his pledge will be Munna Goswami, a 12-year-old boy who got hit by bullets when his curiosity drew him to the tea stall in Modanganj where the murders occurred. Also hit was Poonam Kumar, a four-year-old girl. Poonam was discharged after four days in the hospital but Munna was still fighting for his life. The families of the deceased were given Rs 5,000 each by Dubey but for Munna the only hope lies in Dubey's promise to be ruthless in exterminating lawlessness.

—FARZAND AHMED with bureau reports

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BIHAR

Cornering Contractors

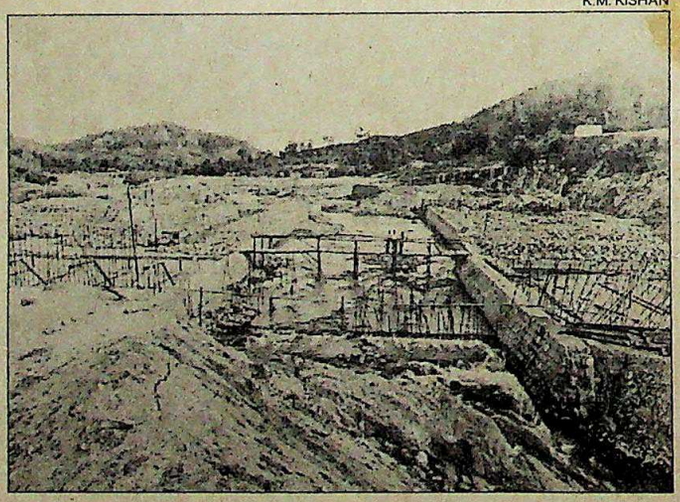
CORRUPTION is so firmly rooted in the Indian system that any attempt to check it appears unreal. When Bihar Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey decided last fortnight to speed up developmental activities in the state by pledging to do away with the corrupt system of private contracts, not only was there cynicism, the move was greeted by protests from within and outside his party. Yet Dubey decreed that all big projects, especially in the power and irrigation sectors which account for over 60 per cent of the plan allocations, would henceforth be executed through the public sector Hindustan Steelworks Construction Ltd (HSCL) and the Bihar Construction Corporation (BCC). Realising that the sudden change in government policy would be resisted strongly by the contractors who are a powerful factor in the state's politics, Dubey said: "I am aware of its political implications but I am here to do this and I mean what I say."

To prove that it was not mere rhetoric, the chief minister immediately called a high level meeting of ministers of all concerned departments, the chief secretary, finance secretary, chairman of the state electricity board, irrigation commissioner and HSCL Chairman Major-General S.S. Ahluwalia to discuss the issue. A subcommittee comprising the state electricity board chairman, HSCL chairman and irrigation commissioner worked out the details and rates for awarding contracts to HSCL.

Dubey admitted candidly that he was moving to break the money power and political muscle of the contractors who, he alleged, were holding the state to ransom. He said that all the major irrigation and power projects like Kosi, Gandak, Bagmati, Subernrekha, which have been dragging on for the past 20 to 25 years, eating into public money because project costs had increased four to five times would now be executed under a time-bound programme. According to official sources, HSCL would get construction contracts worth Rs 80 crore a year, so that it could retain its large work force of 13,000 Biharis. Based in Bokaro, HSCL had earlier decided to move out of Bihar as it had not received any contracts since the completion on schedule of the Bokaro steel plant assignment.

Dubey admits that he is trying to break the money power and political muscle of the contractors who, he alleges, are holding the state to ransom.

K.M. KISHAN



Dam site in Palamau district: stalled project

The chief minister also asked the BCC, a state undertaking starved of contracts which had been created by Jagannath Misra in 1974 when he was irrigation minister to check the private contract system, to accept contracts worth Rs 40 crore annually, as much as the unit is equipped to undertake.

In Bihar contractors with known criminal backgrounds and politicians, including some ministers, have been directly or indirectly through their relatives monopolising public contracts. Though most remain far behind schedule or incomplete, no one has been questioned or asked to explain. The Durgawati reservoir project is a case in point. Launched in 1976 at an estimated cost of Rs 30 crore it had been slated to be ready by 1980. The cost now has escalated to Rs 110 crore and though the state Government has spent about Rs 20 crore, the project is yet to take off. So influential is this lobby that even though in August 1978, the irrigation minister Sachidanand Singh startled the Assembly by suggesting that it was worth probing how much of the Rs 129 crore spent on flood protection works had been pocketed by engineers, contractors, and *rajnetas*, no definite action was actually ever taken.

Instances abound of contracts having been bagged at gunpoint. According to some members of the Bihar Engineering Service Association (BESA) criminals-turned-contractors terrorise engineers to pass their bogus bills. The BESA feels that the Dubey Government cannot free the state from the mafia-contractors control because the problems are so deep-rooted. "A criminal of today is a contractor of tomorrow who becomes a politician the day after," Janki Sharan Prasad, BESA's general secretary, said. Prasad claimed that in the last two years over 50 engineers had been threatened and terrorised by the gun-toting contractors and the Government had remained apathetic. "Engineers are so terrified that they do not want to be posted to the works side in the department concerned," Prasad added.

Records maintained by the state Government paint a similar frightening picture. In 1983, criminal cases were filed against 150 contractors and 83 others were "blacklisted", 158 engineers were suspended and criminal cases filed against 131 officials. Besides this, departmental enquiries were ordered against 178 engineers and officials and 83 of them were "punished". BESA officials allege that while the contractors got away because of their powerful political links, the engineers and officials were conveniently made the scapegoats.

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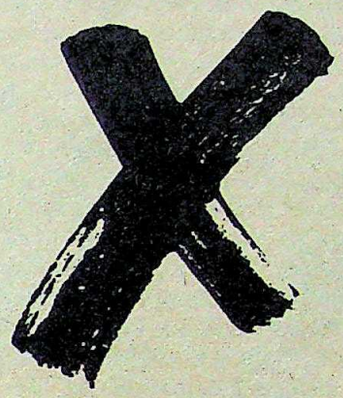

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Soon, Kinetic will be launching a new range of two-wheelers. Suited to our conditions and built especially for us Indians.
So now that you have a choice of two-wheelers, remember the big name in the business.
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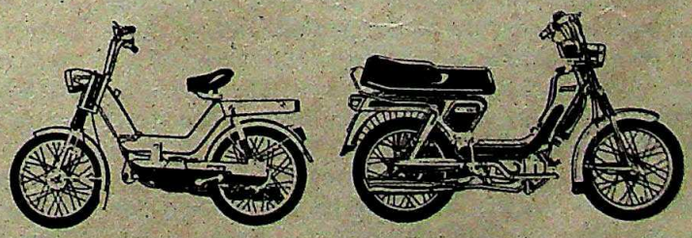

KINETIC
ENGINEERING LIMITED

That's right – the Luna and Spark people.

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The Government in the Sixth Five-Year Plan spent Rs 711.69 crore on major and medium irrigation projects. But only 4.27 lakh hectares of land was irrigated. Likewise though over Rs 491.82 crore had been spent on the power sector none of the ongoing projects could be commissioned. Former chief minister Chandrashekhar Singh admitted in the Assembly that though 35 projects had been marked for completion by the end of 1983-84, only five were actually completed.

The most recent example of official disinterest was when the Kosi embankment breached last September despite prior warning. Enquires revealed that two days before the disaster the contractor, related to certain politicians, received the last payment of Rs 50 lakh for repairs supposed to have been done. The state Government is now spending Rs 10 crore to repair the embankment.

Dubey's attempt to check the practice of private contracts can only be a positive step. But his detractors feel that he is merely trying to bolster his sagging credibility. They claim that contractors have secured a bridge toll collection contract in Aurangabad for Rs 37 lakh against last year's contract for Rs 55 lakh. Similarly, contracts at much lower rates have been given for Telmarcha bridge, Dobhi, Bhorran and Tundi bridges. A spokesman in the chief minister's secretariat said in defence that these contracts had been finalised when the new ministry was being formed and the decision to end the private contract system would be applicable in big contracts only. Despite the brickbats, if Dubey can rein in corruption to some extent, even that would be sufficient reason for hope in Bihar.

—FARZAND AHMED

KERALA

Power Tussle

THE RULING United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala celebrated its third birthday on May 24 with much rejoicing but the celebrations were marred by yet another crisis in the fractious front. The crisis in the originally four-member National Democratic Party (NDP) over the refusal to resign of Health Minister Ramachandran Nair, which had been simmering for several months, finally came to a head. Bowing to the wishes of the other three MLA's of the NDP who have been vehemently demanding Nair's resignation, Karunakaran finally asked the minister to quit his post. But it was unlikely that the chief minister's decision would do anything but bring about a temporary truce.

For one, Nair delayed his resignation, maintaining that he would resign only if the NDP's parent organisation, the Nair Service Society (NSS), asked him to. And the NSS was clearly not very keen to do that. Said Upendranath Kurup, chairman of the NDP and strongman of the NSS: "The chief minister should not listen to these MLA's who have been expelled from the party." The real reason for the stonewalling, political observers maintained, was that Nair and Kurup wanted to compel Karunakaran to dismiss the minister so that they

Officially Nair maintains that he would resign only if the NDPs parent organisation, the Nair Service Society asked him to.

would get the sympathy of the state's 52-lakh-strong Nair community. Said Pandalam Sudhakaran, Congress(I) MLA: "Karunakaran was caught between the devil and the deep sea."

Karunakaran had managed to bring about a temporary truce during the last Assembly session in April when he was facing a no-confidence motion by asking Nair to go on "sick leave" and taking over the health portfolio himself. After the session he reluctantly returned the portfolio. But it was a futile exercise as the dissidents once again protested and threatened to quit the front. It was a threat Karunakaran could not afford to ignore because of his wafer-thin majority (10 in a house of 140). He then got the steering committee of the UDF to ask for Nair's resignation.

The tussle in the NDP was for nothing more than the loaves of office. Explained dissident NDP MLA Therambil Ramakrishnan: "When Nair became health minister (in September 1983) there was an understanding he would step down after a year so others also would have a chance to be ministers, but today he refuses to quit." Ramakrishnan and the other two dissident MLA's, K.G.R. Kartha and Ramachandran Pillai, also allege that Nair has been ineffective and corrupt. Said Ramakrishnan: "Nair was a weak minister who was manipulated by others and couldn't do anything for the Nair community." But the dissidents themselves are vulnerable: Kartha, who was the NDP's first nominee to the ministry, was forced to step down in 1983 after corruption charges had been levelled against him. A.C. Shanmughadas, the firebrand Congress(S) MLA, summed it neatly: "Two NDP MLA's have already been ministers and proved corrupt. The other two also want to be ministers before this ministry's term ends."

The NDP, which claims to speak for the Nairs, has long been a source of worry for Karunakaran though ironically he himself is a Nair. Initially the threat to him was posed by the charismatic and powerful Kidangoor Gopalakrishna Pillai, ex-chairman of the NDP. Mrs Gandhi helped Karunakaran by packing Pillai off to Singapore as the Indian high commissioner there. But Pillai's departure only made matters worse: faction fighting erupted and the NDP split with Nair, Kartha and Ramachandran Pillai ranged against Therambil Ramakrishnan. Now the tables have turned: Kartha, Pillai and Ramakrishnan are gunning for Nair.

The NSS was set up to look into the real and imagined grievances of the once powerful Nairs; among their many demands is reservations for themselves. But because of their infighting the NSS and NDP have been losing their clout.

Karunakaran is still confident his ministry would last the full five-year term but few share his optimism. Says former chief minister and opposition leader E.K. Nayanar: "The NDP and other small communal parties are monsters created by the Congress(I), which will ultimately swallow them." A more ominous sign for the ruling front was CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodripad's call for a "realignment of parties in Kerala based on policies". Such a step could spell doom for the present ministry. With his recurring problems, the icing on Karunakaran's birthday cake was understandably not as sweet as it could have been.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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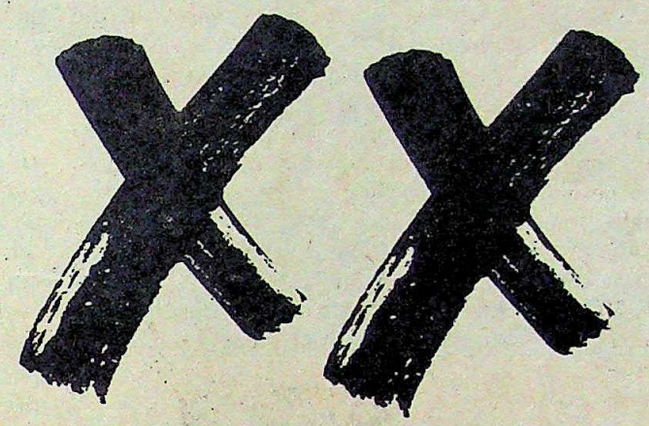

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Vehicles built to perform superbly on Indian roads.
So now that you have a choice of two-wheelers, remember the big name in the business.
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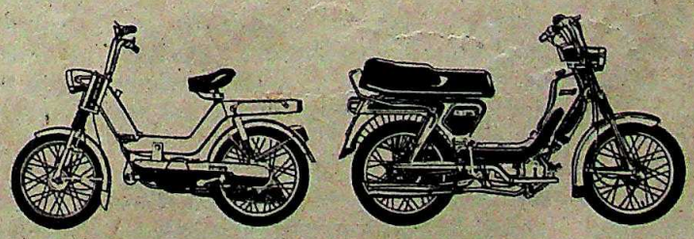

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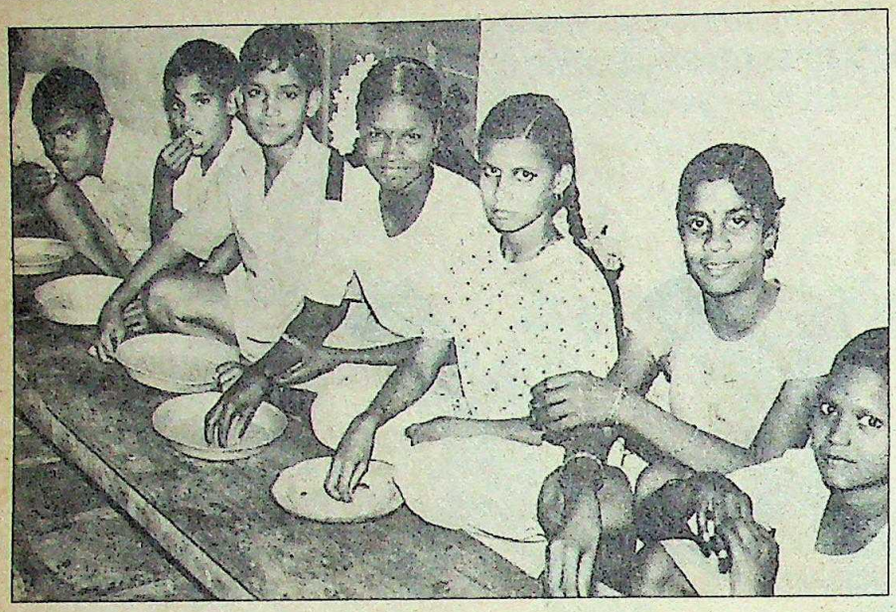

Waiting for a meal: last supper

ANDHRA PRADESH

The Food Fiasco

SOON AFTER N.T. Rama Rao first became chief minister of Andhra Pradesh in January 1983, the hurriedly published official wall calendar for the year, which was widely distributed and displayed, had featured a photograph of children sitting in neat little rows for a meal. The Telugu Desam, second to none in publicising its populist programmes, was reiterating its commitment to provide a free midday meal to the state's primary school children.

But midway through the summer vacations last fortnight, NTR's Government had bad news for the state's 35 lakh primary schoolchildren: after a cabinet meeting on May 23 it was announced that the scheme would be scrapped. The official reason trotted out was that legislators had complained that the scheme was serving little purpose as the *sarpanches* had shown no interest in it. But that was only an excuse to save upto Rs 33 crore a year.

There was yet another of NTR's early commitments on which he had to go back. One of his first acts after coming to power had been to lower the retirement age of government employees from 58 to 55. In his one-month spell in power, N. Bhaskara Rao had reinstated the higher limit but the 4,500 employees who had already been retired had gone to the Supreme Court. Last fortnight the Supreme Court ordered their reinstatement and the Government began adjusting them into the layers of bureaucracy.

But undoubtedly the move that would hurt NTR more was the termination of the midday meal. The scheme was doomed from the start. Borrowing the idea from the flourishing programme in nearby Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam had included it in its election manifesto. But the Congress(I) preempted the Telugu Desam's plans with its chief minister K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy launching the programme in November 1982, about 7 weeks before the assembly elections. A dismayed NTR responded with the charge that the Congress(I) had borrowed the idea only for use as an election gimmick and declared in his manifesto that the Telugu Desam would evolve a "scientific system to implement the midday meal scheme quite effectively and also successfully".

> **The move that would hurt NTR most was the termination of the midday meal. The scheme was doomed from the start.**

Changes there were but they were neither scientific nor efficient. Teachers were divested of supervisory charge and kitchen management was handed over to village *sarpanches*, even as some *sarpanches* of the Krishna and Godavari districts argued that children of farm labourers and other rural poor got better meals at home. And when Rama Rao introduced another change—restricting the free meal scheme to children from backward classes, Harijan and tribal communities—the move only served to heighten class differences, with some *sarpanches* refusing to manage the kitchen for children hailing from the so-called lower classes.

The snafus were rarely tackled. Only a feeble attempt was made to introduce a health card system to assess the nutritional status and physical progress of primary school students. Admitted the State Labour and Employment Minister P. Indra Reddy: "The only ones who put on fat by the midday meal programme were the *sarpanches* and this is why some legislators urged the chief minister to wind up the scheme."

Neither NTR, who has visited Madras more often than any other place after becoming chief minister, nor officials managing the programme, made any attempt to learn from the Tamil Nadu experience which has progressed from providing meals to providing toothpowder and now textbooks for the coming academic year. Funds have never been a constraint in Tamil Nadu, with large sums donated by industrialists.

This is not the first of NTR's schemes to have met with dusty death. A plan to reorganise various state-owned corporations and ban private practice by government doctors backfired, and the Government has remained silent on the implementation of an order reserving 30 per cent of jobs in government and government-funded organisations for women. But the reversal of its stand on retirement age has been its other major pullback. Less than a month after he took over as chief minister, NTR by lowering the retirement age, had cut short the working life of 21,548 government employees. The sudden announcement had claimed the lives of 11 people, including that of a senior doctor in the directorate of medical services. Now, following a Supreme Court directive, 4,500 people, whose posts were either lying vacant or had been temporarily filled, are being reinstated.

But the major casualty last fortnight

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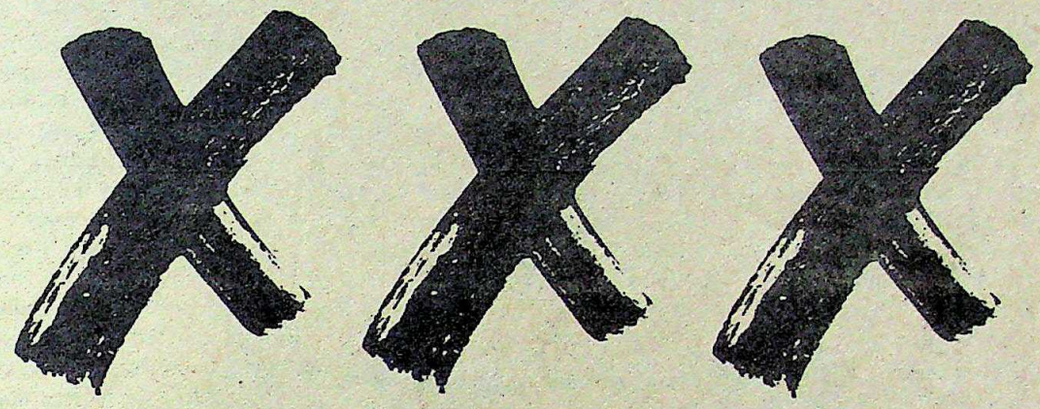
If you think you know what inspired Kinetic to design India's most popular two-wheeler, you're wrong again.



It was the length of your arm.
And your wife's sari.

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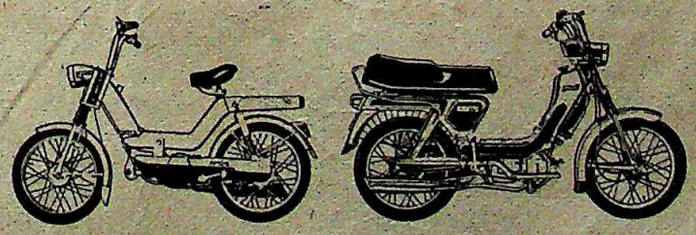

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was the midday meal scheme. Although the programme was listed as a second priority item, after drinking water for villages, in the Pragati Padham—the 15-point economic and development programme of the Telugu Desam—an official of the state education department was forced to confess that "if there was a watch-dog panel, the children would have got the meal. All that we can boast of after spending Rs 85 crore is creating huge 'assets' in kitchen vessels." It was quite clearly, a case of empty vessels making an awful racket.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

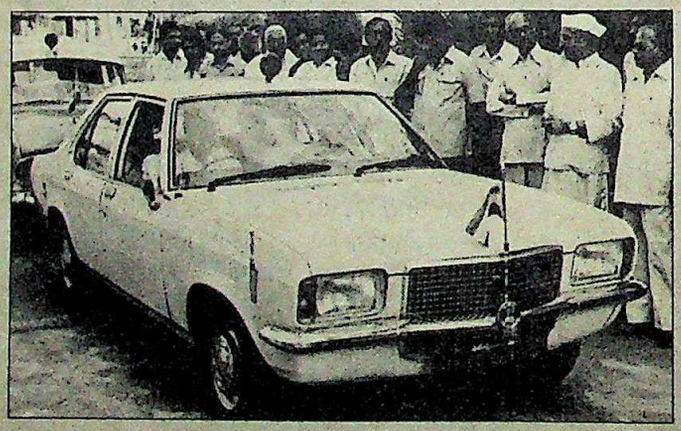
N.T. RAMA RAO

Costly Ride

BACK in the 1950s, when Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao was just another film hero living in Madras he used to drive around in a modest Morris Minor. Rama Rao's fortunes have seen a sea change since then and possibly nothing symbolises this better than his stable of cars: a red Maruti (which he owns personally), a white air-conditioned Maruti and a Contessa (both bought by the Government). And now orders have gone out for the purchase of the costliest car made in India: the air-conditioned Standard Rover 2000, slated to cost Rs 1.9 lakh.

On becoming chief minister in January 1983, Rama Rao had spurned the use of the air-conditioned Mercedes that Congress(I) chief ministers before him had been using and opted for an Ambassador, for reasons of economy. Later that year the first Marutis rolled out of the Gurgaon factories and Rama Rao was one of the select VIP's given the car out of turn. It remained unused for more than a year: the Contessa and the Maruti deluxe took over from the Ambassador. But when the price of petrol was increased by a steep 97 paise per litre in March this year, NTR dramatically announced that he would henceforth use only his personal Maruti. He explained: "The thought of saving a pie is commendable. We have no proper roads, no bridges and no funds to complete our projects. As a representative of the people and a public servant it is my duty to effect as much economy as possible."

The car was used, but only for a few days. It was soon evident that the film star-turned-politician, was only preparing the ground for greater melodrama to protest against the petrol price hike. He had an auto-rickshaw positioned between the pilot and the escort police cars outside his home in the centrally-located Abid's, ready to drive to the Assembly. He was advised against using the auto-rickshaw for security reasons though the need for using two police vehicles was never questioned.



NTR with his Maruti (top) and Contessa: flaunting austerity

NTR's aides explain the new purchase by pointing out that he logs at least 75 km every day. NTR stays in his ashram home, Shanti Kutir, which fringes the Osmansagar about 25 km from the city. His daily round from home to office and back includes a detour to his home in Abid's where his family stays. The decision to go in for a Rover 2000 was explained as necessary not only to rest the chief minister, who has a heart problem, but also to provide him "tighter security". But coming as it did in the same fortnight that the Government discontinued the midday meal for schoolchildren, the Government's extravagance raised not a few eyebrows. And besides, as his detractors asked, does a chief minister who claims to head a "people's government" need such tight security?

NTR speaks repeatedly about paisa-pinching as the state runs up huge overdrafts in implementing his populist programmes but examples of his personal extravagance abound. Last year the Government spent Rs 4.5 lakh on a bus that would be somewhat similar to the Chaitanya Ratham. NTR was to use the vehicle on his tour of the districts but he changed his mind later.

Quite clearly, NTR, who still wears saffron and calls himself a sanyasi, knows little about austerity. When journalists were invited to his "ashram" after speculation about the chief minister's nocturnal activities surfaced as a consequence of a bar on visitors, one journalist pointed out that considering the wall-to-wall carpeting and the air-conditioners it was a misnomer to call the plush two-bedroom house an "ashram". Unfazed, NTR retorted: "All this is a matter of taste. This is my taste." Last fortnight it was again evident that NTR's well-known propensity to practise austerity was driving him to always be among the first to buy the latest in the new genre of made-in-India cars. It is, after all as NTR himself put it quite succintly, just a matter of taste.

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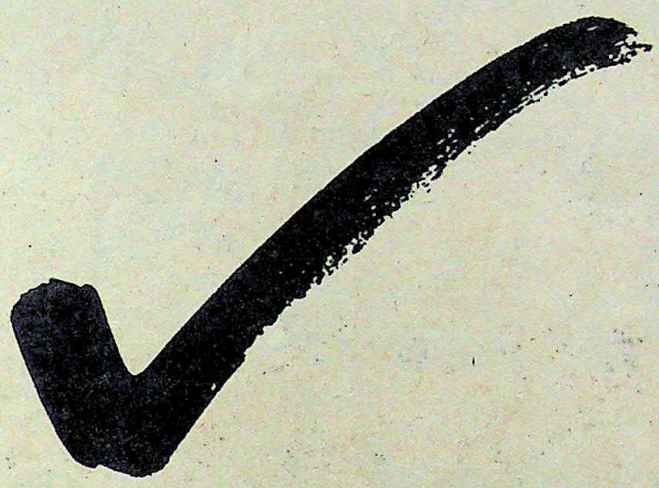

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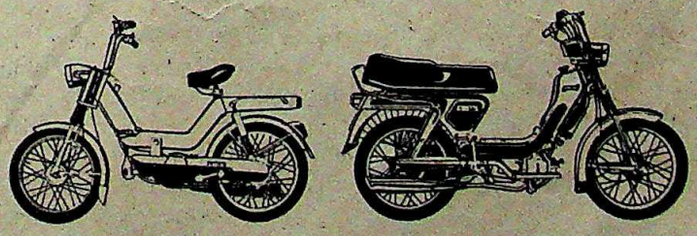

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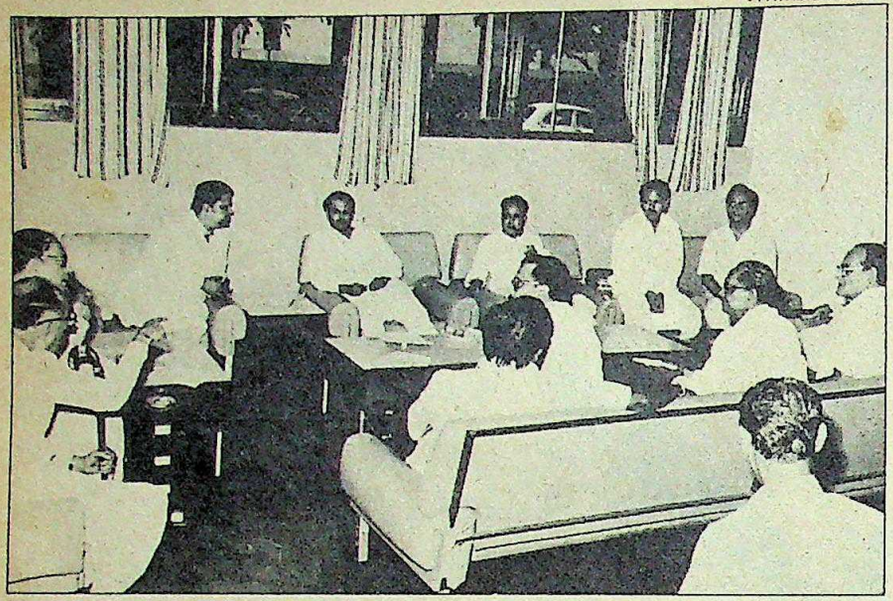

Election committee meeting: intrigue

WEST BENGAL

Civic Discontent

THE RECENTLY overhauled West Bengal unit of the Congress(I), like the ill-fated Titanic, seems destined to flounder on its first voyage. The state Congress(I) boat, headed for the June 30 Calcutta municipal elections, sprang a leak last fortnight with violent discontent erupting in its lower ranks, senior leaders spewing angry denunciations and a skipper hard put to steer a straight course through the shoals.

The jarring began from the very first day (May 10) that party candidates began filing their nominations. That day a rebellious group of partymen ransacked the PCC(I) headquarters to express their displeasure at the choice of a candidate. But the real bombshell exploded a couple of days later with the disclosure of an angry letter written to PCC(I) chief Pranab Mukherjee by Union Law Minister Asoke Sen. Mysteriously leaked out to the local press, the letter expressed displeasure over the fact that a large number of anti-socials had been included in the Congress(I) list. Sen wrote that since the candidates for the municipal wards falling within his Calcutta north-west constituency had been chosen without his approval, he wished to disassociate himself from the municipal election committee.

Stung by the letter, the first to react was the volatile youth leader Subrata Mukherjee, who countered that two of Sen's nominees—Jaan Mohammed and Ruhul Kader—were also known to have bad reputations. Sen, charged Mukherjee, had violated party discipline and dealt the party image a grievous blow. Open diatribes ceased thereafter but privately virtually every leader was reeling off names of alleged anti-socials in the Congress(I) list, while swearing that the nominees in his own camp were of spotless reputation.

In an obvious attempt to restore peace, both Pranab Mukherjee and Asoke Sen were summoned by the high command. But by the time they returned and issued public statements stoutly denying that any of their party candidates could be considered anti-socials, the damage had already been done. Nothing could shake off the impression that the party's powerful underworld connections in the city had resurfaced after years.

Sen, for one, came back a changed man. "I have always been against anti-socials dabbling in public life," he said, and added, "but this does not mean that I have spoken specifically against anyone or that I am implying that our party list is full of anti-socials." He, however, refused to specify whether he had mentioned these points in his letter to Pranab Mukherjee, dismissing the topic with, "It's an internal matter." And perhaps it would have remained so, had local MLA's and MP's been allowed a greater say as originally planned, in selecting the candidates.

"Everything went wrong when the state Government suddenly decided to bring forward the last date for filing nominations from May 15 to May 11," explained Ajit Panja, the convenor of the municipal poll election committee. Panja was initially going about the business of selecting candidates in a fair and systematic manner: receiving bio-datas, recommendations of different MLA's and MP's and scrutinising each application. But the last minute announcement caught him unawares and eventually four working groups were formed, each responsible for choosing candidates from the four city districts—north, central, south and Burrabazar.

"These working groups, as it turned out, were dominated by the Subrata Mukherjee-Somen Mitra combine and its supporters like Mamata Banerjee," charged former Union minister Saugata Ray. The genesis of the controversy was contained in the list prepared by the Burrabazar working group, comprising Subrata Mukherjee, Deoki Nandan Poddar, Rajesh Khaitan and Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. Instead of first getting the list approved by Asoke Sen, MP of the area, it was directly submitted for filing. "Nobody got the list cleared by me," says Sen emphatically.

According to one member of the Burrabazar group, Das Munshi had been given the responsibility of getting the list cleared by Sen, but he had deliberately omitted to do so, and hence precipitated the controversy. "This is absolute nonsense," counters Das Munshi. "The list had been compiled by three MLA's who said they had already taken Sen's consent."

The Burrabazar list provoked a total revolt with most of the district Congress(I) committee members, including its outgoing president K.L. Verma, submitting their resignations and alleging that many of the official nominees had disreputable pasts. For instance, S. Bhimsaria, ward 43, was accused of having links with Sikh extremists and Vijay Upadhyay, ward 22, of being an anti-social. Refuting the allegations, an indignant Rajesh Khaitan remarked: "It just shows to what lengths people will go to discredit their competitors."

Worse still, all over the city's 141 wards, disgruntled Congressmen filed nominations as independents. "There are at least 50 rebels in the fray includ-

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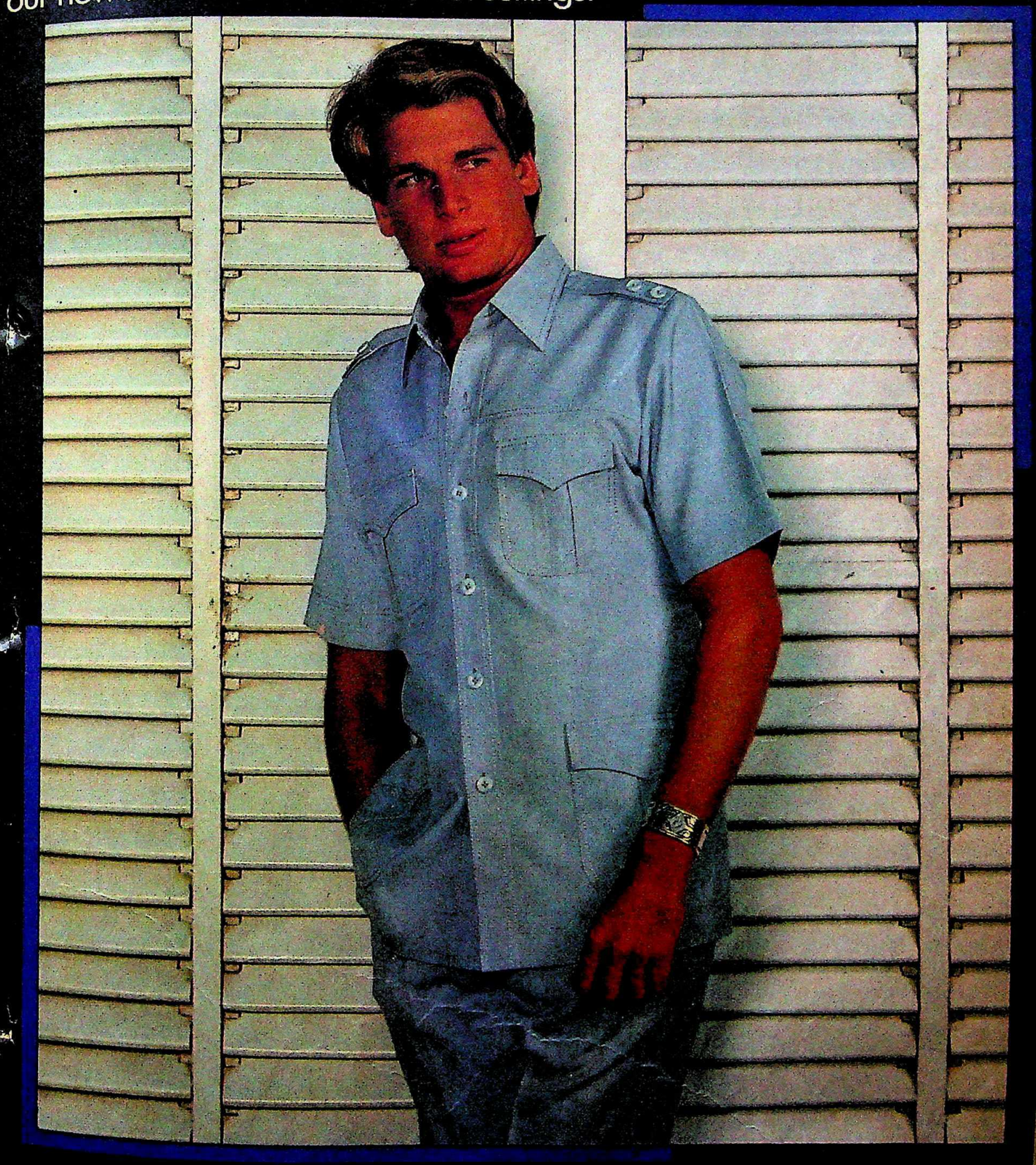

WORSTED AND POLYESTER BLENDED SUITINGS

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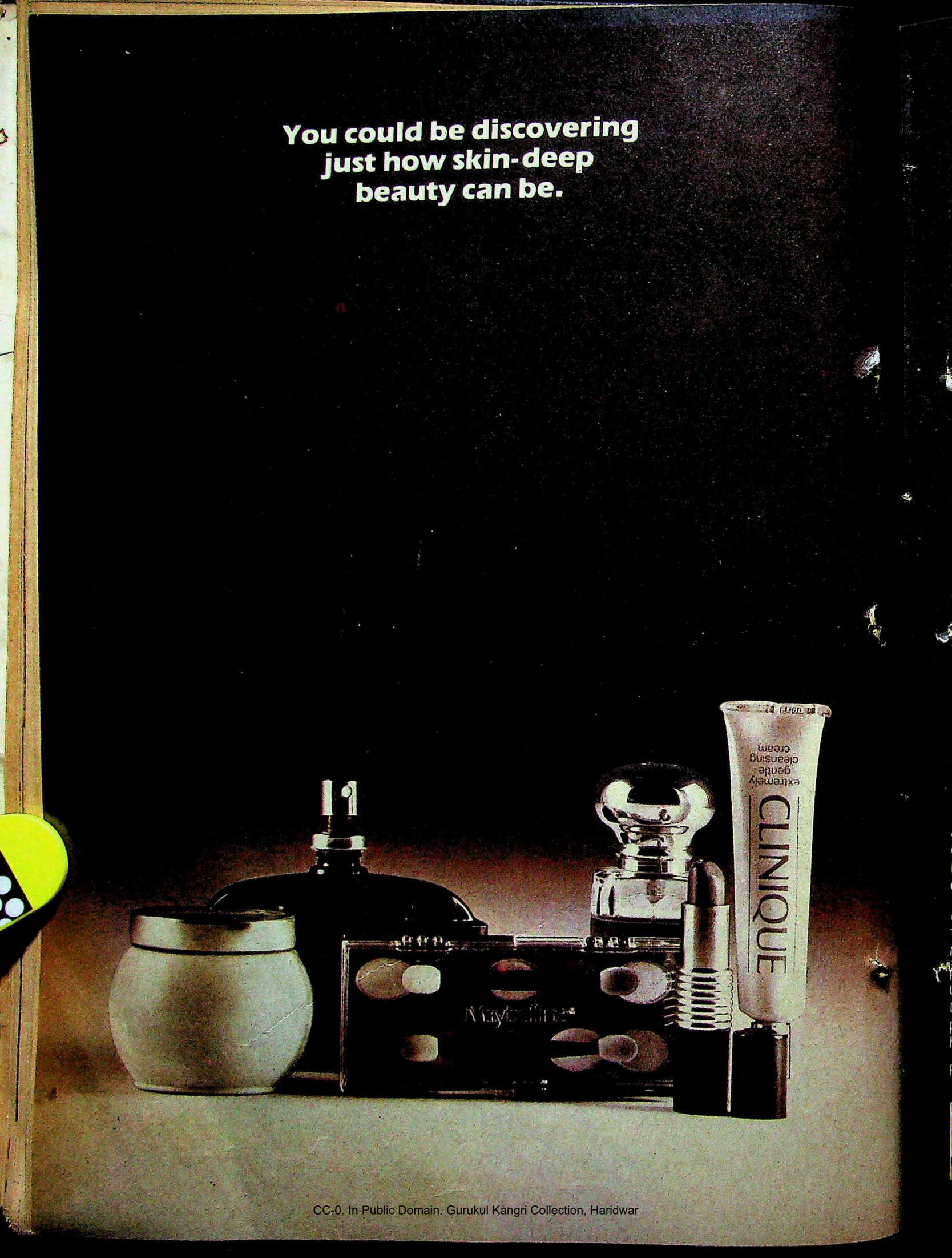

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ing an ex-deputy mayor and a couple of veteran councillors," a Congress(I) leader revealed. Not for the first time, the state Congress(I) leadership reacted too late calling for rebels to withdraw well after the last date. Said Pranab Mukherjee: "Now we have appealed to rebel candidates to write official letters stating that they are withdrawing from their candidatures and will campaign for the official candidates." The rebels were also threatened with suspension from the party for a period of six years if they failed to withdraw. But withdrawals were few and far between.

Pranab Mukherjee explains the unseemly upheavals within the party as a somewhat inevitable consequence of it being "mass-based rather than a closely-knit party". All the same, as Das Munshi points out, the Congress(I)'s chances of success in the municipal polls will depend on "our mobilisation of the rank and file and handling of local egos and personalities". Although Das Munshi and Mukherjee now say all leaders will campaign in unison and ensure that all rebel candidates will step down, the impression that the state Congress(I) is a rag tag bunch united temporarily for winning the elections is unlikely to be dispelled.

The Left Front in comparison has emerged the better, even though some of its own candidates are not without blemish. By deliberately maintaining a long gap of one-and-a-half months between the last date for filing nominations and the elections, the Marxists seem to have ensured that personalities rather than issues come to the fore. Besides, the Left Front has assumed more credibility after INTUC chief Subrata Mukherjee's declaration that the INTUC would jointly participate with left trade unions in resisting lock-outs and closures. This, coupled with Asoke Sen's recent comment at a public function that "Calcutta is not dying", implied that it is the leftists and not the unsympathetic Centre that has the good of the state and the city at heart.

The state Congress(I) had been unable to come out with an election manifesto before the campaign officially kicked off on May 25. The party has now decided to publish a book detailing the backgrounds of its candidates. Pranab Mukherjee has been reiterating that "not a single person among 141 Congress(I) candidates is undesirable," but the Congress(I) boat seemed dangerously close to capsizing. —INDRANIL BANERJIE

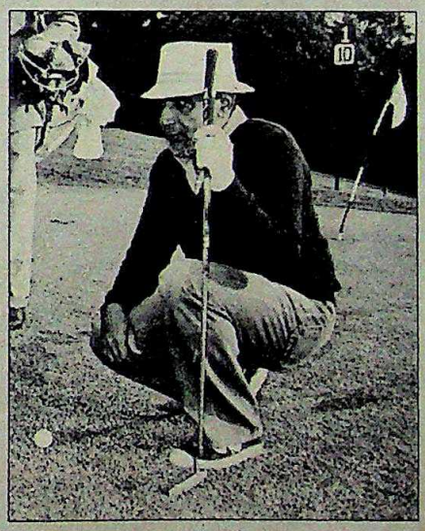
RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

Time Out

HE HAD wistfully spoken about it several times in the past. When his party unexpectedly triumphed in the assembly elections in March, a part of him was sorry that he wouldn't be able to take a vacation. But for a glorious 15 days last fortnight, Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde luxuriated in the freedom of being a private citizen. The 58-year-old charismatic politician ensconced himself in the Tamil Nadu Government-owned Kohinoor Palace in the still beautiful hill station of Kodaikanal, accompanied by three members of his immediate family and a startlingly small retinue of two officials. "It is very necessary for a man who really works to unbend for some time," explained Hegde.

Back home his Government was making news by abolishing capitation fees in all educational institutions but Hegde had carried no responsibilities with him. What he did not forget, however, were his golf-clubs. Sporting a cane-woven cap, informal denims and canvas shoes, Hegde looked every inch the chief executive of a multinational corporation as he intently teed and putted away. Hegde is not new to golf; he first played it in the '60s when his doctor suggested it as a cure for hyperacidity. But he has not played the game with the passion he showed at Kodaikanal. He was at the course at 7 a.m. and he left it only around three-and-a-half hours later after having played all the 18 holes and walking over 12 km.

But, of course, it wasn't a totally carefree vacation for Hegde who has



Hegde playing golf

been bothered by a persisting throat ailment for the last two years. Even speaking for a short time would irritate his vocal chords and he would often lose his voice. Last September doctors in Boston diagnosed nothing wrong with his chords and advised speech therapy as the only cure.

Explained Dr N.P. Nataraja, head of the department of speech sciences at the All-India Institute of Speech and Therapy in Mysore who attended on Hegde: "We found that his basic problem was that he was not speaking at the optimum pitch and he was unnecessarily tensing the muscles of the neck and larynx. So I trained the chief minister (for one and a half hours every day) to speak loudly but without raising his pitch above the optimum level." Nataraja started off by using a computerised pitch analyser; Hegde would speak into a microphone, the pitch analyser would record the pitch and intensity of his voice on a screen and Hegde could see what he was doing wrong. But soon the computer became unnecessary as Hegde developed an ear for the pitch and intensity and learnt to speak at the right pitch. A visibly happy Hegde told INDIA TODAY: "Now I have learnt to speak loudly without tensing my vocal muscles. I feel much more comfortable in the throat while speaking and there is much less strain."

Not that Hegde was not talking. Even at Kodaikanal he held impromptu press conferences at the golf-course. As Hegde said: "My speech therapist has been telling me that a longer life for my throat means shorter speeches but I tend to speak quite a lot." But after Kodaikanal things had clearly changed. At Madurai, on his way back, when party workers pressed him to address them he indicated by sign language that he was unable to speak. It was explained that Hegde had decided to observe silence on Sundays.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI in Kodaikanal

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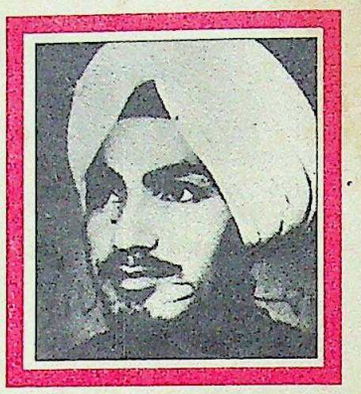
CONFESSIONS OF A TERRORIST



Bhindranwale's hit man Virsa Singh, now in police custody, is a suspect in the murder of Delhi Sikh leader Harbans Singh Manchanda and is believed to be behind scores of bombings and robberies.

EVEN ONE year after the army flushed out Bhindranwale's band of extremists from the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, the real mechanics of extremism in Punjab have remained a more or less grey area. For every little bit of fact there are many fables and for every claim there are many disclaimers.

But now intelligence agencies claim to have worked the problem out to some extent. They have been studiously poring over the long list of "confessions" made by suspects arrested from the Golden Temple and elsewhere, trying to determine the motivations of the extremists and the strategy employed by them. A key "confession" on this list comes from Virsa Singh Valtoha, who was wanted in connection with numerous incidents of murder, robbery and terrorism. Principal Correspondent RAJU SANTHANAM *obtained a copy of the 63-page report of his interrogation and, on its basis, filed this story.*

THE WORLD over, soldiers, scribes, scholars and sleuths have tried for decades to fathom the complex chemistry of an extremists' mind. Yet no one has been able to say just what turns a perfectly normal young man into a terrorist or guerrilla, readily willing to sacrifice his life for a usually unattainable cause he does not know much about.

This is also true of the Punjab terrorist. The large number of veterans in the Indian security network scanning the records of hundreds of suspected Sikh extremists, arrested, dead or at large have yet to come up with a credible answer to that question. But they lay great store by the long list of "confessions" they have collected over the months, and one of these is attributed to Virsa Singh Valtoha.

At 23, Virsa Singh, considered to be one of Bhindranwale's main hit men and blamed for the murder of Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee leader Harbans Singh Manchanda, besides scores of bombings and robberies, is a typical representative of the Bhindranwale band. One of the six sons of Sohan Singh, a small-time farmer from Valtoha village in Amritsar district bordering Pakistan, he comes from the very heart of the Amritsar-Gurdaspur-Tarn Taran-Patti belt from where Bhindranwale got the bulk of his recruits. He was arrested by the army from the Golden Temple complex during Operation Bluestar last June.

More than that, he had the kind of upbringing that, curiously, went into the mental make-up of a lot of Bhindranwale men. After passing his higher secondary examination in the first division, he was trained as a granthi in Gurudwara Baba Budha Bir Sahib in Amritsar. But he soon strayed from the spiritual path. In the B.A. first year examination, which he took in 1981, he could not pass in English and then failed in the supplementary examination in September that year. Frustrated, he joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s Students Federation of India. But, as the Bhindranwale wave began to sweep the Punjab countryside, he shifted allegiance to the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF).

Very soon he came in contact with Kewal Singh, a cousin of AISSF President Amrik Singh who took him to the Golden Temple. Meanwhile he failed yet again to clear his English examination. What followed was almost pre-ordained. As Virsa Singh told his interrogators: "Since I had spare time, I started visiting the AISSF office in the Golden Temple and began to work voluntarily there."

It was during this period that he had his baptism in terrorism. In November, 1982, he says, AISSF general secretary Harminder Singh Sandhu asked him to join a group of youngsters in throwing bombs at the house of Punjab education minister Harcharan Singh Ajnala. He did and told his interlocutors: "Around 8 p.m. Harminder Singh Sandhu and Rajinder Singh Mehta gave us two hand-grenades from Akal Rest House. These were kept under bananas in a paper bag. Anokh Singh and I carried this bag in hand.... We found a newly-built house close to Ajnala's. Anokh Singh and I took off our shoes and trousers. While I held Anokh Singh's shoes and trousers and stayed at a distance he threw the two grenades at Ajnala's house. Both of us ran from there for about half a kilometre and crossed a canal." On returning to Amritsar, "We met Harminder Singh Sandhu and Rajinder Singh Mehta in Akal Rest House. I exchanged my clothes with those of Harminder Singh Sandhu and went to attend my college."

Once he had proved his worth in the raid he became a regular participant in Bhindranwale hit squads. But the turning point in his life came with the bomb explosions at Palika Bazar in Delhi on March 5, 1983. Virsa Singh had actively participated in the raid. Soon enough, Harminder Singh Sandhu told him that a case had been registered against him in Delhi. This was a lie but good enough to unnerve Virsa Singh. Says he: "I did not find my name mentioned in the news reports of these explosions. I, however, began to live in the Golden Temple complex for fear of arrest." That completed his transition from an ordinary college student into a confirmed fugitive hiding from the law. In July 1983 he started living in room No. 20, Guru Ram Das Serai. Three months later he was formally appointed AISSF office secretary.

He soon became a confidant of Sandhu and others in the AISSF hierarchy. Besides, being the office secretary he was also privy to practically everything that happened within the organisation. Presuming that the details of his interrogation

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have been recorded honestly by investigating police officers, he seems to have a good memory and accurately recalls major turning points in the three-year history of extremism in Punjab, besides actions in which he himself participated. Here are some examples, quoted directly from the interrogation report, marked "top secret":

Murder of H.S. Manchanda: "The AISSF was banned on 19.3.84. Harbans Singh Manchanda, president of the Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (DGPC) issued press statements welcoming this and also asking Sant Bhindranwale to vacate the Akal Takht....Harminder Singh Sandhu asked Amarjeet Singh Chawla, chief organising secretary, AISSF, and me to keep in readiness for this work.

"After a day or two Harminder Singh Sandhu and Rajinder Singh Mehta took Chawla, one Gurinder Singh Bhola and me to a room in Guru Ram Das Serai. I had one .455 bore revolver and 19 bullets. Bhola had one .30 bore pistol given to him by Sandhu. It was suggested that Bhola and Chawla should steal a vehicle for this action in Delhi ....Chawla drove the car. We reached the residence of Manchanda (in Delhi) around 8 a.m. We saw Manchanda returning to his home and then coming out in a car. We chased the car. Five or six persons were sitting in Manchanda's car-....Chawla advised that we should take a chance at the red light where the car will have to stop....When Manchanda's car stopped at the red light near Tilak Bridge, Chawla asked me and Bhola to get down and we did so hurriedly. Both of us ran towards Manchanda's car but the light was already green and Manchanda's car had started. I shouted at Bhola to come back but he did not listen to me. He began firing. He fired 6-7 bullets. Meanwhile I too reached near Manchanda's car. I fired six bullets from the other side. Bhola replaced his empty magazine with a new one and fired more bullets. In all Bhola must have fired about 13-14 bullets. It was about 12 noon. We ran towards our car. Manchanda's bodyguard fired 9-10 bullets but none of these hit us. We got into our car which Chawla kept in starting position. He drove us from near Supreme Court. I was dropped near India Gate and Chawla drove away with Bhola. I caught a three-wheeler and reached Nanaksar Gurudwara.

"On 29.3.84 we caught a 9 a.m. train from Delhi and reached Amritsar around 7 p.m. Sandhu and Mehta took us to Bhai Amrik Singh who, in turn, led us to Sant Bhindranwale in Akal Takht. There was some crowd. We waited for about an hour for the crowd to thin out. Bhindranwale expressed his happiness on this work and remarked that he had since pardoned me for my earlier mistake (of calling my beloved to the Golden Temple complex)."

On distribution of arms at the Golden Temple complex: "All the AISSF inmates in the Golden Temple Complex carried revolvers/pistols on their person. These were given to them by Sant Bhindranwale. I too had been asking for one since the day I began to stay in Akal Rest House. Sant Bhindranwale did not give me any weapon for quite some time because he was annoyed with me on account of the fact that my beloved (Balwinder Kaur) had called on me in the Golden Temple complex and this had been brought to his notice. Harminder Singh Sandhu, however, succeeded in getting me one .38 revolver and 25 bullets from Sant Bhindranwale around January 1984."

Militants learn to use arms atop Guru Nanak Niwas

> "All the AISSF inmates in the Golden Temple complex carried revolvers and pistols. These were given to them by Sant Bhindranwale. Later Harminder Singh Sandhu succeeded in getting me a .38 revolver and 25 bullets from Sant Bhindranwale."

On explosions at Palika Bazar and inter-state bus terminus during the Non-Aligned Meet in Delhi: "On the evening of 5.3.83 Harminder Singh Sandhu and Satinderjit Singh Khalsa alias 'PT' told me on the roof of the Akal Rest House that the non-aligned meet was to be held at Delhi and that I had to take some boys to Delhi for throwing bombs and leaflets during that period. On the following day they gave us a bag containing six country made bombs and briefed Kamalinder Singh alias Pappu, Santokh Singh Kala, Dharam Singh Dharma (all of Amritsar) and me that we should throw the bombs at Vigyan Bhawan and on Parliament Street ....In Delhi we stayed in a room at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib. On 7.3.83 Sarabjeet Singh Toni of Amritsar and Sarabjeet Singh, general secretary, AISSF, from Jammu joined us with leaflets. We threw these in Gurudwara Bangla Sahib and in the letter boxes of many embassies including those of the USA and Saudi Arabia.

"The same evening Toni and Kala took some leaflets and one bomb to Palika Bazar. Dharma took one bomb and some leaflets to ISBT. Pappu carried one bomb and some leaflets to Sheila cinema. Sarabjeet Singh (of Jammu) and I took one bomb each....We came back to Amritsar and told Sandhu all about what we had done in Delhi."

On murder of Bua Das, Central Interrogation Agency inspector at Gurdaspur: "On a day in February 1983 I stayed in the Akal Rest House with Harminder Singh Sandhu and Rajinder Singh Mehta. Anokh Singh also came there. I learnt that Anokh Singh had gone to kill Bua Das but did not succeed.

"On that night Sandhu, Mehta and Anokh Singh told me that since my village was also in the same area as Ghariala,

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Bua Das's village I was to join Anokh Singh in killing Bua Das who harassed Sikhs in Gurdaspur and was responsible for breaking the arms and legs of many young Sikhs.

"On the following morning Anokh Singh gave me a .12 bore country made pistol and 12 cartridges. He was carrying a .38 revolver. We caught a bus to Ghariala but were told that Bua Das had gone to immerse his father's ashes in the Ganges. We returned to Amritsar.

"On the day of *dashwan* (tenth day after death) of Bua Das' father, Anokh Singh and I left for Ghariala village. Around 7 p.m. we saw Bua Das going for a walk with his brother. When they reached near the railway station Anokh Singh fired at Bua Das and his brother. I did not fire....We then reported to Sandhu and Mehta in the Golden Temple. They already knew about it and were very happy. On the same evening Anokh Singh took me to see Sant Bhindranwale. Anokh Singh informed him that I was not able to fire from my pistol. Sant Bhindranwale, who was otherwise in a very happy mood, felt a little annoyed with me."

On the robbing of Syndicate Bank, Amritsar, in February 1984: "On a night during February 1984 Sandhu and Mehta asked Gurinder Singh Bhola, Mathura Singh, Surjeet Singh of Amritsar and me to commit a robbery at the Syndicate Bank, Amritsar. Accordingly, four of us, carrying our revolvers/pistols reached the bank which had earlier been seen by Bhola. We threatened the bank staff with our weapons. Bhola snatched away the gun from the bank guard and dismantled it. The cash at the counter was kept in a bag which was taken away by Surjeet Singh. Bhola and I left on the motorcycle while Mathura Singh and Surjeet Singh carried the bag containing the looted money on the scooter. While they were starting the scooter someone snatched the bag away from them....When we informed Sandhu and Mehta in Akal Rest House about the loss of the looted money they felt sorry about it."

On the plans to kill Darbara Singh in Delhi: "Bhindranwale had been desiring the killing of Darbara Singh for a long time. During May 1984 he directed Dalbir Singh alias Fauji and Amarjeet Singh Chawla to visit Delhi and collect information about the residence and movements of Darbara Singh. Chawla talked to me and sought my consent for accompanying him to Delhi. But a few days later he told me that we were now going to kill Darbara Singh rather than merely collect information. He told me that the other men earmarked for this included Bhola, Bakhshish Singh (clean-shaven) and Sukhdev Singh alias Labh Singh...He asked me if we could associate Harminder Singh Gill in this work.

"Accordingly, probably on 7.5.84 Chawla, Fauji, Gill and I met Bhindranwale who offered to give us arms and money according to our demands for this job. He said that Chawla was the leader of the group and anyone disobeying him would be severely punished....On the morning of 9.5.84 they (Chawla and Fauji) collected money and arms from Bhindranwale and came to room No. 22 of Guru Ram Das Serai....They brought one Sten gun and probably three magazines of its ammunition, two .30 pistols, one .38 revolver and a good number of bullets.

"We met at the pre-fixed time and place....One day Bhola, Chawla, Bakhshish Singh and I went to Anand Niketan but failed to locate the residence of Darbara Singh there. Chawla, however insisted that Darbara Singh stayed in Anand Niketan. We returned to Venus Hotel where we were staying....But later we were told that Bhola and Budh Singh (who had returned to Punjab) had been arrested by the police there and thus Sandhu and Mehta wanted us back in Amritsar. Next morning we left from Delhi separately."

Manchanda's body lies outside the Sisganj Gurudwara

> "He began firing. He fired 6-7 bullets. Meanwhile I too reached Manchanda's car. I fired six bullets from the other side. Bhola replaced his empty magazine with a new one and fired more bullets. In all Bhola must have fired about 13-14 bullets."

On disturbances during the Asiad: "I now recollect that during the days of Asiad 1982, one day I had gone to the Golden Temple where Harminder Singh Sandhu and Rajinder Singh Mehta told me that a programme had since been planned to throw leaflets at the National Stadium, Delhi, during the inaugural ceremony of Asiad. Sandhu gave me the draft of the leaflet and asked me to prepare a good number of these in my hand which I should carry to Delhi and join Kamalinder Singh Pappu, Satbeer Singh and Gurmej Singh (all in Amritsar jail now), Nirmal Singh and Harnam Singh Nama at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib. He also gave me money for wayside expenses.

"Anokh Singh accompanied me. His assignment was different from that of mine. I was also given 10 tickets for the final hockey match to be played between the Indian and Pakistani teams. Accordingly Anokh Singh and I reached Delhi on 29.11.82 and stayed in Gurudwara Bangla Sahib where the aforesaid AISSF workers met us on 30.11.82.

"On the following day I was feeling indisposed and, therefore, gave up the idea of courting arrest. I returned from the stadium with Anokh Singh whereas the remaining five of the aforesaid AISSF workers courted arrest after throwing leaflets and shouting slogans. I courted arrest on 4.12.82 from Bangla Sahib

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Gurudwara in the jatha of Parkash Singh Badal.

"Anokh Singh, who had accompanied me to Delhi at the time of Asiad, had the assignment of exploding bombs. But the AISSF workers from whom he was to get these bombs had already courted arrest with the same jatha."

On disturbances on the 1984 Republic Day: "During January 1984, Harminder Singh Sandhu and Balbir Singh Sandhu, secretary-general of the National Council of Khalistan decided that some AISSF workers should be deputed to burn buses, the Indian Constitution and the flag at various places in Amritsar district on the occasion of Republic Day on 26.1.84. It was also decided that the responsibility for this would be owned by the national council of Khalistan.

"Accordingly Harminder Singh Sandhu gave this assignment to two groups of AISSF workers; one consisting of Gurlal Singh, Gurnam Singh and Balwinder Singh and the second consisting of Rachhpal Singh Bhola, Gursewak Singh, Tejinder Singh and Balraj Singh, all of whom were students of Beer Sahib College, Amritsar.... These boys came to the Golden Temple on 25.1.84 and collected one .303 countrymade pistol, one .32 bore countrymade revolver and one hand-grenade along with the Constitution of India and national flag from Rajinder Singh Mehta. They were also given some leaflets in the name of National Council of Khalistan issued by Balbir Singh Sandhu. These AISSF members burnt a roadways bus, the Constitution and the national flag on 26.1.84 at Jhabal. The three boys of the first group were arrested while doing so at Patti.

On the plan to hijack an Indian Airlines aircraft from Srinagar: "One Amarjeet Singh Randhawa, arrested by the army along with us on the night of 5/6 June told me in confidence that Bhai Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu deputed him towards the end of May, 1984, for hijacking an Indian Airlines plane from Srinagar but the plan did not materialise. He said that had this plan of hijacking materialised he would have been in a foreign country and not in the custody of the Indian Army on that day. He also told me that Bhai Amrik Singh and Sandhu planned this hijacking in consultation with Sant Bhindranwale.

"Randhawa told me that a certain Avtar Singh Khalsa of Jammu was deputed to arrange for sending arms into the plane to be hijacked. He said that when he along with his companions met Avtar Singh he asked them to come after a few days as he had not yet succeeded in arranging the arms to be smuggled into the plane. He added that they were to go and contact Avtar Singh Khalsa again but for his arrest during the army action. He further said that one Sten-gun, a pistol and Rs 1 lakh (for expenses abroad) had already been given to Avtar Singh Khalsa by Bhai Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu. These, in my opinion, could still be lying in his custody."

On burning of 36 railway stations in Punjab: "Bhai Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu wanted to pressurise the Government through violence to lift the ban on the AISSF. They conversed with Bhindranwale. A plan for burning a large number of railway stations was also chalked out. After getting the blessings of Bhindranwale they deputed a man of confidence in each district of Punjab to carry out the work. After the burning of a large number of railway stations in Punjab on 14.4.84 these district level leaders of AISSF gathered at Golden Temple, Amritsar.

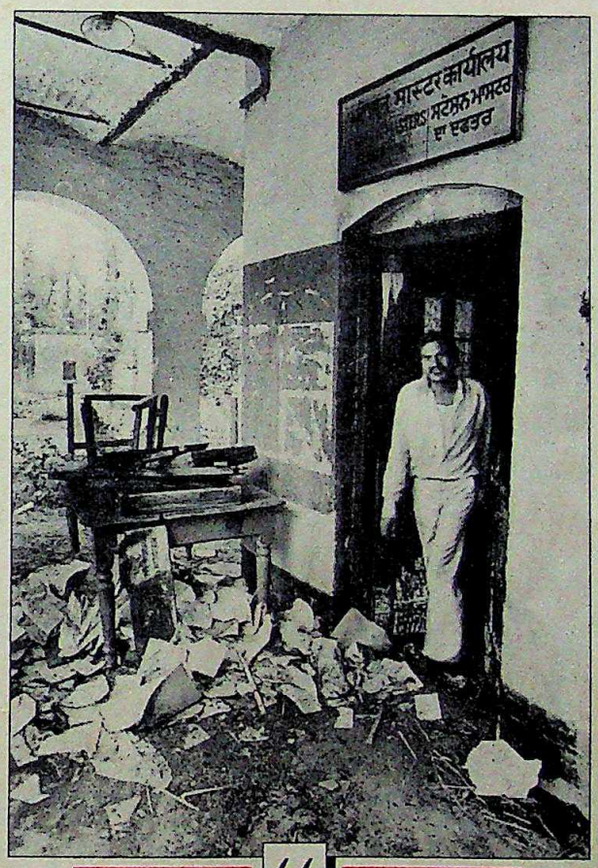
"I also learnt that this action was well-planned. The date and time for burning railway stations and then holding the meeting in the Golden Temple was pre-fixed. After the action all these leaders held a meeting on the roof of Guru Ram Das Langar which was also attended by Rajinder Singh Mehta, Kewal Singh, Baldev Singh, Amarjit Singh Chawla, Harminder Singh Sandhu, Bhai Amrik Singh, Major-General (Retd) Shahbeg Singh, Major-General (Retd) Jaswant Singh Bhullar and Jathedar Ram Singh. In this meeting Bhai Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu thanked the AISSF workers who had successfully carried out the plan."

Virsa Singh is not able to throw much light on the goings on inside the temple complex during Operation Bluestar as he was among the bunch trapped away from the Akal Takht, in the serais. Yet he comes out with the revelation that on June 1, following the heavy exchange of fire between the extremists and the paramilitary forces and troops around the temple Bhindranwale had thought in terms of declaring the formation of Khalistan. In his confession he says: "Kewal Singh (Amrik Singh's cousin) told me on June 2 that Bhindranwale had spoken to Gurcharan Singh Tohra and asked him to announce the formation of Khalistan. But Tohra did not agree."

In strictly legal terms the interrogation report may not be of too much value. But intelligence men assert that they have verified most of the statements to be correct. But their real test, ultimately, will be in the courts for, unless these statements ultimately lead to convictions doubts about their veracity will always prevail.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

A railway station gutted by terrorists in April, 1984



> "I learnt that this action was well planned. The date and time for burning railway stations and then holding the meeting at the Golden Temple was pre-fixed. After the action Harminder Singh Sandhu thanked the AISSF workers who had successfully carried out the plan."

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TERRORIST PLOT

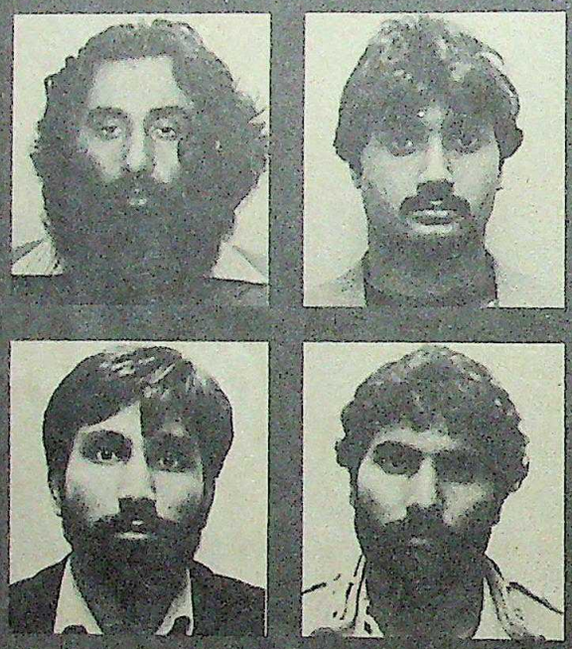
Sinister Designs

FOR ALL the high-level diplomatic rituals acted out between India and the United States in the last several months, it was ultimately the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that scored the most telling blow for improved relations between the two countries on the eve of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit. In a single sweep, the FBI penetrated, busted and arrested members of a US-based extremist Sikh assassination ring which had targeted not only Rajiv Gandhi, but other leading Indian politicians as well. The FBI move not only gave other radical groups with similar intentions notice that they are under continuous surveillance but also helped snuff out some of the much ballyhooed fear in India that an American 'foreign hand' is out to undermine the integrity and stability of the subcontinent.

An INDIA TODAY investigation reveals that while the American 'Sting' operation against the radical Sikh group was a dramatic success in that it led to the capture of the ringleader, Gurpratap Singh Birk, 35, and four co-conspirators, the arrests in New Orleans also blew the cover off a much larger FBI clandestine operation aimed at nabbing at least two dozen Sikh extremists, including Birk, who were shortly to commence a course in guerrilla warfare and explosives training designed to enable them to carry out various assassinations and widespread terrorist bombings throughout India—starting with the planned murder of Rajiv Gandhi during his US visit.

The FBI with the help of the State Department and other US law enforcement agencies had secretly infiltrated this wider conspiracy which agents refer to as the 'Gandhi plot'. The FBI-planned manoeuvre was, however, thrown out of gear with Birk's arrest in New Orleans on charges that he was there to assassinate Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal. The plot was but an offshoot of the wider 'Gandhi plot' and the arrests, made two days before the training camp was scheduled to begin, alarmed other terrorists into flight. "In a way it was unfortunate," said US Chief Attorney Ronald Depetris, who had been monitoring the FBI's operation from New York. "The New Orleans arrests really blew the wider undercover operation. We could have nabbed them all. But then Mr Bhajan Lal's life was in danger. We had no choice." He added that investigations were still in progress.

The arrests of the five Sikh extremists in New Orleans are a grim pointer to the actual threat to Rajiv Gandhi's life. According to intelligence sources small bands of determined and mobilised Sikh extremists are operating as fragmented groups with no apparent central chain of command, but with a well identified purpose. Following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, the Indian Government alerted US intelligence agencies about their well founded suspicions that some of the financing of militant Sikh activity in India originated from US-based Sikh extremist organisations. President Reagan was reported to be personally concerned about increasing terrorism in India and had privately pledged the cooperation of US law enforcement authorities to combat it. One important tool that was to be used for this purpose was the FBI's crack counter-intelligence and anti-terrorist unit—a specially trained force.



(Clockwise from top left) Birk, Suki, Virender and Jasbir Sandhu: pre-empted attack

The American 'Sting' operation against the radical Sikh group was a dramatic success but the arrests in New Orleans also blew the cover off a much larger FBI clandestine operation aimed at nabbing at least two dozen Sikh extremists who planned to carry out various assassinations and widespread terrorist bombings throughout India.

Gurpratap Birk, alias 'John Singh,' was hardly the composite of the run of the mill terrorist. Making between $45,000 and $60,000 (Rs 5.6 lakh-7.5 lakh) a year and a resident of Brooklyn, New York, he worked as a software engineer for the Automated Tools Co, an outfit specialising in leasing computerised tool collection equipment. He came to New York about three years ago, after obtaining a doctorate in engineering from London. Birk holds a British passport, and his wife and children still live in London. "He was very well spoken, very knowledgeable," says Fred Rossetti, an executive working with the same firm, who knew Birk and often had lunch with him. "It's hard for me to think of him as a terrorist. He was shy, well-mannered and amusing." The only time Rossetti said he saw Birk with a turban was when he appeared on a local television news show, after Mrs Gandhi's assassination and made statements that appeared to condone the murder.

Birk's television appearance did not go unnoticed by the FBI's special agents who had been alerted to keep a vigilant eye on Sikh terrorist activities. Law enforcement authorities are reluctant to reveal much about the circumstances under which they were tipped off about Birk's underground activities, but according to one source, Birk first approached a gun-runner, who chanced to be an undercover informant for the FBI, in early November "and made some vague enquiries about paramilitary commando training". The FBI then proceeded to lay the trap.

Meanwhile, undercover FBI agents and informants gained the confidence of Birk and some of his cronies, Lal Singh and

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SIKH EXTREMISTS

The US Network

US and Indian intelligence authorities are convinced that a small minority of Sikhs, who are determined to create Khalistan, have spawned small, scattered networks of fragmented terrorist organisations with no centralised chain of command. These terrorist cells have a central purpose but deliberately avoid contact with one another. There is no apparent centralised brain masterminding their activities either.

Members of these groups come from varied economic and class backgrounds. While it is difficult to pin down where specific sums of money for specific purposes come from, the general sources of their finance are no secret. The international Sikh community, as enterprising and innovative as its Indian counterpart, is awash in money. Sikh millionaires—engineers, traders, physicians—abound all over the world and donate generously to causes in gurudwaras. Many of the North American gurudwaras now out of bounds for Hindu worshippers, have been taken over by radical elements who raise funds for various causes.

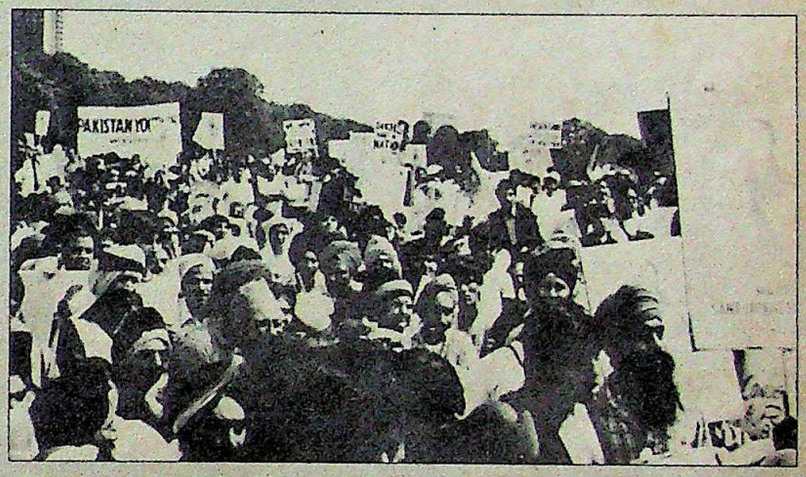
According to intelligence sources, both extreme right wing and left wing ideologues are involved in fuelling the Khalistan cause, aimed at destabilising Punjab and India. Intelligence briefs reveal that there are three known terrorist training camps in Pakistan, just across the Indian border. The closest one is near Gurdaspur, where Sikh guerrillas are being trained by Pakistani army officers. About 200 guerrillas from these camps are believed to have crossed the border into India, shortly before the waves of terrorist bombings rocked the country.

The Government of India has picked up a 'hit list' of Indian politicians to be assassinated, including Rajiv Gandhi. Heading the list is the name of the late prime minister Indira Gandhi, crossed out in red ink. The Indian Government is also apprehensive about communist infiltration of the Sikh movement in Punjab, but is uncertain as to whether the Soviets are playing an active role in the destabilisation campaign. The Indian Government recently captured a communist document prepared by a militant Sikh extremist, who has been in and out of England. The document is a Naxalite blueprint for terrorism, guerrilla warfare and the consequent destabilisation of India, using Punjab as a stepping-stone into the larger subcontinent.

The International Islamic Permanent Tribunal of Lahore, headed by Abdel Majid Turab Zamani, is described in one report as "a coordinating centre for radical Muslim/Khalistani operations into the subcontinent." Zamani has recently stressed the need for "convergence between Indian Muslims and Sikhs for destroying the Indian nation state". The London branch of this tribunal is managed by Siddiqui, a member of the Islamo-Marxist "Muslim Research and Planning Institute".

Al Nusrat, a Frankfurt-based Pakistani publication of Libyan-connected former PPP members, has published regular articles supporting Khalistan. Finances for *Al Nusrat* are apparently derived from the Islamic Council of Europe led by London-based Moazzan Ali, Pakistani member of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Sikh members of the Babbar Khalsa are believed to be receiving terrorist training from the PLO and Red Brigade trainers at a camp in Canada, run by Jon Vanderhorst, one of the world's best-known free-lance mercenaries. The camp is located in British Columbia, outside George, in the Okanagan Valley. Some of the extremist Sikhs arrested or identified in the 'Gandhi plot', that was uncovered by the FBI last month are believed to be hard core supporters of Talwinder Singh Parmar's Babbar Khalsa. They are understood to have travelled from Vancouver to Detroit and then into California and New York where all their movements and activity were monitored by US intelligence forces.



Protest rally being held in London: ominous portents

The International Sikh Students Federation has been established as the student arm of the American-based World Sikh Organisation, now led by expatriate General J.S. Bhullar. The federation is a foreign regrouping of the All India Sikh Students Federation of Amrik Singh, who was killed during the storming of the Golden Temple along with Bhindranwale. One intelligence summary described Amrik Singh as the recipient of funds from the Russian KGB.

A Vancouver-based Babbar Khalsa operative, by the name of Purewal, has travelled to Pakistan several times and is believed to be responsible for recruiting volunteers from both the Babbar and Dal Khalsas. The terrorist recruits reportedly travel on Pakistan International Airline flights from London into Pakistan and from there infiltrate India. The recent transistor bombings in Delhi are reported to have been carried out by these recruits as well as former Indian army Sikh extremists, many of whom were Bhindranwale's advisors.

The leader of the Khalistan movement in West Germany is Triluk Singh who claims "good cooperation" between members of the Kashmir Liberation Front and the 4,000 Sikhs who live in Germany. About 1,000 West German Sikhs are reportedly active in the Khalistan movement. Triluk Singh and Canada-based Talwinder Singh Parmar, who was recently in Germany, are expected to visit a gathering of Sikhs. The meeting is also being billed as a major "strategy session".

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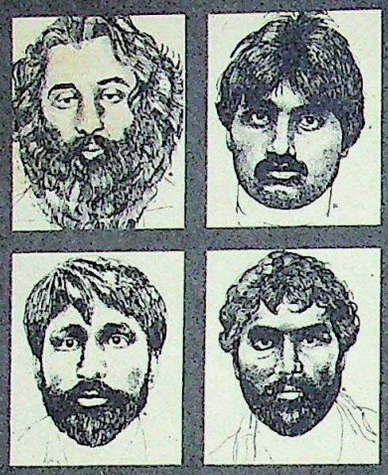
Ammand Singh, both casual workers in their mid-twenties, residing in New York. They set up a meeting between them and a secret agent code-named 'A' in the FBI's reports. The agent is a top counter-terrorism intelligence expert, schooled in urban and guerrilla warfare, explosives and automatic weapons who works closely with the FBI. He is a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honour for Bravery. The undercover agents, posing as Birk's collaborators met him and Lal Singh in a hotel room in New York City on January 26. The entire proceedings were videotaped by concealed FBI cameras. 'A' told Birk and Singh that he headed a mercenary gun-running and guerrilla training organisation based in Birmingham, Alabama, and that he might be able to meet their needs.



The group wanted to overthrow the Government of India by violent means and to create a loss of confidence in the present system through bombing a nuclear power plant, bridges, hotels and public buildings.

Taking their cue, Birk and Singh told 'A' that their group wanted to overthrow the Government of India by violent means. One tactic to be employed was to create a loss of confidence in the present system through bombing strategic locations in India—a nuclear power plant, bridges, hotels, public buildings. Also confiding their plan to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi and other political figures, Birk and Singh asked 'A' to provide the necessary military training to implement such plans. They requested specific training in the use of explosives, automatic weapons, chemical warfare and urban guerrilla tactics. According to their plan, 'A' would train a cadre of men in the US, following which he would then travel to India in the capacity of the group's adviser, until such time as they seemed proficient enough to operate on their own. This initial cadre would, in turn, train others. At the same meeting Birk and Singh are also recorded to have asked 'A' to obtain C-4 plastic explosives for them as well as false US passports to facilitate exit and entry into India for members of the terrorist group.

Following this meeting, the FBI put Birk and his group under comprehensive surveillance including telephone taps. The next meeting between the earlier three and Ammand Singh again took place in a hotel on February 20. Birk acted as spokesman, while conferring regularly with the other two in Punjabi. 'A' was subsequently given dates and deadlines. Birk was anxious that the initial phase be completed by May 10. 'A' was asked to make provision for smuggling arms and explosives into India, adding that they needed explosives sufficient to blow up the size of Triboro, Brooklyn or the Queensboro bridges and a large 36-storey building. The weapons order included small arms and machine-guns, particularly the Ingram 9mm, Mach-10, and grenade launchers. 'A' said he would be able to supply them.

Rajiv Gandhi

During the course of subsequent telephonic conversations between 'A', Birk and Singh from February 20 to April 27, Birk revealed that they had found a remote, wooded site in Columbia, New Jersey, appropriate for the training. It was during this drive to Columbia that Birk asked 'A' to find someone to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. The group also revealed they wanted at first to do this in India, but changed their plan when the prime minister's visit to the US was announced for June. In a bid to lead them on, the agent recommended three options—the costs, merits and feasibility of which were relatively weighed by Birk and Singh, who then made their selection. Details of the payment were left till later.

The die was now cast. About two dozen Sikh terrorists were to reach Columbia, New Jersey, to begin training on May 6. 'A' was to deliver the weapons and explosives on that day. But 'A' promised to do more than that. According to a hidden agenda worked out by the FBI, and the Secret Service, the entire site would be secretly wired with tape-recorders and cameras to record the evidence.Plans had been made by the FBI, the US Attorney in New York, the New Jersey Police, and the Secret Service to raid the training camp on May 8 and arrest the terrorists. But there developed a twisted subplot that created an unforeseen diversion in the FBI's plans to unravel the wider 'Gandhi plot'.

Bhajan Lal had arrived in New Orleans on April 29 for eye surgery. Upon completion of the lens implant at the Louisiana State University Medical Center, Lal was moved to the Meridien Hotel, where he was expected to spend two weeks for follow-up treatment. The Indian Embassy had routinely cautioned the State Department that Lal's name had figured on various 'hit lists' compiled by radical Sikh organisations and that he would require protection. The State Department informed the New Orleans FBI office that Lal was to be treated as an "Internationally protected official". The FBI in turn, notified the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), which immediately put into action a local 'risk assessment programme.' But little did these officials know—until May 3—that a conspiracy had been hatched to kill Bhajan Lal. Birk and associates, having discovered that Lal was in New Orleans, worked out a plan to murder him.

Birk seemed confident that the mercenary organisation led by 'A' could be relied upon to help in a quick kill. 'A' put Birk and an accomplice, Sukhvinder 'Suki' Singh, 30, another New York resident, in touch with Thomas Morris, a Birmingham-based FBI undercover special agent, who, 'A' said, would help the Sikhs with the Bhajan Lal murder. Birk and Suki travelled to mingham and contacted Morris on the phone, telling him that they wanted to hire a hit man to assassinate an Indian official in New Orleans. Morris, who was duly recording the conversation, said that none was available. The two Sikhs responded by saying that they would do the job themselves, and asked Morris to help them purchase a .45 revolver.

In order to create a detailed paper trail and a record that would carry weight in a court of law, as evidence of a murder conspiracy, Morris directed Suki and Birk to another undercover FBI informant in Birmingham for the purchase of the weapon. Subsequently, the two Sikhs bought a .45 calibre

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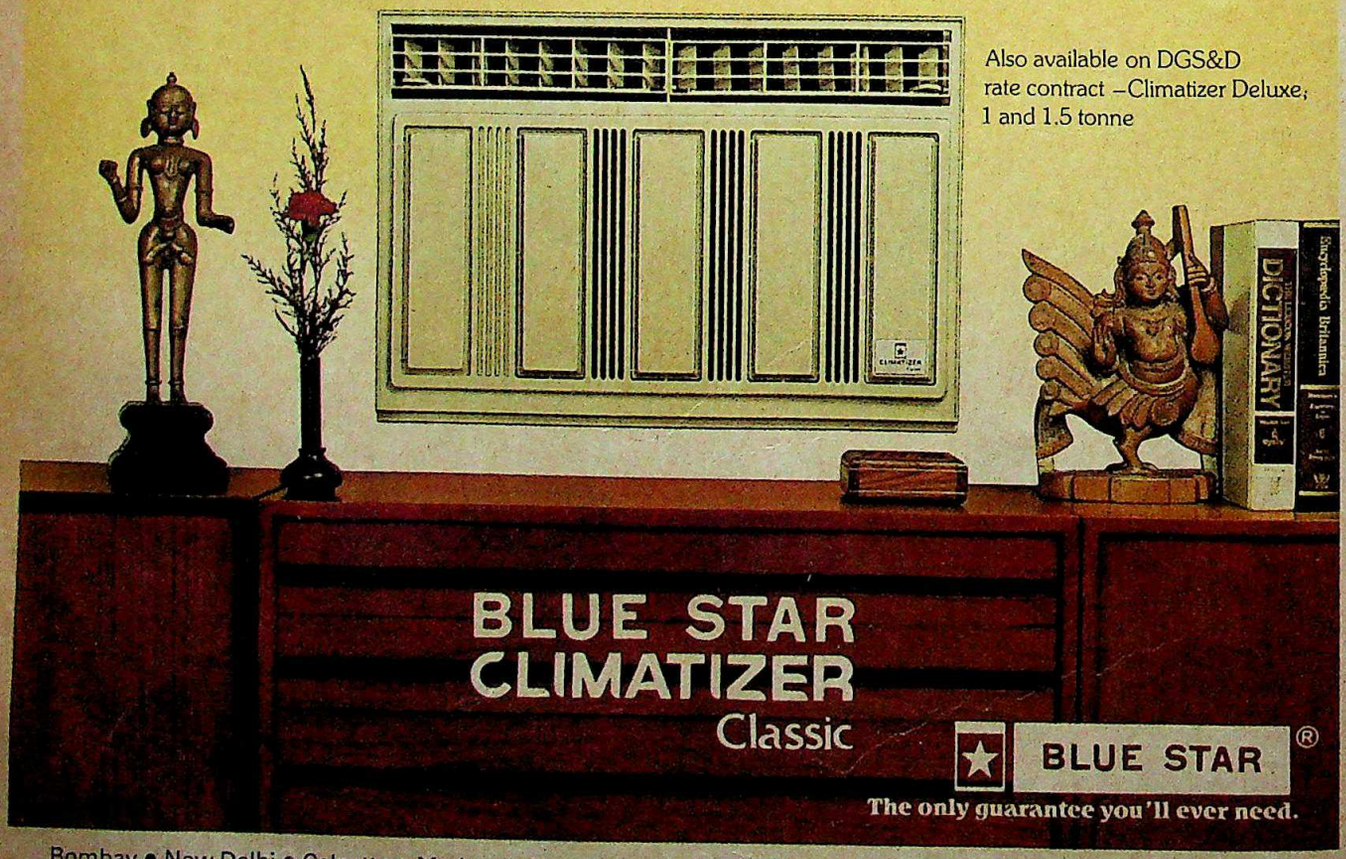

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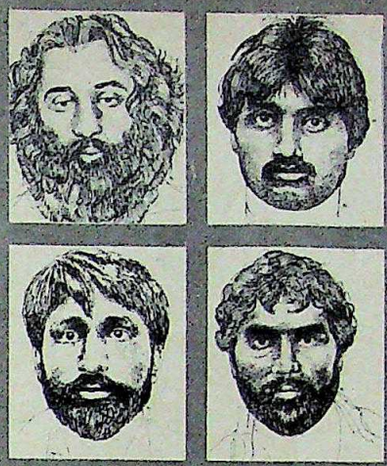
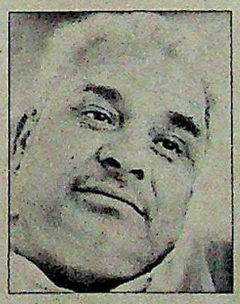
semi-automatic pistol on May 4. An FBI agent, monitoring the scheme, noted the serial number of the weapon. Birk and Suki left Birmingham by 1 p.m., in a dark-grey Celebrity sedan. Under the impression that Morris as well as the gun dealers they had dealt with were 'A's, contacts, and therefore fellow conspirators, Birk and Suki had no reservations about taking them into full uninhibited confidence.

But on May 3, as soon as Birk contacted Morris and asked for a 'hit man', the FBI office in Birmingham, acting on information given by Birk, contacted the FBI office in New Orleans. The NOPD was advised to strengthen their guard. Until then Lal had a solitary Indian security guard to protect him. But on that day, 14 members of the NOPD's intelligence unit went into action. About half of them were detailed directly to protect Lal, and set up a command post outside his room. Sergeant Graig Jennings, of the NOPD intelligence cell, said in an interview: "We advised the minister in general about what was happening on May 3. But on May 4, after we learned that Birk and Suki had obtained a weapon and were on their way to New Orleans we went to Level 1 alert. We were now in constant touch with the FBI, the Secret Service, the State Department, and the US Attorney's office in New York and New Jersey. The Indian minister did not show much concern about the threat."



The arrests however created a new set of problems. Right until the moment the suspects were nabbed, opinion remained divided between law enforcement authorities about the timeliness of the action.

NOPD officials had in fact, advised Lal to consider changing hotels and cancelling a dinner engagement with a friend for that night. However, Lal insisted on going out so the NOPD provided him with a police limousine with a follow-up car in tow. He left at 7.30 p.m. and returned around 9.45 p.m. Within minutes of Lal's return, NOPD officers arrested four suspects on the sidewalk outside the hotel. The four included Birk, Suki, and Jasbir Sandhu, 24, Virender Singh, 25, also of New York. Eight days later, the police arrested Jatinder Singh Ahluwalia, a New Orleans taxi-driver, who had been seen consorting with the other four suspects on the night of May 4. The arrests made that night can be attributed to the presence of mind of an unusually alert Indian government official, who had reached Lal's hotel earlier during the day.



Bhajan Lal

While on his way out through the hotel lobby facing the New Orleans French Quarter, the official had spotted suspicious characters who appeared to be of Indian origin. They were stalking the hotel from across the street. Without further ado, he informed the police. According to a filed report, one of the arresting officers spoke to Virender Singh shortly after he was detained. The officer quizzed Singh about what he was doing in New Orleans. "Singh, who appeared nervous, nodded at Jasbir Sandhu's direction, and stated: 'We're together. He does not speak good English,' asking: 'Do you want me to tell you the truth?' The arresting officer replied: 'Yes, please'. Singh stated: 'We are here to hurt him.' The arresting officer then asked: 'The man in the hotel?' To which, Singh nodded in affirmation, refusing to answer any further questions."

The following day, on obtaining a legal warrant, police searching the car in which Birk and Suki had travelled to New Orleans, found the .45 semi-automatic under the right front seat, a 38 calibre colt, two daggers, a kirpan, a map of New Orleans with a circle around the area Bhajan Lal was staying, as well as several newspaper photographs of Lal.

The arrests, however, created a new set of problems. Right until the moment the suspects were nabbed, opinion remained divided between law enforcement authorities about the timeliness of the action. One school of thought held that the gang should have been arrested only during the actual murder attempt. Sergeant Jennings believed that would have been running too great a risk. "Birk and his crew were out there making a final reconnaissance. The next step for them would have been the murder attempt. They had no local address or any overnight bookings. My guess is, they wanted to make a quick hit and drive back the same day, without leaving a paper trail."

Even after the arrests, the authorities were unable to take a decision whether to indict the four immediately, or let them off without so much as an inkling that the wider 'Gandhi plot' had been penetrated and capture them later at the training camp. On May 6, about 20 State Department security personnel and officials arrived in New Orleans for a high-level strategy session that lasted two days. The authorities were in agreement that the failure of Birk and his associates to return to New York had probably already roused the suspicions of many of the other conspirators, spurring them to flee. They decided to wait until May 13 before announcing the arrests. The delay would also give the FBI's New York office adequate time to prepare a detailed case indicting Birk, Lal Singh and Ammand Singh on charges of attempting to assiassinate Rajiv Gandhi.

Ahluwalia, the New Orleans taxi-driver who was seen on May 4 outside Lal's hotel, was trach down and finally arrested in his home by FBI agents on May 12. the authorities had deliberately decided to stall his arrest since he was a local resident and the news would have been given unwanted publicity in the local papers—thereby jeopardising the deliberate black-out that the FBI wanted so carefully to maintain. Ahluwalia, who is otherwise a clean-shaven sikh, insisted on sporting a turban at the time of his arrest.

On May 13, nearly ten days after the original arrests, US prosecutors in New York and New Orleans issued simultaneous announcements to the effect that they had foiled a plot by Sikh terrorists to assassinate Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal. Birk will be tried on separate charges in both states. Meanwhile, the conspirators are being held without bond. The authorities fear that if he is freed on bail, Birk is likely to flee the country. His passport bears witness to his travels in virtually every country in Europe.

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INDO-FRENCH TIES

Behind the Glitter

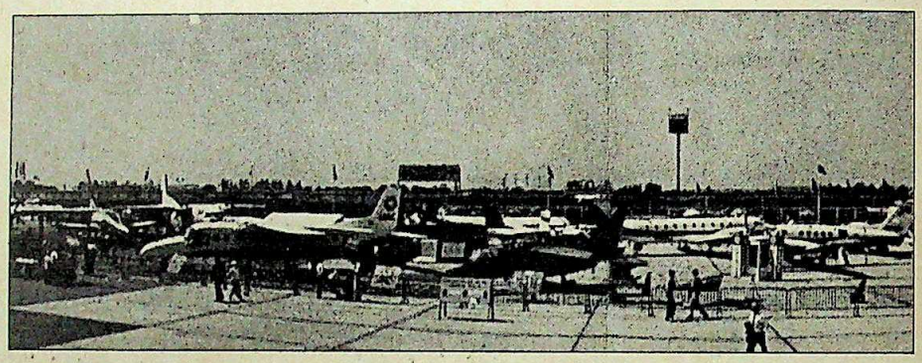
THE FESTIVAL of India in Paris is not going to be all glamour and glitter. While gay Parisians savour Indian delicacies and Munna waltzes to western tunes, France and India are going to clinch crucial issues that will go a long way in strengthening bilateral relations. Which is why such considerable importance is being attached to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to France, where he will arrive a virtually unknown figure, but for vague comparisons in the press for his "remarkably identical interests" with his French counterpart, the 39-year-old Laurent Fabius.

With the espionage affair conveniently forgotten, the Indian cultural efflorescence will, without doubt, dazzle the French, who perhaps are consumed by the most voracious cultural appetites in the continent. But there is more to the visit than the Festival.

Befitting the vivid cultural ambience of the visit, a major announcement is likely regarding the opening of an ambitious cultural centre in Paris. A cultural centre is seen as the most natural culmination of such an extensively mounted cultural pageant as *L'Annee de l'Inde*. Details regarding the venue, financial assistance, and the cost of maintenance remain to be ironed out. In this respect, while the various Alliance Francaises in India are on to a good deal there is virtually no parallel Indian centre here.

Heading the Prime Minister's agenda are bilateral talks with French President Francois Mitterrand and Fabius. He is also expected to meet leading members of the socialist cabinet, including Charles Hernu, Roland Dumas, Pierre Beregovoy and Edith Cresson. One vexing tripwire that will come under searching scrutiny is French financial terms, which are notoriously unattractive. The West Germans and the British consistently offer better financial packages. If Indo-French trade and commerce is to really take off, the French will have to offer competitive rates. If not, this vast effort would be yet another tale of squandered chances.

Besides traditional favourites like disarmament issues, one topic where Mitterrand could get fulsome accolades would be for his formidable *tour de force* at the recent Bonn summit. There, western media attention was spotlighted on Mitterrand's efforts at countering the technical challenge posed by Ronald Reagan's 'Strategic Defence Initiative' with his own proposal, the 'Eureka Project'. 'Eureka' envisages European cooperation in such areas as lasers, artificial intelligence, high-powered computers and microprocessors. What was of more specific interest to the developing world was the fact that the French President stymied all efforts to agree on a date for the GATT conference. The essence of his argument in Bonn was: "GATT consists of over 90 nations, not just the seven of us. We ought to be consulting the developing countries too." Whatever label is attributed to it, a 'new international monetary conference' or a 'new Bretton Woods meeting', the idea would have natural Indian endorsement.



Display at the Paris air show

Rajiv Gandhi is also expected to address a special session of the beleagured UNESCO. The organisation has circled its wagons and is now beset by its executive board's budget battle. India has more or less been supportive of the organisation and its besieged Director-General, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, unlike a growing number of western nations which have excoriated UNESCO's profligate ways. Any expressions of support for UNESCO will no doubt be more than welcomed by its corraled director-general.

The prime minister is also scheduled to visit the renowned Paris air show at Le Bourget, which every two years unravels the latest in aircraft both military and civil as well as a dazzling paraphernalia of avionics and aerial weaponry. This year, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited too will be represented and will display its latest turbo-prop trainer, the HTT-34.

However, there is renewed anxiety among security experts following the publication of a secret American Embassy document that predicts a terrorist attack at the air show. Officials here have already been disquieted by the dire threats from 'Khalistan' zealots in London against the Indian prime minister as well as by the fact that Jagjit Singh Chauhan has been paying clandestine visits to France with the backing of a Paris-backed organisation, CIPRO. It is no help either that Rajiv Gandhi arrives here precisely a year after Operation Bluestar, a further goad for 'Khalistan' protagonists. Already, plans for Mitterrand who has been under an unprecedented security cordon during the past year and for Rajiv to 'mingle' in the 'mela' have been wisely dropped.

If armament and fighter planes have dominated news columns when Indo-French ties are discussed, one area that has escaped media attention has been the escalating scientific cooperation which could deservingly become a fulcrum of Indo-French relations in the future. Spearheading this cooperation could be the formal announcement during the prime minister's visit of an absorbing project that has been hanging fire for three years: an Indo-French centre for the promotion of advanced research in New Delhi. The idea had taken birth when the then President, Giscard d'Estaing, visited India in January 1981. The aim of this ambitious institute is to promote a binational programme of research in priority areas of futuristic technology. The protocol on the protection of the environment is yet another significant step in the rapidly expanding Indo-French scientific cooperation.

So, the festival is not going to be just fun and games, after all. While the French get to know India, the two nations are going to nail down certain issues of importance to both.

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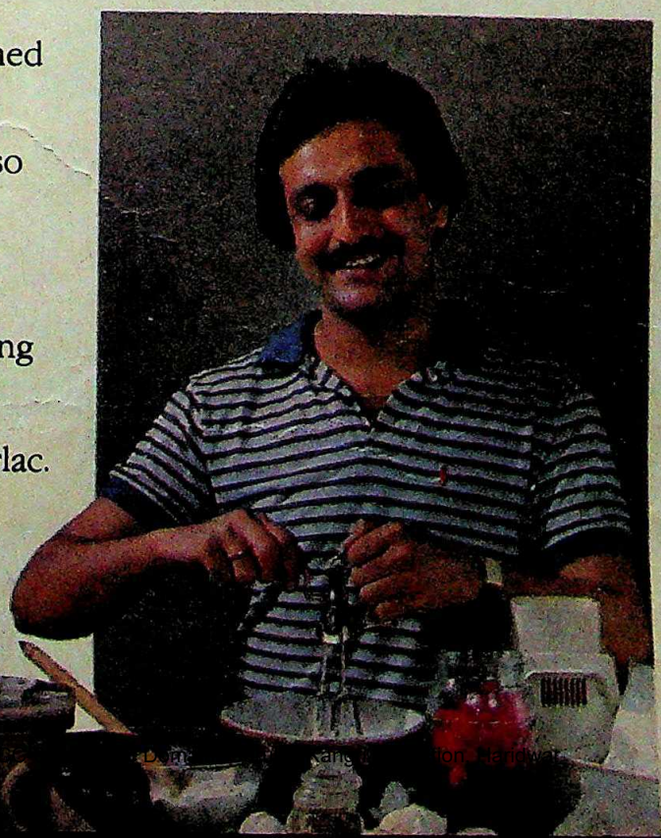

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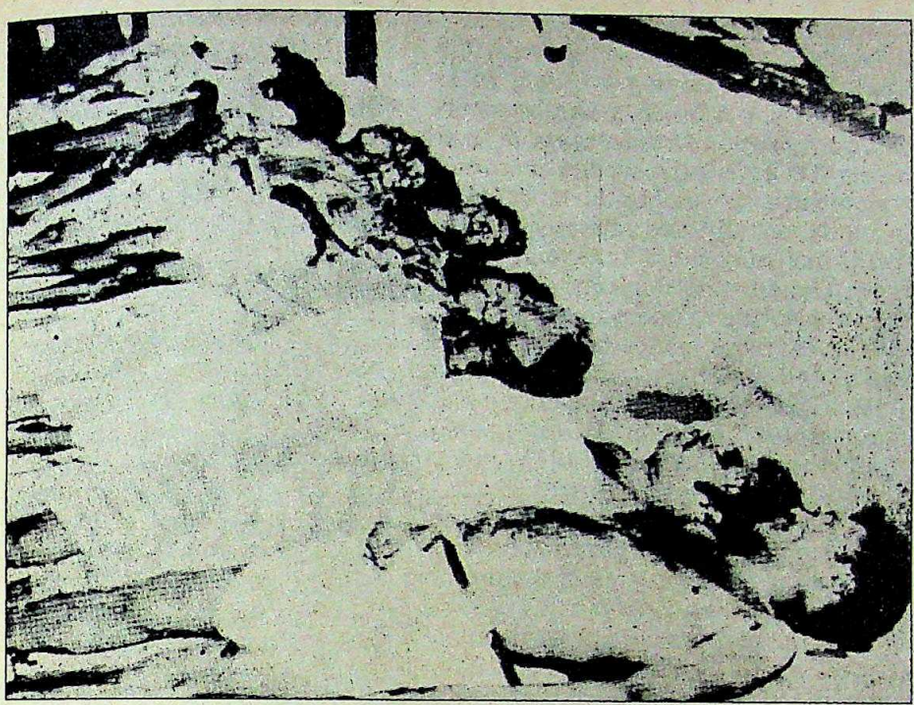

Victims of the Anuradhapura massacre: killed in cold blood

SRI LANKA

Unbridled Terror

IT WAS all over in less than half-an-hour, a blood-splattered scene straight out of a movie by Sam Peckinpah, an exhibition in pure, unbridled terror that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or Abu Nidhal, the Palestinian terrorist leader, would have envied. May 14 in Anuradhapura, the holiest of cities to the island's nearly 12 million Sinhalese Buddhists, turned out to be one of the bloodiest days in Sri Lankan history and a new chapter in the annals of terrorism.

At eight in the morning the street leading to the market-place and old bus station for short-distance passengers was already quite crowded with schoolchildren, accompanied by their parents, rushing for their school bus. There were the early morning shoppers and others waiting for government offices and banks to open. Vesak, the two holidays marking the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death, had brought several thousand pilgrims by bus, train and coach to Anuradhapura, and more were still pouring in. A Ceylon Transport Board bus pulled up at the bus station and four young men in military-style uniforms and carrying AK-47s alighted and walked towards the police station some 300 yards away. Uniformed service personnel, however, are now a common sight in Anuradhapura, as indeed is the army in other parts of the island, signifying the main post-July 1983 change that has occurred in the Sri Lankan socio-political scene.

Then the rest of the passengers (more than 20, said an eyewitness later) got down and in what was perhaps a perfectly rehearsed drill, formed two rows along the sides of the street. Suddenly a command, a few words shouted, they opened up with their automatic weapons, mowing down every person in sight.

With well over 200 persons dead or bleeding to death in the street, the attackers got back into the bus and drove to the Sirimaha Bodhi, a temple and the sight of a sacred Bo tree held in great veneration by all Buddhists. They opened fire again at the temple premises killing several, including one monk and four *bhikkunis* (nuns). The final casualty figure given by the Government two days later was 146 but the death toll, Anuradhapura residents say, is in fact closer to 200.

Strangely, no separatist Tamil guerrilla group claimed responsibility although a report from Madras said that the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) had admitted having launched the attack. But TELO officially denied it the next day. The Government, however, was sure it was an operation conducted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the best-known of the militant groups, led by V. Prabhakaran. The National Security Minister Lalit Athulathmudali told INDIA TODAY: "It has all the hallmarks of a LTTE operation, especially the cold-blooded attack and its ferocity." But the LTTE has denied any involvement, and other groups have condemned the massacre in the strongest terms. "Probably they realised the international reaction was one of shock and horror," said a senior ruling United National Party (UNP) member, adding, "the Indian Government must have been greatly embarrassed too."

While Tamil opinion in Jaffna, the northern capital, Colombo and Madras views the brutal massacre as a retaliation for the killing of Tamil civilians by the troops in the north, President Jayewardene left the question open. Speaking at a ceremonial opening of a suburban police station, he said: "It is reported that the Anuradhapura attacks were acts of revenge for the killings of civilians in the north by security forces during the last few months. If civilians have been deliberately killed, it is wrong and unproductive. The security forces are trained to follow commands issued by their superiors."

Just prior to the Anuradhapura massacre, the Indian press and radio had been reporting allegations by Tamil leaders of indiscriminate killing of civilians. The president of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), M. Sivasithamparam, now in Madras, claimed that 150 Tamils had been killed in Valvettiturai in the north after a Sinhalese major, had been killed in a grenade attack by the separatist rebels. While Tamil sources in Jaffna put the figure much lower, the Government claimed that all the deaths were caused in "anti-terrorist operations" or when army patrols were fired upon, and the army returned the fire. "Civilians may get caught in the crossfire," said an official. However, there have been persistent reports of Tamil civilians being killed in the north and east. "In every one of these cases, we have instituted official enquiries," says Athulathmudali. The Government, nonetheless, is starting to get worried over the growing indiscipline in the armed forces. Both the US State Department in a report to Congress, and two British MP's, guests of the Sri Lanka Government, in their report to the British Parliament, have had reason to comment on this question and voice their

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anxiety and misgivings on the situation.

President Jayewardene dwelt at length on this issue during his speech, placing it in a much broader perspective which indicated the Government's growing worry about the role of the army. "In a democracy," he said, "the security and administrative services come under the control of the political leaders elected by the people. When such leaders are not elected by the people but have taken authority by force and keep it by force, it is a dictatorship. I will never adopt such an attitude, nor will this government permit this to happen. That is why in the direction of this war, orders are ultimately given by elected leaders, whoever may be in the seats of power." Jayewardene's speech was made a few days after a Sinhalese major had to shoot and kill a Sinhalese soldier who went berserk and killed six Tamil refugees.

After the 1971 Tamil youth insurgency, the army's ranks were rapidly swelled by Mrs Bandarnaike's government. The new recruits came largely from rural areas and were poorly trained and equipped.

Transported into an alien environment to fight a sort of a war he was not mentally or professionally equipped for, the Sinhalese soldier saw it as a war against the Tamils, a war that has gone on for 2,000 years, a history he has absorbed through myth and legend and school textbook.

THE ANURADHAPURA massacre, however, did not provoke a massive Sinhalese backlash in the south, and the community remained calm. Relieved as the Government is, no doubt, it is nontheless nagged with doubt whether the Sinhalese may be turning anti-government and feeling that the Government is incapable of coping with the separatist insurgency. State Minister Ananda Tissa de Alwis admitted that 45 per cent of the people are opposed to the Government. Prime Minister Premdasa, however, warned the opposition against thinking on capitalising on the UNP misfortunes.

With rising economic dissatisfaction, the Government may begin to feel that it is faced with the thankless situation of fighting the northern war in an increasingly hostile southern environment. Meanwhile, the Maha Sangha, the ranking Buddhist clergy, has stepped in, assuming the role of an activist intermediary, while a long quiescent and timorous opposition has suddenly sprung into action in alliance with the monks, and under their protective umbrella. The Mahanayaka Asgiriya, one of the most influential and respected members of the higher clergy, has had talks with former premier Mrs Bandarnaike and proposed that a new advisory committee on national security should be formed. In order to avoid party politics, he has suggested that he be its head. Later, he had talks with three other left-wing opposition parties.

President Jayewardene promptly summoned a conference of all heads of Sri Lanka's clergy and told them that he was ready to seek their advice. Making clear the distinction between state and church, he offered to seek and consider advice, but was obviously unwilling to make institutional changes which give a decision-making role to the clergy. "After 1983, the army was thrust into politics," says a Socialist Party leader, "now the Government may be worried that the clergy is trying to thrust itself."

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

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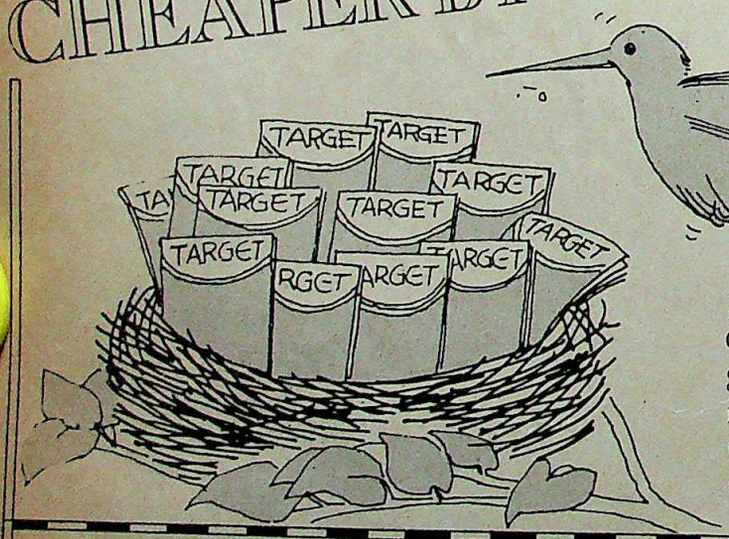

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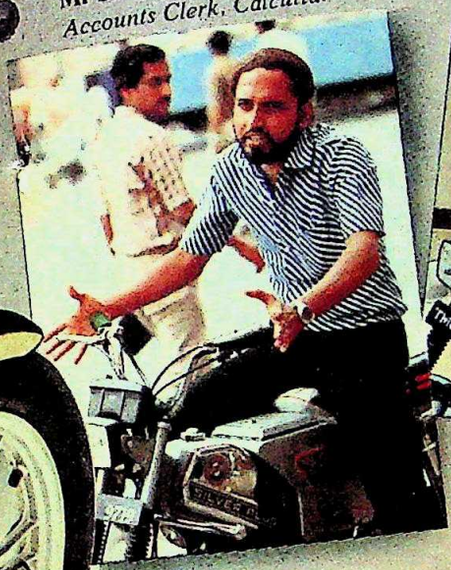
"Sudden brake'. Ek dum stop. No vibration, no skidding."

Mr Shibdas Banerji
Accounts Clerk, Calcutta.



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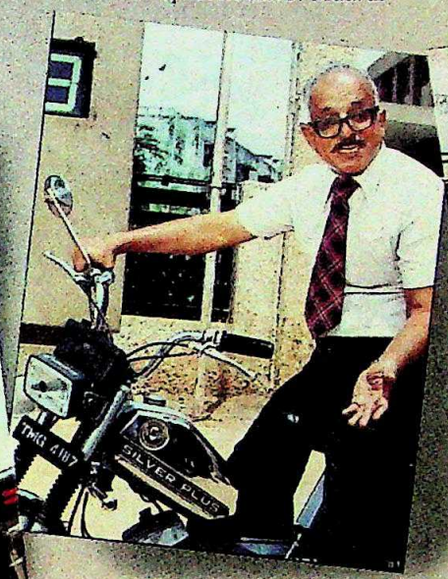
Medical Representative, Madras



"Superb pick-up. Zooms in and out of Calcutta traffic. Reaches me on time."

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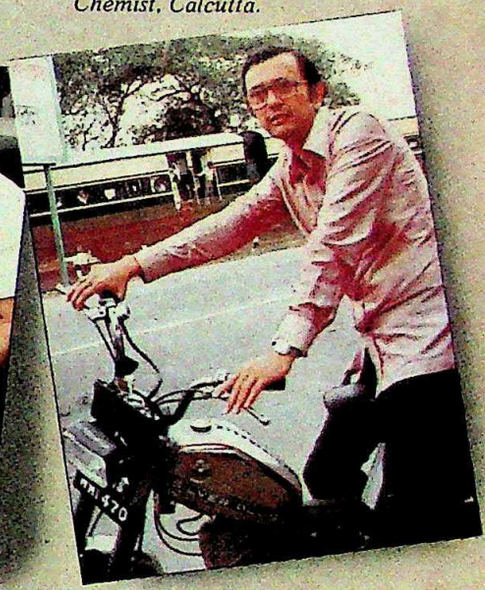

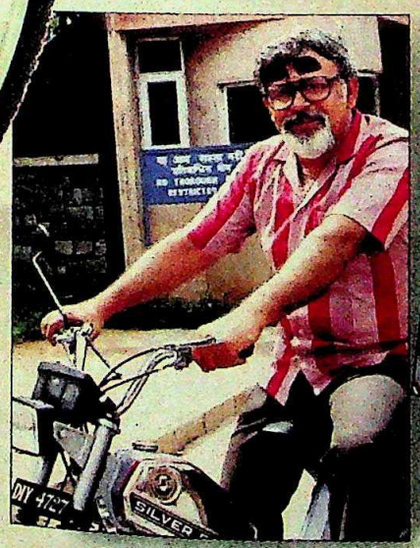

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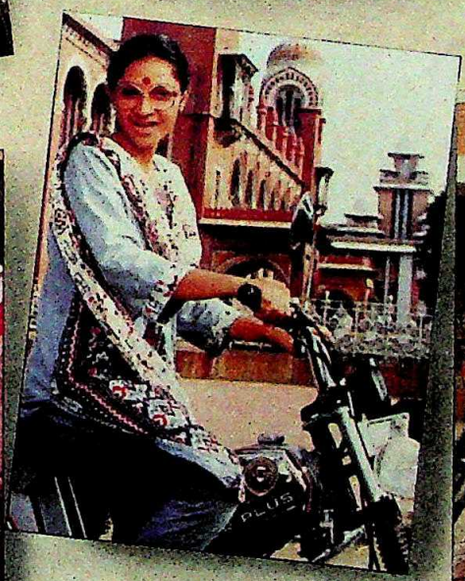
Mr S Nagpal
Professor, IIT Delhi.



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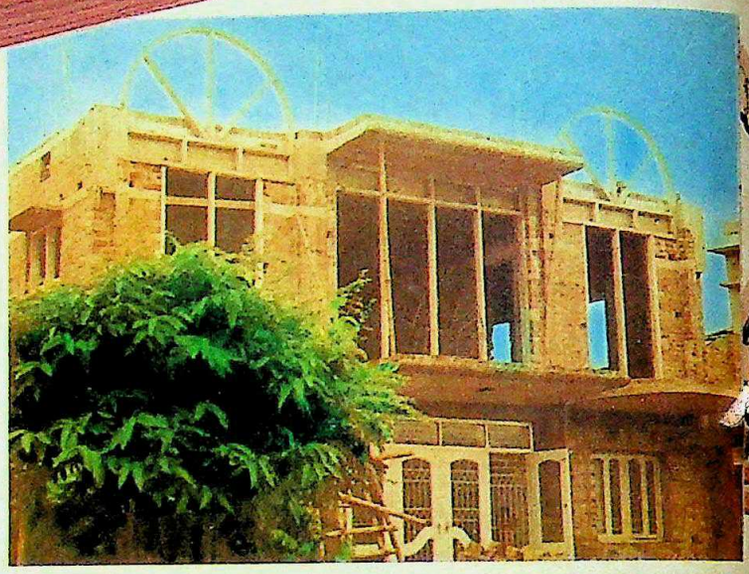
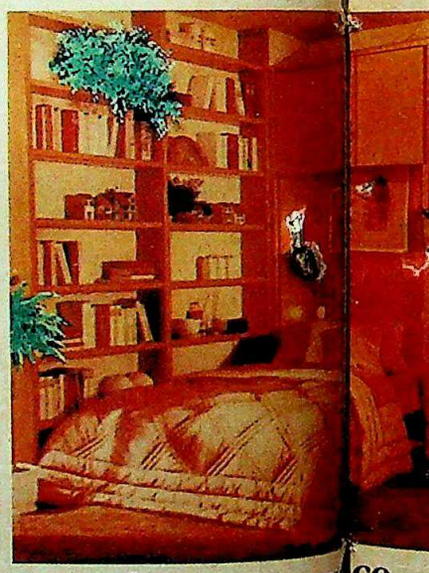


My dreamhouse...

Our dream anniversary dinner...



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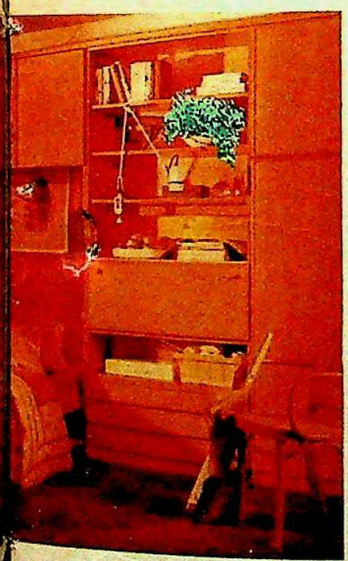

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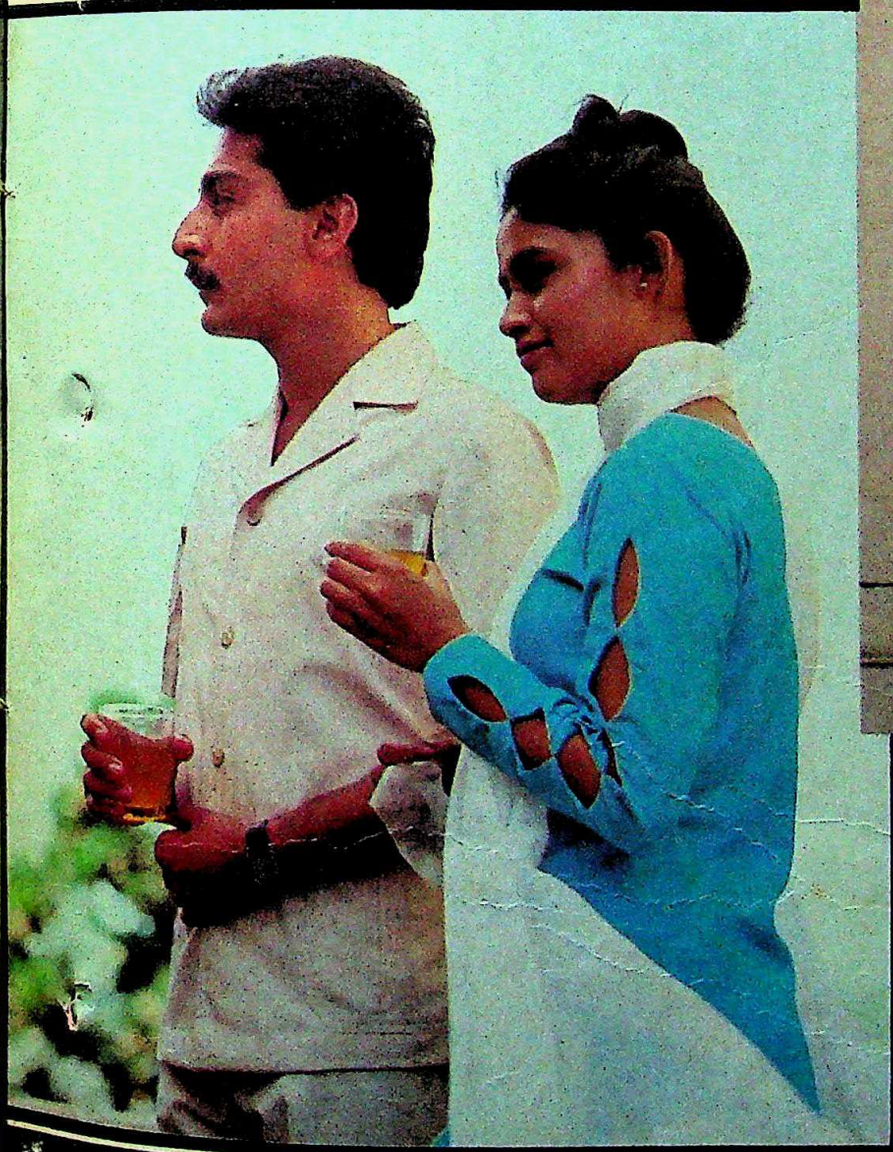

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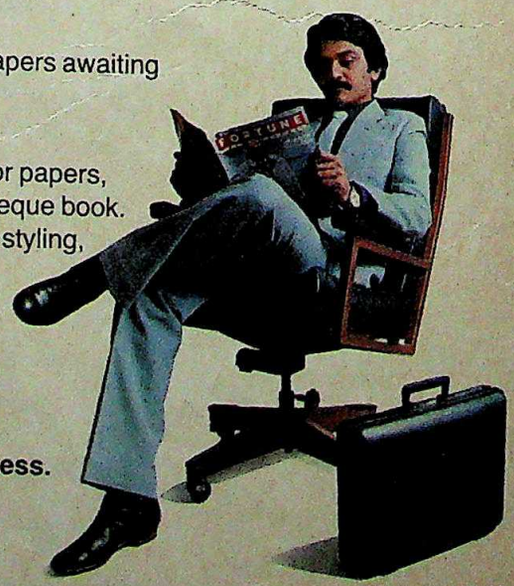

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INDO-US TIES

The Key Issues

THERE are interesting similarities and differences between Indira Gandhi's and Rajiv Gandhi's interactions with the United States and the Soviet Union in the formative years of their respective prime ministerships. Mrs Gandhi's first journey was to Washington, her second to Moscow. In her son's case, the process, however, is reversed; the road to Washington runs through Moscow.

Indira Gandhi began as a weak prime minister in a year of great difficulties for India—the demanding wages of the 1965 war had to be paid in the midst of near-famine conditions; India was heavily dependent on PL-480 grains from the US. Her World Bank-oriented economic advisers counselled a certain degree of submission to American prescriptions to cure the economic ailment: massive devaluation of the rupee, cut down on public subsidies and opening the economy to private foreign investment. Mrs Gandhi had to put up with heavy American pressure to mute her criticism of the bombing of North Vietnam, and was actually punished by President Johnson for praising Ho Chi Minh as a great patriot: each shipment of PL-480 grain to India was required to get the President's personal approval!

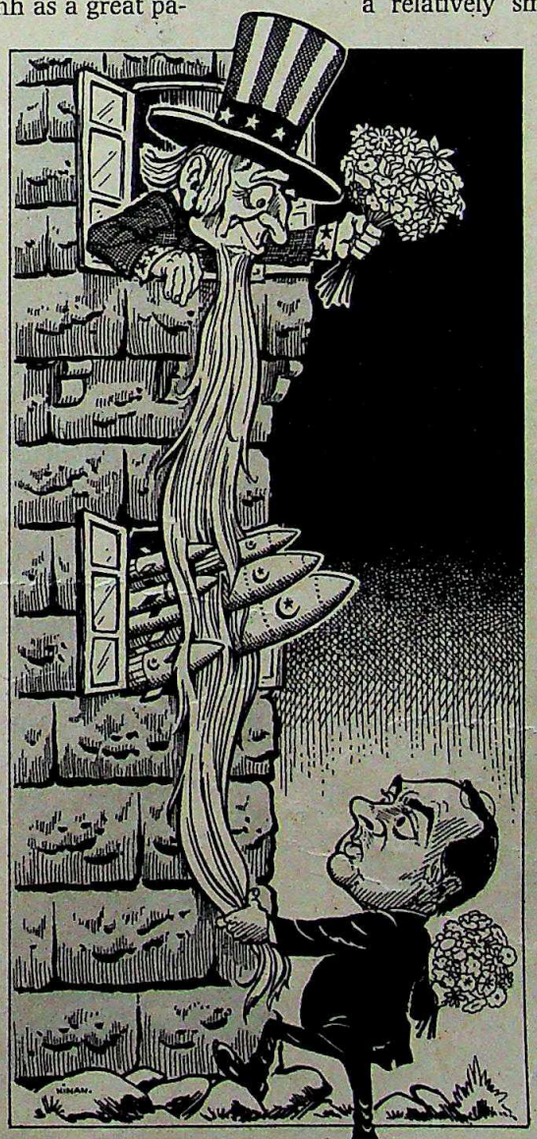
Rajiv Gandhi will be going to Washington in June not from a position of weakness but from a position of strength. India is not dependent on the United States for anything whatsoever. India is a food-exporting country. It produces more than one half of the petroleum it consumes. The Indian rupee is quoted in a number of European stock-markets. India makes a great deal of the weapons it needs, and has an assured supplier of high-tech weapons in the Soviet Union on terms and conditions no one else can match. Most of the high technology the United States would like to sell to India can be obtained from Japan and Western Europe very much on Indian terms.

The Indian modernisation programme, to be paced up by Rajiv Gandhi, cannot absorb frontier technology immediately or in the next few years except in very limited areas. Frontier technology demands a long gestation time, and tends to dictate long-term dependencies. Besides, there is the crucial question of long-term consistency and the final reliability of an American connection.

None of these points argues against an improvement in Indo-US relations. All of them, however, stress India's position of strength. Rajiv Gandhi will be in an excellent position to bargain with the Reagan Administration, demanding an adequate return for everything he may agree to give. An improvement in relations with the United States will make India's role in regional and world affairs stronger still. It will have a sobering impact on policy makers in Pakistan. It will help restore a realistic perspective in the hardliners of President Jayewardene's cabinet. It will make India's relations with the Soviet Union even more equal than it is now, and it may induce the Chinese to walk a little faster on the road of normalisation of relations with both the USSR and India.

However, for none of these desirable benefits has the prime minister to yield more than he can get from the White House. More and more countries are now adopting the bargaining model of negotiations with the United States. France, Japan and China are the principal adopters of the bargaining strategy. India must join their ranks.

A great euphoria has been built in the United States as well as India around the prime minister's Washington visit. There is undoubtedly an upsurge of American popular interest in India, created largely by a succession of films—*Gandhi*, the TV serial *Jewel in the Crown*, *A Passage to India*, *Heat and Dust*. Several American specialists in international strategic affairs have been taking a new look at India since 1982-83. One can find whiffs of fresh air in the writings and speeches of a relatively small number of American strategic thinkers candid enough to acknowledge India's rising stature as an industrialising power and the worldwide decline of American influence.



However, a technicolor arch of wishful hopes has been thrown over these cautious, tentative new-look attitudes towards India. The image-makers in Washington DC have crafted the image of India's new prime minister as young, pro-US, technology-addicted, wedded to private enterprise and a friend of the multinationals. Their counterparts in India have built a rainbow of expectations—large inflows of American private capital and frontier technologies and a fundamental change in India's time-tested development strategies. In getting ready for his Washington visit, the prime minister has to ask himself two basic questions: what does the US want from India and what is it prepared to give in return? And secondly, what it is that India would like to get from the US and what can India afford to give in return?

Americans have prospected the post-Indira Gandhi Indian scene in depth. Since November 1 last year, nearly a hundred American VIPs have been to India probing, exploring, groping, reappraising. Nothing comparable has been done by India. Rajiv Gandhi has been relying on the competent Indian ambassador

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in Washington, on a few of his economic advisers who have scoured the American scene since his assumption of office, and on the wisdom of men like Chairman G. Parthasarathy and Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari to acquire a realistic grasp of the United States in the first year of Ronald Reagan's lame-duck second Administration.

At the same time, the men who constitute his closest circle of aides are heavily drawn from the worlds of computers and multinationals; many of them have been closely connected with the World Bank and the IMF. Are they competent enough to supply the prime minister with adequate answers to the two questions he must put to them? Are they sufficiently aware of India's strength? Do they comprehend the strategy of bargaining necessarily involved in negotiations between and among nations?

From what important Americans have been saying publicly and privately since January, it is possible to frame an outline of US expectations of India ruled by Rajiv Gandhi. In the political-strategic field, they want India to be "genuinely non-aligned", that is, a little visibly distant from the Soviet Union, at least moderately critical of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, less "paranoid" about the flow of American arms to Pakistan, and a little more "understanding" of the US role in world affairs, including Latin American and Indian Ocean developments.

Economically, the Reagan Administration wants India to throw its doors wide open to private foreign investment, adopt a friendly attitude towards the multinationals, and further relax the terms and conditions for American participation in India's economic modernisation. Last but not the least, India must not be nasty in dealing with Union Carbide for what unfortunately did happen in Bhopal.

What, now, are India's expectations of the Reagan Administration? First and foremost, restraining the transfer of high technology arms and weapons to Pakistan. Simultaneously, effective pressure on Pakistan not to explode a nuclear device; the pressure must produce a commitment from General Zia that would be credible to the international community. Thirdly, a stand-off from South Asia, a commitment not to supply arms and weapons to India's smaller neighbours, and a lowering of naval activity in the Indian Ocean.

On the economic side, India's first expectation is the relaxation of quota and other visible and not-so-visible restrictions on exports to the United States. Increasing US private capital investment in select key sectors of the Indian economy largely on the terms and conditions India has offered, and which are found to be acceptable (even if not covetable) by Japan and the West European countries. Last but not the least, India should be allowed to import without restrictions and without conditions some of the latest technologies it may need, and the supplies must be assured over a long time.

What can India give the United States if one or more of its expectations are met by Reagan? A visible distance from the Soviet Union? Lowering the profile of Indo-Soviet friendship? A no-war pact with Pakistan? Muting criticism of American policies and activities in Central America, the Middle East and southern Africa? An Indian version of Reaganomics? Giving US multinationals equity control and unlimited profit export as a price for investment in India? Purchase of American arms without insisting on transfer of military technology? Giving up India's support for the international conference on the Indian Ocean now delayed till 1987? Supporting Israel rather than the PLO, South Africa rather than SWAPO?

When it comes to the bargaining strategy during the prime minister's Washington visit, he will find that the Reagan Administration cannot or shall not give him much. A new treaty involving as much as $ 6 billion in economic and military aid to Pakistan covering the latter half of the decade is under negotiation. Some US sources indicate that it is almost wrapped up.

Nor will Rajiv Gandhi find much scope to increase Indian exports to the US. The US is *not* India's number one trade partner if the value of the sale of Bombay High crude, totalling nearly $1 billion in 1984, is taken off the two-way turnover of $3 billion. Indian exports to the US fluctuate within a narrow margin of $1 billion and $1.4 billion. Apart from petroleum, readymade garments and diamonds are the only two items whose exports touch $100 million a year. With another slow-down coming upon the US economy, protectionist pressures mounting, and a virtual trade war raging between Washington and Tokyo, it is highly doubtful if Indo-US trade can pick up very much in the next few years.

Rajiv Gandhi will be in an excellent position to bargain with the Reagan Administration, demanding an adequate return for everything he may agree to give.

Nor will the prime minister find the MNCs bending over backwards to invest in India unless he is willing to give them terms he has not had to give the Japanese, who are willing to come into the Indian market in a much bigger way, even with dual-purpose technology. Despite the liberalisation of investment terms, US private capital investment in India hasn't crossed $500,000. In contrast Americans invested in Hong Kong $2 billion, in Indonesia $1.3 billion, in the Philippines $1.24 billion and in Singapore $1.19 billion at the turn of the decade.

Which side, then, will come forward to break new ground to give a forward push to India-US relations? The Reagan Administration is the most ideologically committed regime installed in Washington since World War II. Its effective foreign policy strategists do not sit on the seventh floor of the State Department building at Foggy Bottom; they are either in the White House or in the right and far-right think-tanks or in the Pentagon. They will not change their military or economic ideology in order to woo India. They will expect Rajiv Gandhi to take two steps before they take half a step forward to meet him. Still, the prime minister may gain a modest harvest if he can play the card of India's rising strength as deftly in Washington as he did in Moscow.

But Rajiv Gandhi, sticking to the bargaining model of negotiations, may induce some far-sighted MNCs to invest in select areas of the Indian economy by and large on Indian terms. He may get the transfer of certain frontier dual-purpose technologies with no strings attached. All that he may yield is to buy certain advance weapon systems from the US provided military technology is also transferred on a long-term basis with no conditions involved. More than this level of improvement in Indo-US relations must wait upon newer times when a less ideologically committed and less bellicose cold warrior takes the presidential chair in the Oval Office.

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PASSAGE TO THE WEST

THEY'RE calling it curry-colonialism. America is spiced out. Her galleries and museums are being invaded by bodhisattvas, bronze Harappan chariots, dwarf yaksas, sinuous Sivas, gilded torsos of Vishnu and an assortment of erotic sculptures. There's more to come: Banarasi brocades, temple and court jewellery, sun-baked terracotta, women painters of Mithila, princely costumes, biryani and rogan josh, Ravi Shankar and Zubin Mehta, Tantra and Vedanta, Indrani Rahman and Kathakali, folk dancers and poetry readings. It's India's answer to America's blue jeans and hamburgers, hoola hoops and blue suede shoes, bubble gum and Donald Duck, Tarzan and Little Lulu.

Exit, Coca-colonialism and Karma Cola. Enter: The Festival of India. It's the real thing. Not a flash-in-the-pan Diwali Mela, as the recent parliamentary brouhaha over the shipping of bronze sculpture from Tanjore would lead many to believe, but a transcendental thunderbolt of such intense cultural megawattage that it promises to electrify Americans and American institutions into a radically changed awareness of India.

For the next 18 months, The Festival of India, in ever-changing manifestations, will course with viral speed through America's social, cultural, academic and intellectual bloodstream. It will rage through 80 cities at a leisurely pace through just about every gallery, museum or cultural centre that ordinary Americans frequent. Grandiose in scope, comprehensive in design and unprecedented in concept, the Festival is, in a sense, India's private World Fair in the United States.

FESTIVAL OF INDIA
1985 1986

Pupul Jayakar, India's reigning tsarina of culture and chairman of the Festival of India's Indian committee grandiloquently described the mammoth fiesta as floating "oil lamps in tiny boats on a river, for an instant to illuminate the ripples on the water and the rapt faces of those who participate in the launching; to awaken sound, colour, mood, flavour, laughter; to set before the mirror of attention times past and times present..." The festival's Director-General in India, S.K. Mishra, a distinguished civil servant credited with the Haryana Tourism success story, and its chief impresario in America, Niranjan Desai, the low-key, Washington-based minister counsellor for culture, are united in their views of what the Festival will achieve for India. Specifically, Mishra believes that after the American success of films with Indian themes such as *Gandhi*, *Heat and Dust* and *A Passage to India*, "it's

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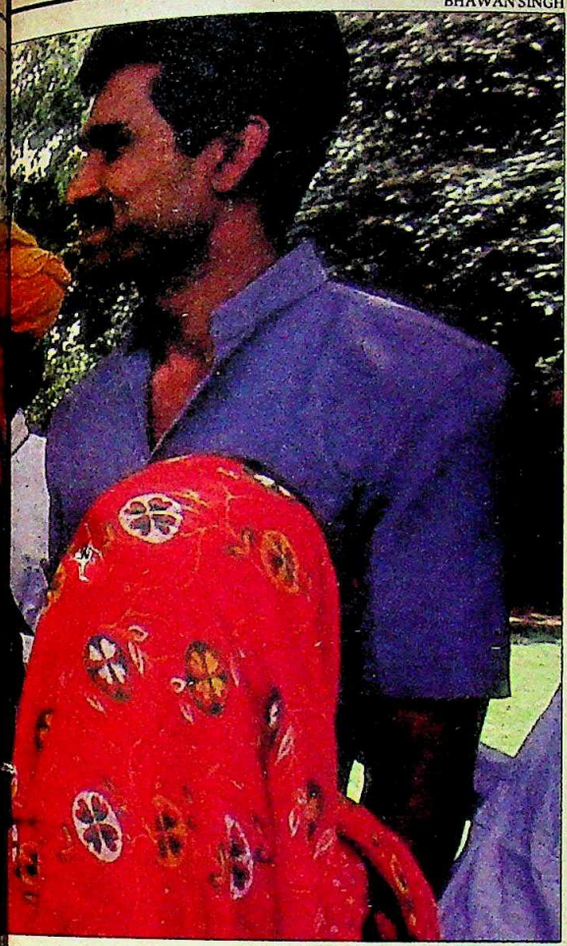
BHAWAN SINGH



Rajiv Gandhi meeting participating folk performers: a heady take-off

a perfect moment for India to cash in, to change existing prejudices about India in the western world and to signal a new era of Indo-American cooperation and exchange". Desai says the immediate, concrete benefits for India will be in the areas of tourism, books, movies, investment and trade. "These are the things we want but cannot get till we alter our image. We are still trapped in the *Heat and Dust* and *Indiana Jones* syndrome. We have to show that India is not only exotic but contemporaneously exotic as well as modern and competent."

The festival is perhaps the most ambitious and aggressive diplomatic initiative ever attempted by India—or for that matter any other nation—in a foreign country. In gestation since Mrs Gandhi's triumphant visit to the United States in 1982, it has officially been in preparation since a Directorate of Festivals of India was set up, with its own under-secretary, director and director-general and independent offices in New Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan last year. Aimed squarely at the hearts and minds of the American people, its concept is founded in the belief that the most effective method of opinion building is when people are able to talk directly to people across continents.

Indian diplomats and policy-makers in the United States have constantly agonised over the lack of a continuing India lobby capable of influencing American Government, opinion makers

"For the first time we are facing the West in complete equality. Our generation, the older generation is passing away. This festival is about how the young eyes of India see tradition."

PUPUL JAYAKAR
chairman, Festival of India

"It's a perfect moment for India to cash in, to change existing prejudices about India in the western world and to signal a new era of Indo-American cooperation and exchange."

S.K. MISHRA
director-general, Festival of India

"The *raison d'etre* of the festival is not to hold a *tamasha* but to create something permanent, to reinforce the spirit of commerce."

RAJEEV SETHI
director, Aditi Project

"At this moment in time, it's we who want to display our culture abroad and if we want better exchange we must prove our bona fides first, we must determine the criteria for cultural import."

MARTAND SINGH
director, Costume Exhibition

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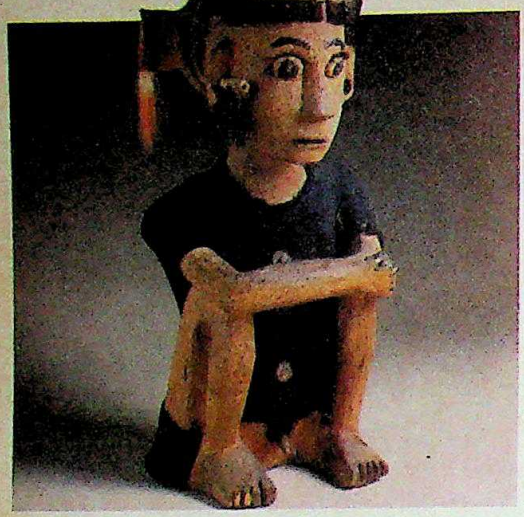
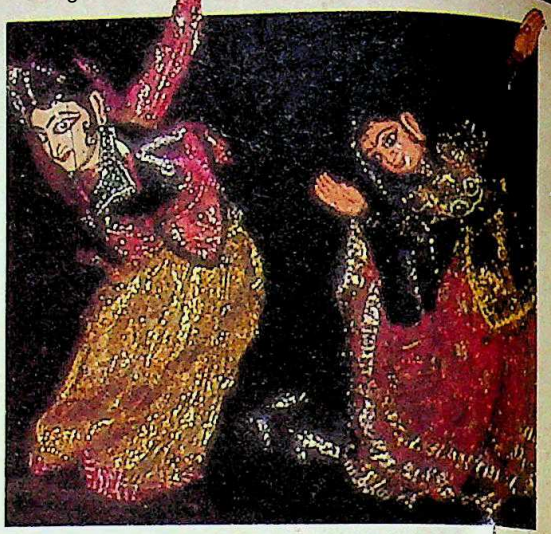
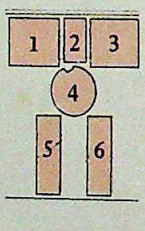




and the media in the direction of India's interests. Ambassadors and plenipotentiaries have come and gone creating minuscule furrows of influence in Washington. American Indophiles and pro-Indian academics have talked, mostly to one another, in small, incestuous circles. But an orchestrated assault has been missing, of the kind that China—starting with its ping-pong diplomacy—attempted with its wooing of America. And China succeeded in one critical aim: American public opinion, formerly wedded to the concept of protecting Taiwan against the "Red menace" on the mainland, moved rapidly away from its traditional stance to accept Chinese interests in that region. Changed perceptions often lead to changed politics. And one country's initiative can lead to another taking the cue: the pre-festival publicity of India in America has been so successful that already China is making a bid to organise a festival of its own in the United States in 1988-89.

In essence, the Festival of India is a cultural Trojan Horse carrying within its belly the armies of trade and diplomacy. "It's a backcloth for political initiatives," says Martand Singh, organiser of one of the Festival's major shows, the exhibition of princely court costumes at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Festival simultaneously seeks to sound the clarion call of "Brown is Beautiful" while creating within America a reservoir of goodwill—a people's constituency capable of influencing American policy-planners of the future.



1. Contemporary wood carving of a Naga youth.

2. A nineteenth century dancing girl in papier mache from Varanasi.

3. Shadow and puppet theatre from Rajasthan.

4. A medallion incorporating a goddess and buffalo from the Assam State Museum, Guwahati.

5. Tribal wood carving of a mother goddess and child from Bastar.

6. And the celebrated third century Didarganj Yakshi in polished sandstone fromthe Patna Museum.

Notwithstanding the existence in America of a powerful, successful and wealthy Indian community, India has traditionally been perceived by Americans as a distant constellation of fuzzball images. That's changing, rapidly and dramatically. The American Rip Van Winkle has awakened—in India. The shattering and fast-occurring chain of cataclysmic events such as the Indian army action inside the Golden Temple, Mrs Gandhi's assassination, the anti-Sikh riots and the Bhopal tragedy, have catapulted India into media headlines. On the other hand, the success of several film and television ventures on India have deepened a cultural interest in this Asian country among Americans. These vignettes and images of India past and present have merely whetted the curiosity of Americans about India. Yet, modern India remains a country they know little about. Says Tanen of the Indo-US Subcommission on Education & Culture: "*Gandhi* took America by storm. It focussed the attention of many Americans on India's philosophy and the life of this great Indian

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and even world leader."

The media invasion that began with the movies has steadily and indomitably built up to the arrival of the Festival of India. "Return of the Raj" screamed a recent banner headline in the New York *Post* displaying Indian fashions. "The Raj rages" said an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. And *Vanity Fair* carried a piece entitled "Raj-ma-Taj". There is little doubt that America's current fascination with India stems from British films and TV series on the Raj that have proved greater hits in America than in Britain. This phenomenon has bred vituperative criticisms from one section of Indians like writers Salman Rushdie and Gita Mehta. The Raj nostalgia, says Mehta, has converted India into a "costume drama dream factory—unbeatable entertainment. There is still some argument over whose perception of India should be paramount, the native's or the imperialist's?"

Inversely, it has to be admitted that the reason why voices of serious Indian writers like R.K. Narayan, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Rushdie and Mehta are suddenly being heard in American magazines and newspapers is because of the huge interest serials like *Jewel in the Crown* have aroused on American television networks. The airing of the Raj nostalgia is merely a prelude to the creation of more serious, thought-provoking interest about India. A recent article in *Newsday* entitled "Passages to India" comments that "this impending onslaught of Indian culture (the Festival of India) serves to put the Raj in perspective—a 100-year episode in a 5,000-year civilisation. The Raj was a moment; India is eternal." Writing in *Life* magazine columnist Loudon Wainwright propounds his theory on why Americans are so enraptured by the Raj. "My own feeling about *Jewel* and *Passage* is that they somehow offer us the opportunity to have it both ways. Watching them we can identify with the British and despise them too. And we can feel warm and tender toward the Indians without sharing the guilt of exploiting them.... It's an easy moral victory for us. It gives reign to our sense of superiority over the British. It's lovely to see them taken down a peg."

And in another article entitled "India is on Our Minds—But Whose India?", William Borders, New Delhi correspondent of the *New York Times*, writes: "In the long history of India the presence of the British was only a little blip and a lot that is great about the place has nothing to do with them. It used to amuse me to imagine the first Englishman who saw the Taj Mahal. Whoever he was, when he came around the corner and cast his eyes on this magnificent structure, don't you suppose he wondered just a bit whether or how much these people really needed the civilizing influence of the British....

"The exciting thing about India today is the splendid adventure of its democracy.... It really is a free society and miraculously it is producing enough food and acquiring a high technological sophistication in its manufacturing. I don't mean that a story about India's self-sufficiency in automobile parts would make a better film; it just seems a shame if those aspects of the country get overlooked in all the current fascination with the glamour of the Raj... Like the Taj Mahal, the Festival of India is a reminder to Americans that there was an India worth paying attention to long before the British acquired the place."

WHATEVER the reasons behind it, India, as the *Washington Post* recently proclaimed, "is *In*." *USA Today* has called 1985 "unquestionably the year of India" and has predicted that the festival will produce a new "groundswell of interest in India" that will lead to the growth of Indian fashions, Indian food, the sale of Indian furniture in fancy department stores, Indian gift items, and travel to India.

Vanity Fair, in a cover story entitled "India Boom-Boom", reported on "turban fever" raging through the world of haute couture as a result of the interest in India. And Art Malik—who plays Hari Kumar in *Jewel in the Crown*—models Indian-style clothes under the heading "Art Throb". The magazine also featured an official list of Indiaphiles—"those who have been seduced by the subcontinent"—that included: American journalist Walter Cronkite; actress Goldie Hawn; Dame Peggy Ashcroft; poet Octavio Paz; film maker Louis Malle; composer Yehudi Menuhin; and J.K. Galbraith. And over a segment entitled "Fashionwallahas", the magazine struck this high note by quoting from Gita Mehta: "The Indian is no better at handling reality than anyone else, but we live closer to it, so we have to take more elaborate evasive action...."

The May issue of the widely circulated *Town and Country* magazine carried more than 40 pages on "India: Passage to Power" a, story about "the new potentates—contemporary, worldly heirs of an ancient society setting a dynamic style for the democracy's future". Subtitled the "Movers of Modern India", the story carried photographs and reports about the Madras-based Murugappa group, Amitabh Bachchan, Dr Karan Singh of Kashmir, shipping magnate Sumati Morarjee, Pupul Jayakar, J.J. Bhabha, Ratan Tata, Satish Gujral, the Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja "Bubbles" of Jaipur, the Nawab of Pataudi and Sharmila Tagore, R.K. Narayan, Aroon Purie of INDIA TODAY, Lalit Mohan Thapar, M.F. Husain and Harish Mahindra.

While *Town and Country* was busy making household words of these Indian movers and shakers, another travel magazine—*Diversions*—that caters to the specialised leisure needs of wealthy physicians throughout the United States was exhorting American doctors, in in-house idiom—to go to India or, at least to pay attention to the festival. "The complete life of India is something of which the European merely dreams," the magazine quoted psychoanalyst C.J. Jung. "But this year the Americans will have a glimpse of that life through the Festival of India..." Not to be left be-

"We are still trapped in the *Heat and Dust* and *Indiana Jones* syndrome. We have to show that India is not only exotic but contemporaneously exotic as well as modern and competent."

NIRANJAN DESAI
minister counsellor for culture, Indian Embassy, Washington

"*Gandhi* took America by storm. It focussed the attention of many Americans on India's philosophy and the life of this great Indian leader."

TED TANEN
executive director, Indo-US subcommission on Education & Culture

FESTIVAL OF INDIA
1985 1986

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hind, *Connoisseur* magazine—meant for Americans with a discerning taste in entertainment—carried a pictorial essay on polo ("it tests the horse, the rider and trainer") in which Rao Raja Hanut Singh, the Maharaja of Baria, and Colonel Billy Sodhi became American clubhouse words.

The *Washington Post* devoted an entire issue to Indian fashions and their forthcoming impact on the world. Several top American department stores—Bergdorf Goodman, Lord and Taylor, Bloomingdale's, Elizabeth Arden—are planning Indian promotions to coincide with the 18-month festival. Japanese designer Issey Miyake, whose clothes are first presented in Paris, is in India to create an entire collection based on Indian designs. Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein are working on lightweight cottons. Geoffrey Beene is working on producing gold-threaded skirts based on the sari, while Michael Kars has begun to market a neo-Nehru jacket. In Paris, Jean Paul Gaultier has begun work on dressy brocades for the world market.

"India Is In, and Everyone's Going Subcontinental," read a recent headline in the New York *Daily News*. The *News* reported that fashion mogul Diana Vreeland—in conjunction with the festival—will focus exclusively on Indian court costumes for her next show at the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute. "People need a story to dress by, and this year it's India," says New York designer Koos Van Den Akker whose new Spring collection includes tunics and leggings in sheer cotton voiles and tropical coloured Indian silks.

The leading magazine for coin collectors—*Coin World*—declared 1985 "The Year of India", in a lead editorial. "India's numismatic legacy is so vast, so rich, and so complex," the editorial said, "we necessarily can offer but a brief introduction in this issue." And America's top travel magazine, *Travel and Leisure* rated India as one of the "hot spots" in a suggestion column entitled "Where to go".

The coming festival and related hoopla have led to a fascinating interest in the American book trade. Piled beside the latest best sellers by Danielle Steel, Stephen King and Mario Puzo in bookstores are newly-issued reprints of *The Raj Quartet* and *A Passage to India*. And a host of new books is slated for publishing to coincide with the event. Putnam are bringing out *An Indian Dynasty: The Story of the*

Festival of India in America—The Main Events

May 5-September 2, 1985: A comprehensive survey of Indian sculpture from 2500 B.C. to 1300 A.D. containing the finest selection of Indian masterpieces. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

June 12-September 2, 1985: India—A Festival of Science. Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. The exhibition later moves to five other venues, including Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, and Boston.

June 13-July 28, 1985: Aditi: A Celebration of Life. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C.

June 26-30 and July 3-7, 1985: Folklife Festival. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

September 9-November 9, 1985: Contemporary Indian Terracotta Art. About 300 samples of terracotta, from pots to deities, from all parts of India on display at the American Crafts Museum, New York.

September 9-December 1, 1985: India. A grand exhibition of Indian art from the 14th to the 19th centuries, features some 400 exquisite, extraordinary pieces selected by American art historian Stuart Cary Welch. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

September 11-17, 1985: In a salute to India, the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Zubin Mehta celebrates the music, musicians and composers of India.

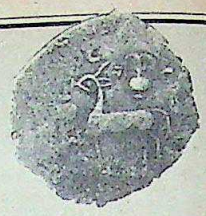
October 1985: A festival of Indian cinema, including retrospectives of the films of Raj Kapoor and Ritwick Ghatak at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

November 9, 1985-January 19, 1986: The Golden Eye displays works by international designers developed with Indian craftsmen. Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design, New York.

November 13, 1985-January 5, 1986: Kushan sculpture expresses the beauty of the Mathura and Gandhara schools. Cleveland Museum of Art. The exhibition later moves to New York and Seattle.

November 20, 1985-February 9, 1986: Life at Court contains 100 samples of the finest flowering of Indian miniatures. From the 16th-19th centuries. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

December 16, 1985-September 1, 1986: Nearly two hundred courtly costumes from the gilded age of princely India displayed with spectacular accessories and jewellery. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



"This impending onslaught of Indian culture (the Festival of India) serves to put the Raj in perspective—a 100-year episode in a 5,000-year civilisation. The Raj was a moment; India is eternal."

excerpt from 'Passages to India' Newsday

"The Indian is no better at handling reality than anyone else, but we live closer to it, so we have to take more elaborate evasive action..."

GITA MEHTA
author

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1985 1986

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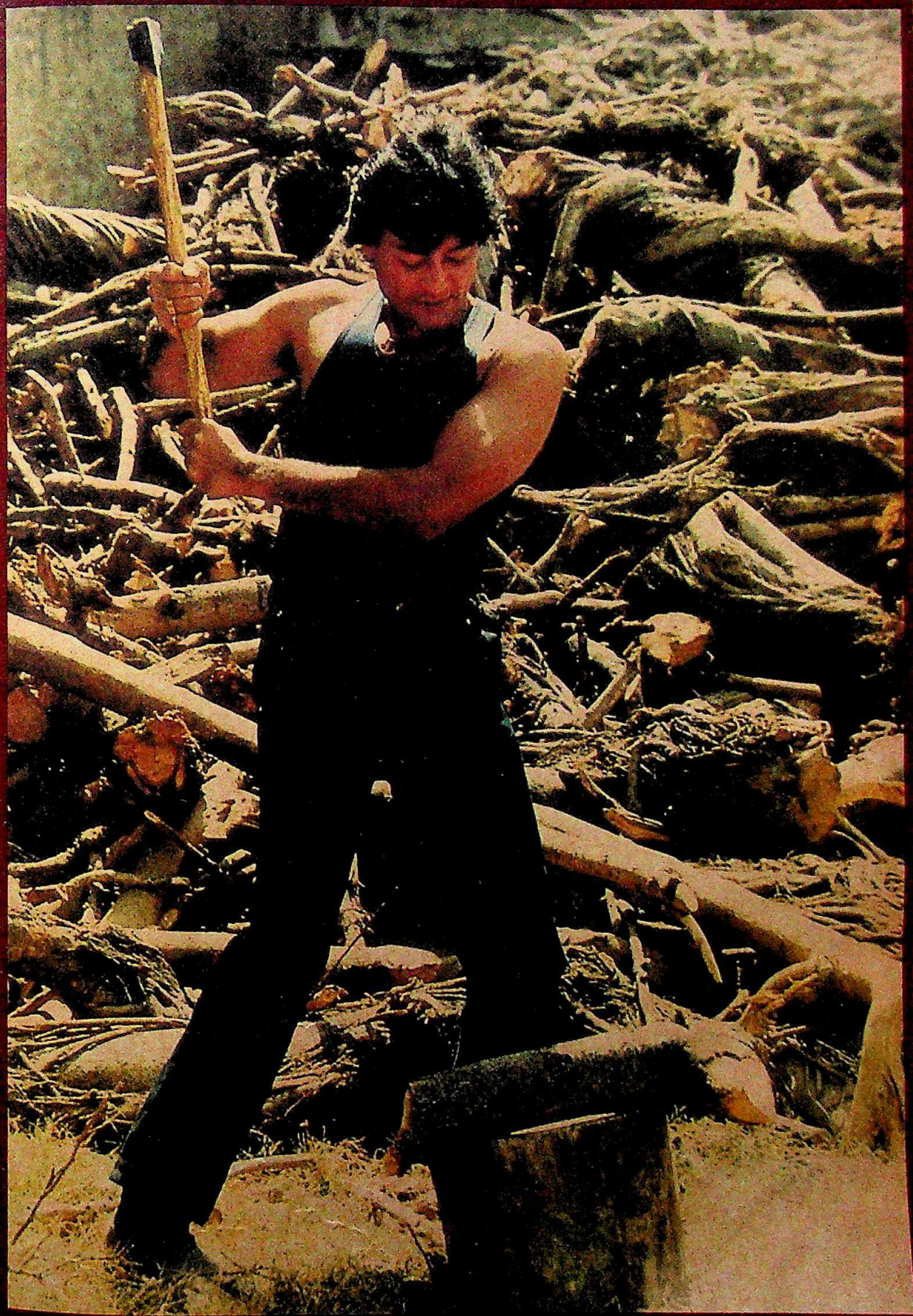
THE TOUGH ONES



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Phagwara

POLYESTER FABRICS

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Nehru-Gandhi family by journalist Tariq Ali. Due in September from W.W. Norton is *The Assassination of Indira Gandhi* by journalist Pranay Gupte and the same publisher will reissue *The Men Who Ruled India*, a two-volume work by Philip Mason, a former member of the Indian Civil Service.

Harry Abrams, publisher of fine coffee-table books has scheduled several books on India including *Village India* by Stephen Huyler and a glossy *Festival of India Catalogue*. Doubleday's list includes a book on Mother Teresa (Harper & Row is also bringing out one on the same subject) by Eileen Egan, a book on Calcutta by Dominique Lapierre, the memoirs of the Rajmata of Jaipur and a lavishly illustrated book on Indian court life called *The Second Paradise* by Naveen Patnaik that was specially commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy on behalf of Doubleday when she visited India last year.

One reason why the American media, and American private enterprise, are so enthusiastic about the festival is because of its high-powered political connections—Nancy Reagan and Rajiv Gandhi are its chief patrons on the two continents, and last month, President Reagan issued a personal proclamation of support, dedicating the "Year of India" as he called it, to the memory of Mrs Indira Gandhi whose visit to Washington in 1982 had sown the seeds of the festival idea.

By international standards the festival comes cheap—$12 million, a figure, that according to Director-General Mishra, may go up to US $15 million. India's share of costs is estimated at one-third of this sum, about Rs 5 crore, of which Rs 1 crore is to be expended in hard currency. The foreign exchange sanction of US $1 million will cover the cost of the inaugural concert in Washington's Kennedy Center on June 13, pay for advertising space on American television and be used up in maintenance costs of Cultural Counsellor Desai's office in the Washington embassy.

The American expenditure has been raised from a variety of sources: the institutions hosting the events, charitable trusts and national endowments as well as American business houses such as the Boeing Company, Coca-Cola, General Foods, ITT Corporation, Lockheed, Roland International, Armand Hammer Foundation, Ford Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, Pan American Airways and Phillip Morris.

"The division of expenditure," explains Mishra, "has been undertaken on the basic principle that the Indian side will pay for the passages, the shipping, packaging and insurance costs while the Americans will take care of mounting the shows and providing hospitality to the participants." Mishra reckons that the number of free passages will "easily amount to over 400" to cover the staggering load of dancers, musicians, performers, craftsmen, intellectuals, academics and journalists that will be ferried to the United States under the aegis of the Festival of India.

In America, among the hundreds of members of various committees responsible for shepherding the festivities in the fields of fine arts, performing arts, education, science and culture are included luminaries such as Jacqueline Kennedy, Dustin Hoffman, Gregory Peck,

Designer Martand Singh (sitting) with some princely costumes: courtly extravaganza

BHAWAN SINGH

"The exciting thing about India today is the splendid adventure of its democracy....It really is a free society and miraculously it is producing enough food and acquiring a high technological sophistication in its manufacturing."

WILLIAM BORDERS
New York Times

"People need a story to dress by, and this year it's India."

KOOS VAN DEN AKKER
New York designer

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1985 1986

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FRANCE

Indian Summer

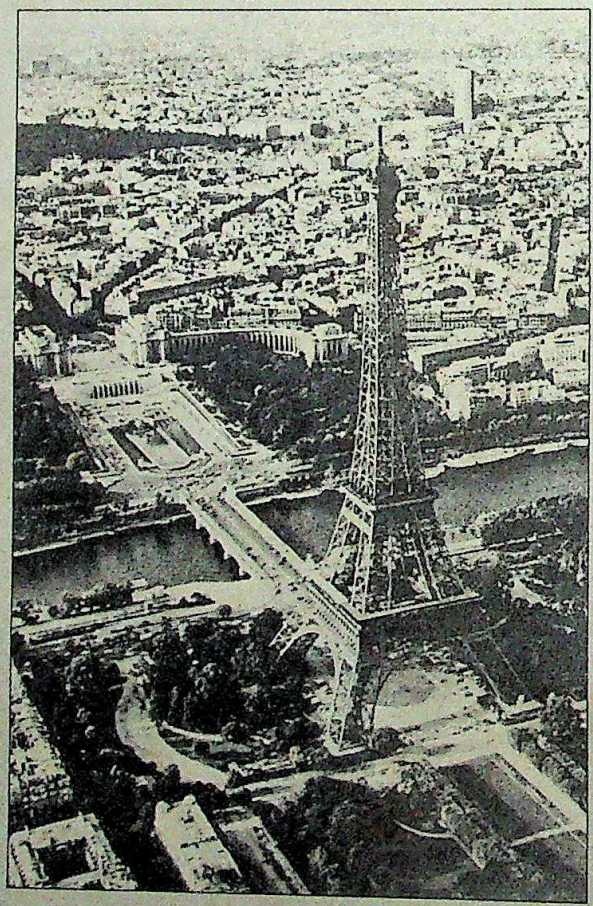
FIRST stop on the prime minister's tour starting this fortnight will be Paris, where he will inaugurate the year-long Festival of India in France from the base of the Eiffel Tower. It will be an evening of unparalleled grandeur, with 100-metre-long French and Indian flags draped from the Tower and the kilometre-and-a-half area known as Trocadero transformed into an Indian fairground. Thirteen triumphal arches made of Indian textiles, pith, bamboo and jute and a procession of richly caparisoned elephants and camels (rented from French circuses) will herald Rajiv Gandhi's meeting with President Francois Mitterrand, following which the prime minister will make over his gift of a baby elephant and the *mela* will be declared open to the residents of Paris. Thirty shops, including 18 foodstalls, selling Indian artefacts, handicrafts, toys and brightly-coloured posters from Sivakashi will throw open their shutters as over 150 folk-dancers and singers from all parts of India mingle for two days and two nights with the French public.

The idea of the prime minister sailing down the Seine in a flotilla of barges has now, for security reasons, been shelved. Instead, about 600 tiny copper pots containing water from the Ganges will be distributed among visitors to be poured into the Seine in a symbolic meeting of the two rivers; and as dusk falls over the city, thousands of oil lamps will be set afloat down the Seine to heighten the aura of an Indian wonderland. Just then, a traditional balladeer from Rajasthan will begin to sing a paean to the city of Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower, his voice echoing over the area's magnificent sound system. No other singer has had the privilege of such a vantage point since the great French singer Edith Piaf was permitted by the city authorities many years ago.

"Our idea was to change the character of the heart of Paris completely for those moments," says New Delhi-based architect Krishna Menon who is the mela's technical director. Menon, together with Ahmedabad-based designer Dashrath Patel and a design team of eight, has been at work on the project since September last year. It has been a complex project to coordinate as at any given moment, reports Menon, the area will be flooded with 100,000 visitors.

With as spectacular a take-off, the sprawling *L'Annee de L'Inde* (The Year of India) will run a varied and exciting course through Mitterrand's Socialist France. While its concept was mooted by Indira Gandhi and Mitterrand, its chief architect has been the high-profile, controversial French Minister for Culture Jack Lang. Unlike the Festival of India in the United States which has been largely funded and produced by institutions and business houses, the festival in France is a government-to-government effort with a pronounced emphasis on the performing arts. There is a large selection of non-classical performing arts slated at the House of World Cultures in Paris with folk-dances, music, puppetry shows and hairdressing demonstrations throughout the year; a festival in the city of Avignon beginning July, which will premiere Peter Brook's long-awaited theatrical adaptation of the Mahabharata as well as present a prestigious assemblage of Indian classical musicians, from Kumar Gandharva to Fahimuddin Dagar, in concert; and an Autumn Festival in Paris that will feature nearly 50 of India's most celebrated vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers. In addition, there will be shows of Henri Cartier-Bresson's Indian photographs, of contemporary Indian painters, massive retrospectives of Indian film stars and directors at the Pompidou Centre, of Indian architecture and contemporary Indian textiles. The last will feature a selection of Indian fabrics and designs in a very modern mode by celebrated Japanese designer Issey Miyake.

A view of the mela site around the Eiffel Tower



The *L'Annee de L'Inde* hopes to revive the Indo-French connection while at the same time tide over the recent strain in the relationship caused by the espionage scandal. An estimated 50,000 French tourists are said to visit India each year, a number larger than any other European country, save Germany and they are an adventurous lot. They are known to travel to places like Palitana or Tanjore or Varkala in search of remote artistic or architectural marvels, unhampered by colonial memories or pseudo-mystical baggage. It is this burgeoning crowd of travellers that the festival hopes to encourage besides promoting trade between the two countries.

Already the first signs of an Indian Renaissance in Paris, are evident. Indian restaurants are becoming gradually popular. Indian films have left a marked impression upon the city's cultural elite and in the working class district of the Rue du Faubourg St Denis adjoining the Gare du Nord station, there are now as many as eight Indian shops doing flourishing business in spices and saris, cassette tapes and Indian *bidis*. In fact, Paris-based Indians refer to the area as the French Southall.

—SUNIL SETHI with RAMESH CHANDRAN in Paris

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Zubin Mehta, Jack Valenti, Professor Stephen Cohen, Paul Newman, Dr Jonas Salk, Senator Pat Moynihan, Congressman Steve Solarz and Thomas Prizker, president of the Hyatt chain of hotels.

In India, the committees are made up of an overwhelming number of bureaucrats with a smattering of businessmen like Aditya Birla and Sanjay Dalmia, film-maker Girish Karnad and, architect Charles Correa. Indian industrialists have also enjoined the donation effort: the Tatas, Birlas, Mahindras, Mallya of United Breweries and Hindustan Lever have been permitted by the Government to remit up to Rs 50 lakh each in foreign exchange to fund the massive show on Indian art that opens at the Metropolitan Museum in New York this September.

Together an estimated 1,500 exhibits, many of which have never travelled out of the country before (*see page* 100), 200 artistes, performers and designers, nearly a 100 academics and over 20 major departments of the Government ranging from the Department of Science & Technology to the State Trading Corporation to the India Tourism Development Corporation are involved in putting together the festival that officially kicks off with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit on June 13. The inauguration at Washington's Kennedy Center before an invited audience of 2,000 will feature Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan in concert with Alla Rakha and Zakir Hussain on the tabla. The concert will be followed by a Kathakali dance performance and Vice-President George Bush will be the chief American guest. Although the Indian prime minister will spend five days in the United States, details of his programme and that of his family are strictly being kept under wraps for security reasons.

But the American media seems as enthusiastic about the young prime minister as the festival itself. Says Stephen R. Weisman, New Delhi correspondent of the *New York Times*: "Rajiv with his young and beautiful wife are bound to be a great hit in America. All he has to do is to keep smiling. The time is right for his visit and the American public is really receptive to his image."

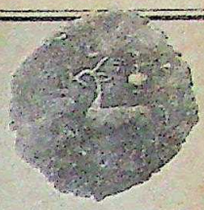
The logistics of creating the mammoth exercise has been a stirring, if occasionally disputatious saga of mobilising new ideas, engineering talent and skills, coordinating among scores of Central and state government departments as well as personalities to create a cohesive whole. "For the first time we are facing the West in complete equality," says the festival's Indian Chairman Pupul Jayakar. "Our generation, the older generation is passing away. This festival is about how the young eyes of India see tradition."

Understandably, therefore, the most talked about exhibitions originate from her twin cultural heirs, designers Rajeev Sethi and Martand Singh. Sethi, with his meteor's tail of magicians and monkeymen, is getting ready to invigorate the Smithsonian Institution in Washington with his Aditi celebrations, while Singh, the whizkid of Vishwakarma, has New York's undisputed Queen of Fashion Diana Vreeland wrapped up in metres of gilded yardage.

Sethi's Aditi, an unconventional exhibition about the

Rajasthan puppets from the Aditi exhibition at the Smithsonian: moving spectacle

TEJBIR SINGH



"There's nothing wrong per se in wanting to show your culture abroad. It's how we do it that matters. You simply cannot have an indigestible inundation of India. There is such a thing as surfeit of culture."

KRISHEN KHANNA
painter

"She (Pupul Jayakar) only thinks anything which is 5000 years old is art."

M.F. HUSAIN
painter

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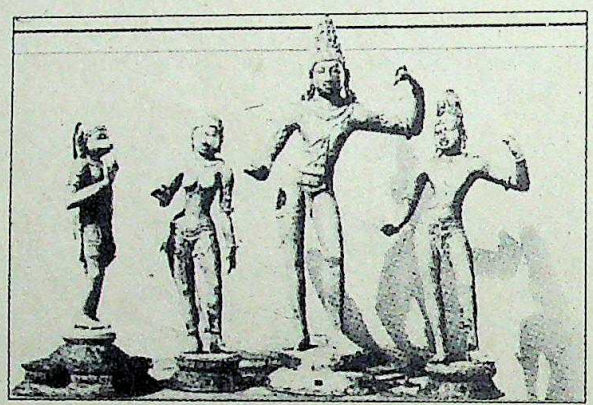
CONTROVERSIES

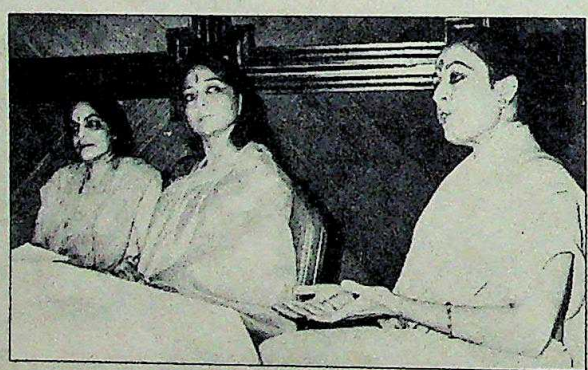
Warring Tribes

ALMOST from its inception the Festival of India has been plagued by rows but the bitter battles of the last two months are like a cultural rendition of Star Wars. Dr Sihare of the National Museum rowing with Pupul Jayakar, Opposition MP's K.P. Unnikrishnan and S. Jaipal Reddy taking up cudgels with Minister for Culture K.P. Singh Deo, dancers Sonal Mansingh, Yamini Krishnamurthy and Uma Sharma squabbling with Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Dr Narayana Menon and nameless other warring bureaucrats, designers, journalists, performers have unleashed enough venom to fill up a snake pit. Last fortnight, however, matters came to a head when, at a public discussion in Delhi organised by the Indian Archaeological Society to debate whether it was wise to ship invaluable samples of Indian art abroad, Mrs Jayakar was shouted down each time she rose to speak, and Dr Sihare called her a "liar" twice before a packed hall when she claimed that she had not seen all the lists of masterpieces requested for.

Controversy No. 1 is: can priceless, and irreplaceable pieces of ancient Indian sculpture such as the massive stone female figure known as the Didargunj Yakshi dating from the 3rd century B.C. suffer damage if taken on long journeys and will the display abroad of a group of Tanjore bronzes, the only ones of their kind belonging to temples in Tamil Nadu, offend the religious susceptibilities of their worshippers? Art scholars like Karl Khandalavala and Dr Sihare say yes. Mrs Jayakar says it was up to the experts to decide but they vacillated.

The fact of the matter is that, in the case of the Tanjore bronzes answers to both questions concern neither the morality of the issue nor the hazards of conservation. Originally when the nine bronzes (five belonging to the Tanjore Art Gallery and four to the Paruthiyur temple) were requested for by Dr Pramod Chandra, the Washington National Gallery of Art's guest curator for the "Sculpture of India" show, Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran had refused. When he was prevailed upon to agree, everyone from Mrs Jayakar and Dr Sihare it seems, extended their blessings to the loan. Dr Sihare even made the request in writing. But when it was discovered in Parliament that the temple sculptures, in fact, may have been in worship or that they were probably stolen property, all hell broke loose—and the minister for culture seemed utterly clueless. Grave embarrassment was caused, the matter was taken to court, and though the court gave its assent for their display abroad, only the museum bronzes have gone to America and not the temple ones.





Points of controversy: the Tanjore bronzes (above) that did not go and (below) the dancers who will not dance

Meanwhile, Dr Sihare has changed position, claiming that he is the victim of intrigue, and that he has all along believed it would be dangerous to allow priceless pieces out of the country. The Didargunj Yakshi and several other important pieces, including five from the recent Sanghol excavations in Punjab, winged their way to Washington last week, three weeks after the show opened. But the war in Delhi continues.

Controversy No.2 is less spiteful and only a shade more colourful, because it concerns the state of pique of India's three leading prima donnas. Yamini Krishnamurthy, Sonal Mansingh and Uma Sharma have for years been the reigning divas of dance, so they were less than appreciative when the Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Dr Menon in a television interview mumbled something about young, new dancers representing India in the forthcoming festivals in France and the US. At no point did he make any reference, by name or implication, to the troubled trio who, nonetheless, took it as a deep slight. Their form of protest was unique: expected to perform at a concert in memory of the great dancer Balasaraswathi last month, they came on stage to read out their letter of protest attacking Narayana Menon who was sitting in the front row. Walking out of the function, they went to town denouncing Menon and the Akademi's selection. Retorted Menon: "There are hundreds of dancers in the country, not just these three. We will invite young dancers not because of their youth but because of their quality."

Star turns by performing artistes developing into star tantrums is providing the Festival of India secretariat with regular headaches. Director-General Mishra explains that in several of the performing arts festivals to be held in the United States, sponsors such as the Lincoln Center in New York which will host a series of concerts through September have commercialised the events and have made independent selections of the performers. Still, troubles abound. Not being invited to the inaugural concert on June 13 in Washington has become a major bone of contention.

"Much of the hysteria associated with the Festival of India arises out of lack of professionalism. Exhibitions aren't ego events, people involved in the festival should try and remain anonymous," says Martand Singh, organiser of the costume exhibition who modestly keeps insisting that it is Diana Vreeland's show, not his. But king-size egos and vainglorious power politics have gone a long way in converting the festival image into a cesspool of controversy at home.

—SUNIL SETHI

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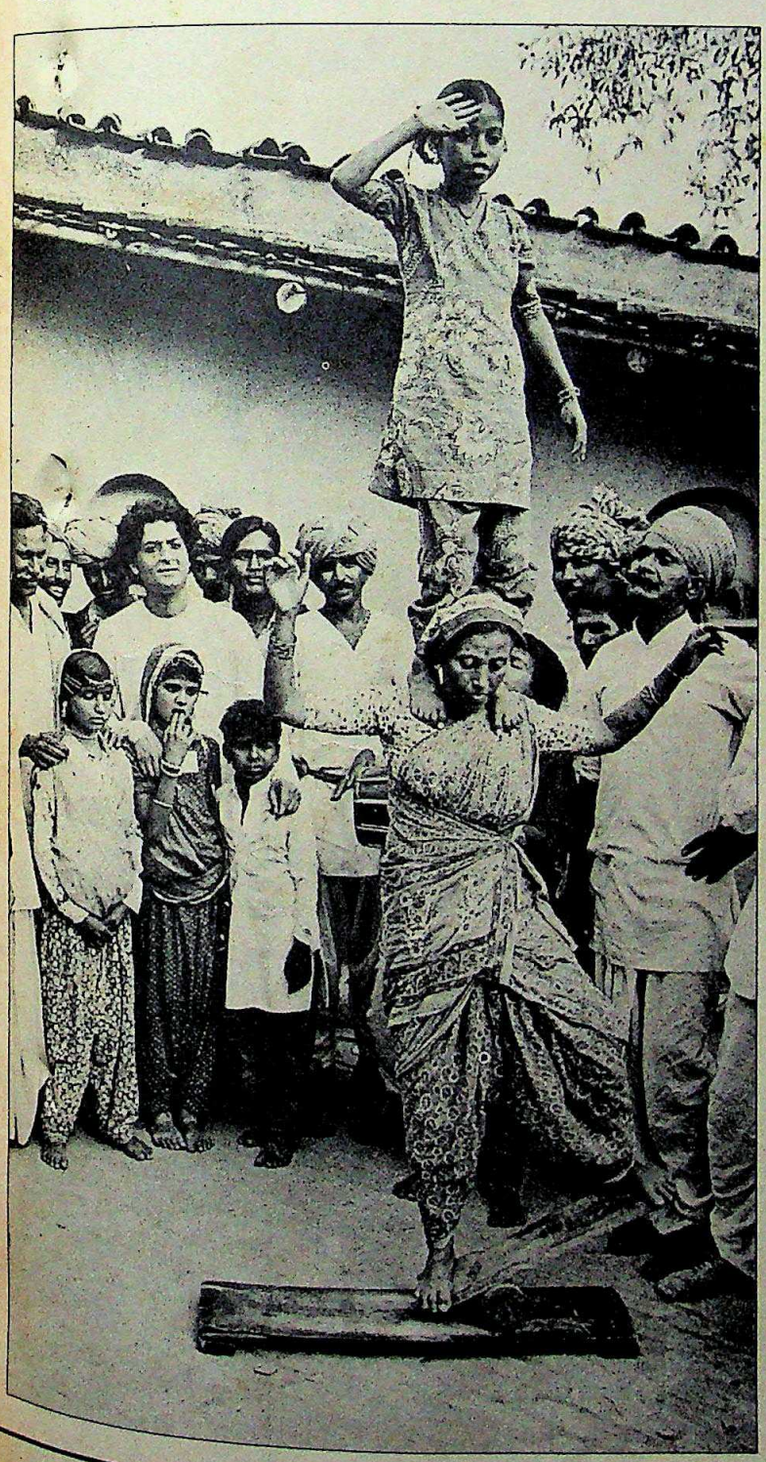
Indian life cycle, coincides with the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival which will re-create the ambience of an Indian mela culminating in the burning of a Ravana on July 5, the day after American Independence. A whirling melange of about 80 craftsmen and performers for both events—acrobats and balladeers, toymakers and drum-beaters—are presently undergoing an orientation programme at New Delhi's Ashok Hotel. Overseeing the operation is the Indophile daughter of Senator Moynihan. "I show them postcards and maps and photographs of Washington D.C.," says 27-year-old Maura Moynihan, her all-Indian outfit appropriately worn with an all-American T-shirt. Other than taking down details of their eating habits, introducing them to American currency and the American Constitution, she is also responsible for instructing her colleagues back home on the necessity of providing Indian-style lavatories. "We will have special frames built on toilets so they can comfortably squat on them."

Sethi's other *coup de theatre* is an exhibition known as "The Golden Eye" for the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. Renowned international designers and architects were invited to visit India and use traditional materials and skills to create their own designs. Ettore Sotsass from Italy has designed a dining-room, complete with flooring and chandelier. Mario Bellini, another designer from Italy, has created a cane gazebo, marble couches and a sandstone bench so smooth it feels like silk to the touch. American fashion designer Mary MacFadden has produced an entire collection based on her Indian sojourn and designed a Mughal garden. Sir Hugh Casson, president of Britain's Royal Academy of Art, has produced a lobby of tiles and trellis work as well as a remarkable glass bed. Jack Larsen has produced rugs in crewel work, screens of brocade and wall surfaces of Bhagalpur tussore. I.M. Pei, the architect, has designed a lamp in stone while Milton Glaser, pundit of graphic design, has created toys and jewellery. Says Sethi about the mingling fusion of concepts, nationalities and mediums: "Art does not come to us as the West will have it, categorised in styles, schools or chronology. Art is a holistic concept and comes together in a variety of interconnected mediums."

Some Indian designers disagree with Sethi, who believes that the *raison d'etre* of the festival isn't to hold a *tamasha* but to create something permanent and reinforce the spirit of commerce. Says muralist and architect Satish Gujral of Sethi's artistic diversifications: "It's nothing but an extension of colonial slavery. To start with, a foreign designer cannot be

Designer Rajeev Sethi (behind children) with itinerant acrobats: explosion of folk culture



"The theme is America and India—show and tell. It's not a contest, but suppose it is, then you win hands down."

JOHN HUBBARD
chairman Indo-US Subcommission on Education & Culture

"There are hundreds of dancers in the country, not just three... we will invite young dancers not because of their youth but because of their quality."

DR NARAYANA MENON
chairman, Sangeet Natak Akademi

FESTIVAL OF INDIA
1985 1986

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expected to collect more than superficial impressions about a traditional craft in a few days. Moreover, it's sacrilege to transpose the medium of traditional crafts."

Other Indian artists question the very premise of holding a Festival of India. While painter M.F. Husain dismissed the whole exercise as a display of Pupul Jayakar's indiscriminate arbitration—"she only thinks anything which is 5,000 years old is art"—his fellow painter Krishen Khanna is more specific in his charges. "There's nothing wrong per se in wanting to show your culture abroad," he argues, "but it's how we do it that matters. You simply cannot have an indigestible inundation of India. There is such a thing as surfeit of culture."

Opinions vary, but even the most senior organisers of the Festival express a certain queasiness about America's cultural offerings, or lack of them, to India. Dr John Hubbard, president emeritus of the University of Southern California and chairman of the Indo-US Subcommission on Education & Culture, points out that America may not have anything of comparable value to return. "Okay", he says, "the theme is America and India—show and tell. It's not a contest, but suppose it is. Then you win hands down."

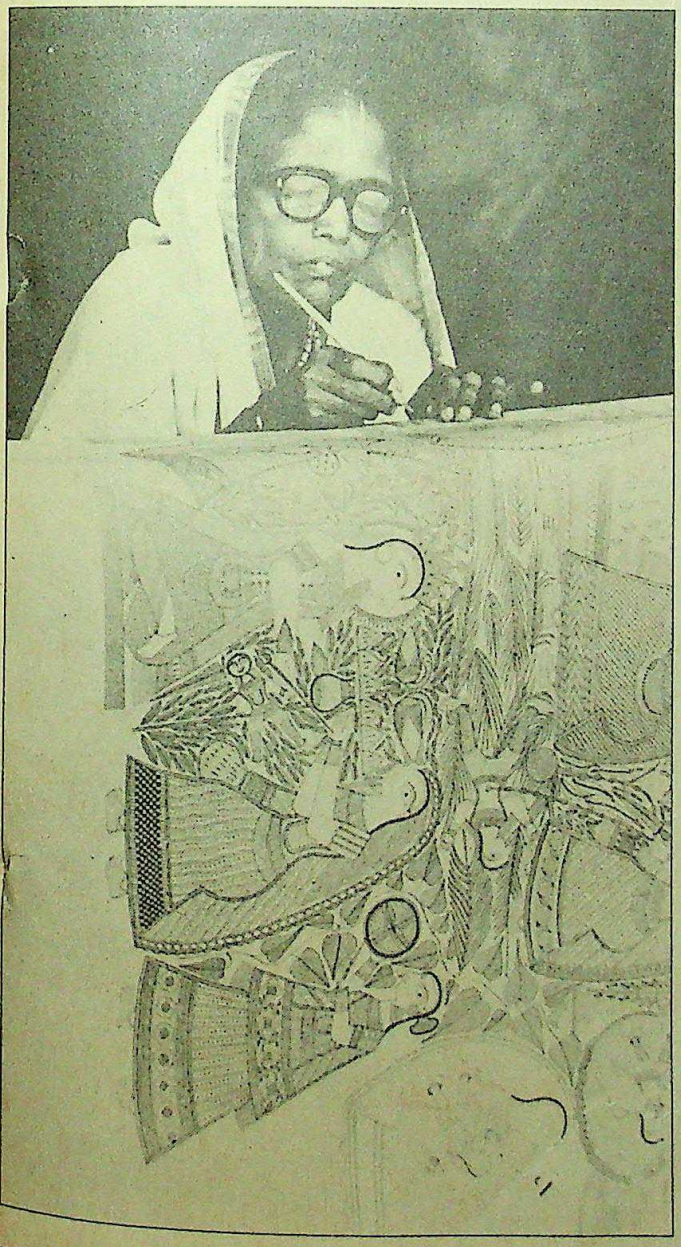
The trouble lies also with what Indian arbiters of culture think their fellow Indians should see from America. Dr Laxmi Sihare, director of the National Museum, for instance, thinks that the Americans should be sending their great art collections such as the Picasso retrospective. Rajeev Sethi thinks such shows would be "elitist". He'd like to see computers supplanted in Connaught Place or the Bread and Puppet Company travel to Indian villages.

But as S.K. Mishra and Martand Singh point out, such debates are not within the ambit of the Festival of India, which stands as an independent entity away from the give and take of the hubbub of bilateral exchange: "At this moment in time, it's we who want to display our culture abroad and if we want better exchange we must prove our bona fides first, we must determine the criteria for cultural import", says Singh.

All such soul-searchings, outpourings of discontent, rumblings of fear and favour, however, will be banished next week when amidst the dazzle of the Empire State Building in New York lit up in colours of the Indian flag and to the strains of Ravi Shankar's sitar, the curtain will finally go up on the Festival of India in America. It will, as American policy-makers with an interest in India have pointed out, be a signal for a new era in Indo-American relations that began with the rapprochement that the late prime minister Indira Gandhi's 1982 visit to the US created. "It will be a demonstration of our ancient culture exploding with contemporary advancements in science and technology," says festival Chairman Jayakar. But a recent advertisement by a travel agency in Indian newspapers promoting cheap fares to America puts it more succinctly. "Come to America," it announces, "India is waiting."

INDERJIT BADHWAR
in Washington with MADHU TREHAN
in New York and SUNIL SETHI
in Delhi

Painter from Mithila creating a Madhubani mural: demonstrating traditional skills



"Come to America. India is waiting."

Travel Agency Advertisement in Indian Newspaper

"Rajiv, with his young and beautiful wife, is bound to be a great hit in America. All he has to do is to keep smiling."

STEVEN R WEISMAN
New York Times

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BIHAR

Confusion Reigns

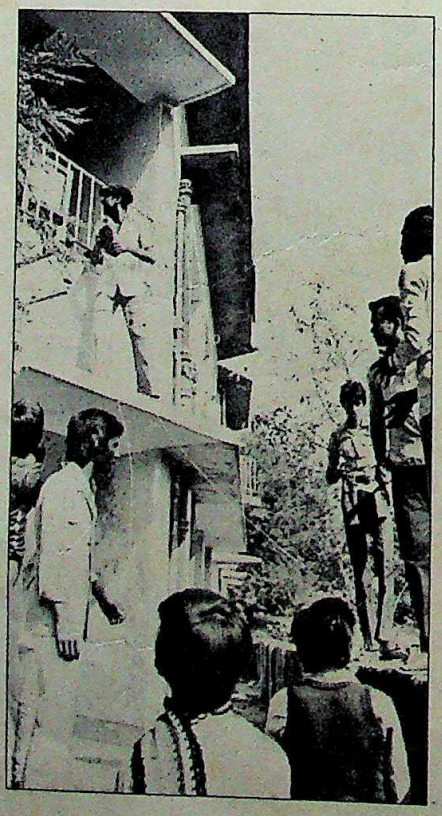
BIHAR is fast turning into a huge graveyard for education. Last fortnight, the Bindeshwari Dubey Government, despite its oft-repeated announcements of steps to improve the state's education system, suddenly scrapped the Bihar Intermediate Education Council (BIEC) set up in 1980 by the Jagannath Mishra government through an ordinance. With it went the much vaunted ten-plus-two education system that the successive Union education ministers have been placing great stress on. The furore that followed was only natural since the implications of this sudden move were loud and clear. Overnight, the 200-odd employees and officers of the council, including its chairman, Shaligram Singh, as well as the teachers and other staff appointed under the BIEC, found themselves jobless. Not only this, more than 150 intermediate colleges became automatically derecognised and over half a million students who had passed the council's examination during the past four years found that their certificates and mark-sheets were now nothing more than worthless bits of paper.

"The Government has disowned the council like an illegitimate child," said BIEC employees union Secretary Jagannath Lal Karn. State Education Minister Uma Pandey, however, showed no regret. "It was the worst experiment in education in the state since independence," she said, pointing out that the council had been the target of criticism ever since its inception. "It failed to fulfil its task and so the Government had no alternative but to abolish it," she added.

What baffled everybody was the manner in which the Government went about it. Said council Vice-Chairman Hiranand Jha, "The best and legal course before the Government was to promulgate an ordinance to dissolve it." The dissolution of the council without proper thought and without alternative arrangements has given rise to many problems which Dubey's two-month-old Government seems unable to face. To the various queries about the future of the employees, teachers and students affected directly by the move, education department Additional Secretary Naveen Kumar could only say that the department was trying to solve all these problems. He told INDIA TODAY that the employees on deputation would be returned to their respective universities while the others would be absorbed in the newly created 'University Service Commission'. The examinations, he said, would be conducted by the various universities as they had been before the setting up of the council.

However, BIEC employees union President Yogeshwar Rai did not think it was as simple as the additional secretary made it out. According to him, the council had 74 employees on deputation, while 35 were direct recruits and nearly 108 on daily wages. While the temporary ones have no place to go, those on deputation too stood to lose their jobs as their earlier posts had in the meantime been filled up. He also pointed out the academic problems that would naturally follow: the implementation of the ten-plus-two education policy, the difference in the council and university syllabi and the future of those whose certificates and mark-sheets had been rendered invalid. Again, he wanted to know what will become of the 150 inter colleges and 28 schools in the state which followed this system.

Students at the BIEC office: out on a limb



BIEC sources alleged the council had all along been an unwanted institution and the Government was only too glad to be rid of it. It had given the council a grant of only Rs 12 lakh in 1980-81, its first year., and Rs 12.76 lakh and Rs 13 lakhs in subsequent years. When Chandrashekhar Singh succeeded Jagannath Mishra, this meagre grant too was withdrawn as an 'austerity measure'. Also, only seven posts of officers, 91 of class three employees and 11 of grade four workers had been sanctioned for the stupendous task of drawing up the syllabus, recognising colleges and holding examinations. The council functioned out of four offices spread over the capital as it had no building of its own.

As a result, the working of the council was inefficient and lackadaisical. Question papers were invariably leaked out and results were often mixed up or kept pending for months on end. The council, which conducted its first examination in 1983, has been plagued with serious irregularities in the appointment of paper setters, moderators and examiners. While the BIEC and the education department kept blaming each other for the mess the council's functioning continued to deteriorate. It was this decay that not only prompted but hastened the state Government's decision to scrap it.

The state has been singularly inconsistent as far as education systems go. In the mid-'50s, the Government had introduced the internal assessment scheme at the matriculation level but when this created vested interests it was done away with. It then introduced the one-plus-three system at the undergraduate level. But this system too was soon scrapped and replaced by the higher secondary system which had the 12th class at the school level, followed by the three-year degree course. This again was partially scrapped when the plus-two system came into effect. However, the eleven-plus-two-plus-two system (matriculation, two years intermediate and two years graduation) continued simultaneously, causing great confusion. The death of the plus-two system was, in a way, expected.

Meanwhile, inter colleges and schools following the plus-two system have proliferated all over the state and the Government's sudden decision to scrap the council has thrown them in limbo. What will come of all this learning and unlearning is anybody's guess.

—FARZAND AHMED

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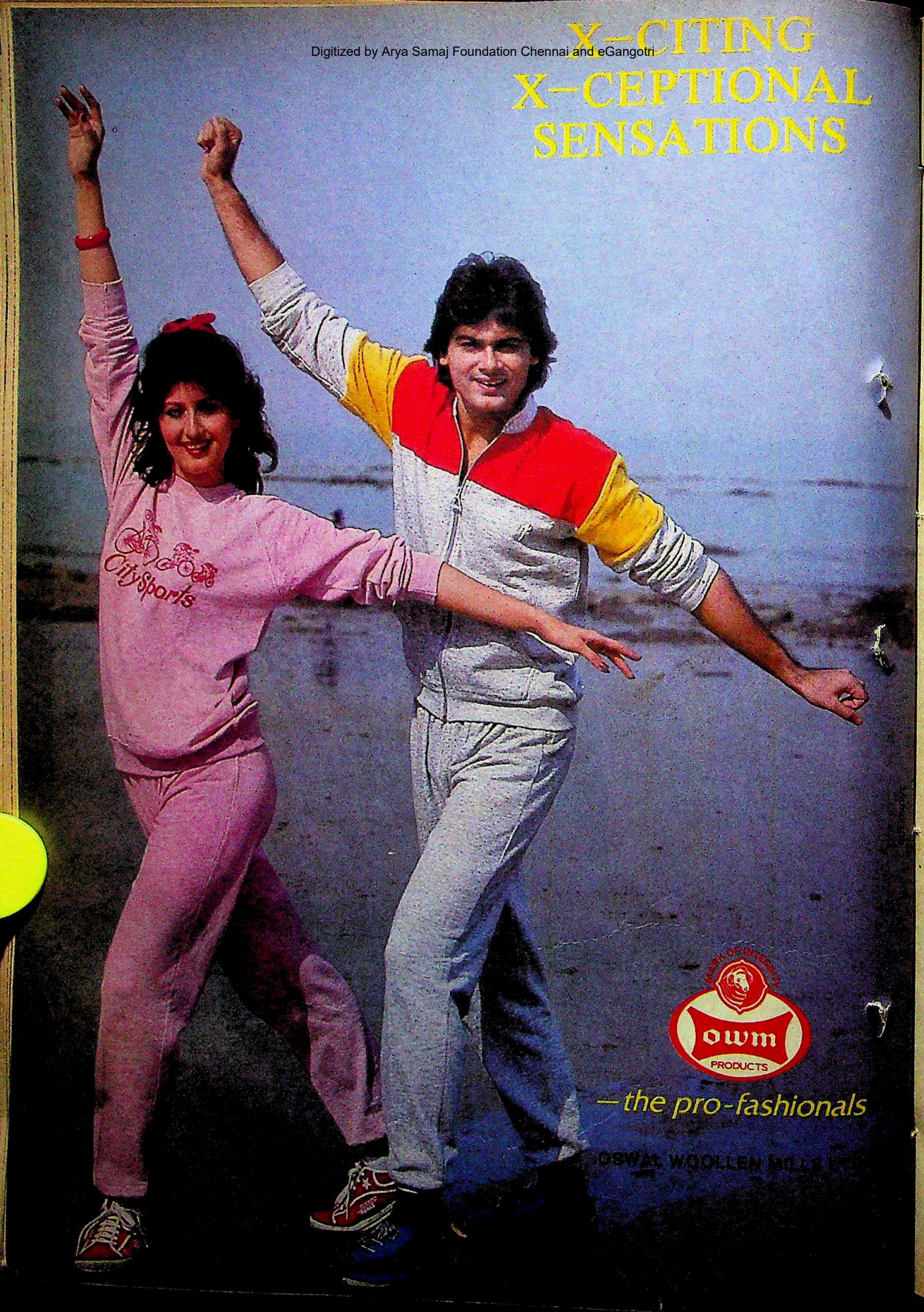

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SAFETY Engine Mounting	Right hand side	Central	Centrally aligned

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MORE AUTONOMY

RADICAL changes are likely in the constitution of the boards of public sector companies, following the Government's digesting of the Arjun Sengupta report on the public sector. The Government is likely to push through a decision to sharply reduce the representation of its officials on public sector boards so as to give the companies far greater autonomy and to make them accountable within a framework of clearly defined parameters. The proposal initially met with some resistance from government departments, which argued that since large amounts of public money were being spent by the public sector companies, government nominees should continue to be on the company boards. But Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is believed to have taken a firm stand on the issue and overruled the objections that were raised. A final decision is expected to be announced shortly.

RETHINKING POLICY

A CRITICAL assessment is currently being made of the fertiliser pricing policy, which guarantees fertiliser companies a 12 per cent return on investment if they achieve a stipulated optimum level of capacity utilisation. It is now felt that this does not give companies a sufficient incentive to reduce costs. Also, a study has shown that over half the reasons for low capacity utilisation lie within the ambit of company managements. Going on the premise that the burgeoning subsidy bill can be reduced only by achieving greater efficiency within the industry and by reducing energy consumption in the industry, efforts are now being made to look for more appropriate pricing mechanisms that will subserve these objectives.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

THE PAPER industry's initial happiness at the Government's decision to allow the import of pulp has now given way to some concern. Paper manufacturers had been looking forward to easier raw material supplies, but they have now realised that the import of pulp makes small scale paper manufacturers a more serious force in the market since they can convert pulp into paper more easily and more economically than if they had to start from the basic raw material. With the paper market already competitive, the prospect of small-scale paper companies providing a new edge to the competition is now being viewed with some concern.

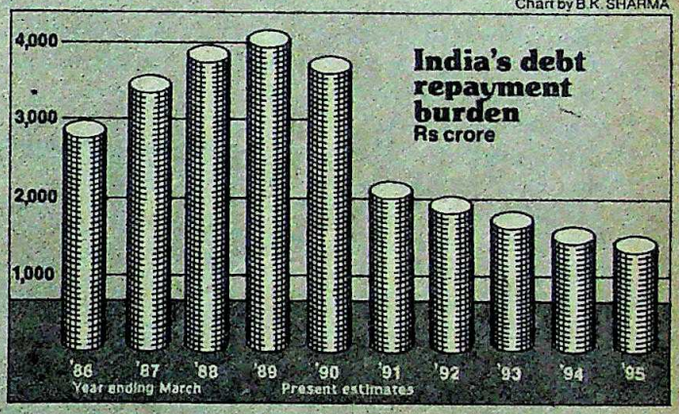
SPURIOUS SPARES

MORE than 40 per cent of the automotive spare parts sold in the country are either substandard or spurious. A recent survey of the market, commissioned by the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association, shows that of the total annual sales of Rs 1,300 crore, Rs 200 crore is accounted for by substandard parts and Rs 350 crore by spurious parts. The manufacturers of both categories of products are able to achieve market penetration by offering larger and more lucrative trade margins, and by evading excise duties and sales tax. The survey suggests that the solution to the problem lies in introducing stricter legislation that will make the manufacture of spurious parts a cognisable offence and also a thorough reviewing of the tax structure that at present gives the makers of spurious parts a cost advantage.

UPHILL TASK

INDIA's overseas debt repayment obligations are expected to increase very rapidly over the next three to four years, before tapering off after the seventh plan period. The figures now available show that repayments will climb from less than Rs 2,000 crore three years ago to over Rs 4,000

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



crore by 1988-89, before dropping off to less than Rs 1,500 crore a decade from now—unless fresh loans are negotiated with bodies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The real crunch on the foreign exchange front, therefore, lies just ahead in the medium-term future, and could develop into a major constraint for the Seventh Five-Year Plan.

CHANGING DAILY

SANJAY Dalmia is negotiating with R.K. Karanjia for the purchase of the Bombay tabloid, *The Daily*. Dalmia, whose family once controlled the Bennet Coleman group of publications, is anxious to get back into the publications business, and the price at which the tabloid (including some property in Bombay and printing machinery) is to be bought has reportedly been settled. The deal has not yet been concluded because discussions are continuing on the question of whether to retain the paper's entire journalistic staff, and whether Karanjia or Dalmia should take on the job of slimming the payroll. If these issues are sorted out to mutual satisfaction, Dalmia intends to convert the struggling tabloid into a broadsheet and to bring out a Delhi edition of the newspaper as well. Meanwhile, an understanding has already been reached with the editor of a prominent Bombay weekly, who will become *The Daily*'s editor if Dalmia eventually does manage to gain control.

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DRUGS POLICY

The Elusive Formula

IF ANY drug company were given the opportunity to prescribe remedies for the ailments of its counterparts in the industry, it would probably write out a poison, to be taken in double dosage. And if the Government were given the opportunity to intervene, it would almost certainly be like a dispensing chemist who has forgotten the difference between an antibiotic and a pain-killer.

Both these and more have been in evidence in recent weeks as the Government pulled back from announcing a new drug policy that was supposed to replace the existing one, announced in 1978. Lobbying and counter-lobbying by foreign and wholly Indian-owned companies had reached fever-pitch until the inevitable happened: the Government argued itself to a standstill, and a hapless Minister for Chemicals and Fertiliser, Veerendra Patil, made the astonishing confession in Parliament that he couldn't announce a new policy because of the activities of the rival drug lobbies.

Logically, none of this should have occurred. For two years, a variety of committees had gone into every aspect of the drug industry's working and cobbled together a patchwork of recommendations that were to form the basis of the new policy (INDIA TODAY, October 15, 1984). But with a new government assuming office this year, the competing lobbies thought they spotted the chance to push their own views home and put down their rivals, and began a fresh round of the propaganda war that has so far resulted in a frustrating stalemate.

The first salvo was fired when, in an unusual move, Patil threw open his office to the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), dominated by foreign-owned companies, which mounted a slickly produced audio-visual show that carried a blunt message: scrap price control on all but a handful of drugs, free licensing, and allow a virtual open-house by replacing government controls with "self-discipline" on the part of the industry. As OPPI President Russi Langrana explained: "The whole philosophy of the Government is changing, and if you want production, you must relax all licensing." That view was echoed by V. Prakash of Hindustan Ciba-Geigy, who argued that "in the earlier environment we couldn't ask for decontrol, but now it is different."

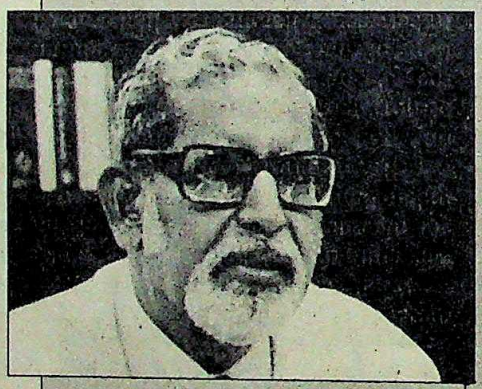
But if the foreign-owned drug companies felt that the time was ripe for the big push towards an open-door policy, they reckoned without the immediate and inevitable counter-pressure from some large Indian-owned companies, who began an equally aggressive campaign to make sure that the Government did not go overboard. The resultant frustration in OPPI circles was expressed by D.G. Shah of Pfizer, who said: "The industry needs a quick decision. Companies are stopping the production of drugs because the existing prices are unattractive, new technology is not being introduced because of the policy restrictions, and production is falling short of the targets. What is the need for further delays when two years of preparatory work has already been done for framing the new policy?"

The answer came from a spokesman of a large, wholly Indian-owned company, who argued that the scrapping of the present drug policy would allow the foreign drug companies to expand into non-essential areas, and prevent the large Indian-owned companies from continuing to follow up on their rapid growth of recent years.

At the heart of the dispute over a new policy are two completely divergent judgements on the results of the present policy. The OPPI points out that drug production in the last five years has fallen well short of the targets set in the sixth plan, that the pace of fresh investment has slackened, that imports are rising fast, that unattractive prices, a restrictive patents law and the curbs on using brand names have prevented companies from introducing the latest drugs from abroad, and that many drug companies are withdrawing vital products from the market because of the unattractive prices.

Hindustan Ciba-Geigy's Prakash argues that his company is losing Rs 4 crore annually on its pharmaceutical business (neutralised by profits earned from its other operations), and Shah of Pfizer points out that numerous drug companies are now seeking alternative avenues of growth, in related chemical fields. He lists Searle, Cyanamid, Hoechst and May and Baker as examples.

While there is some force to these arguments, the rival viewpoint sounds equally convincing. As Harish Chawla, resident director of Cipla argues, that "the existing drug policy has helped the leading Indian drug companies to grow rapidly," that the multinational companies in India have not grown because they chose to stay away from high technology and essential drugs, and that any changes in the patents law or in drug licensing can only strengthen the hands of the multinational companies.



"The philosophy of the Government is changing, and if you want production, you must relax all licensing."

RUSSI LANGRANA, *president, OPPI*

There is some force to these arguments too. In the five years to 1984, 11 leading multinational drug companies expanded their production of antibiotics by only 5 per cent, while their production of tonics increased by a hefty 50 per cent; numerous foreign drug companies have voluntarily diluted their overseas shareholding to 40 per cent, so that they escape the clutches of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA). Subsequently, they have exploited the scheme for registering fresh projects and booked huge additional capacities. Searle India has registered itself for the production of 37 new items in three years, Dupher Interfran for 40 items in just one year, German Remedies for 19 items, and Boehringer-Knoll for 24 different drugs.

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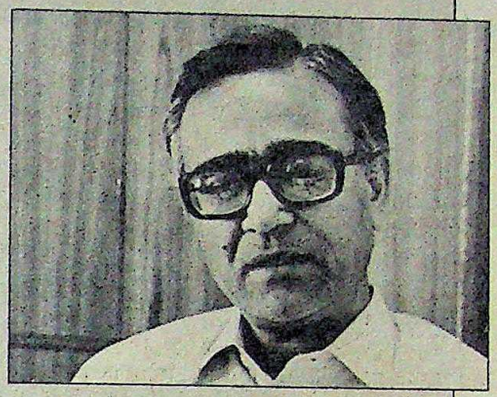
"In the earlier environment we couldn't ask for decontrol, but now it is different."

V. PRAKASH
general manager, Hindustan Ciba-Geigy



Allowing foreign-owned companies to expand means a huge outgo in foreign exchange. Such outgo is already rising: by 47 per cent for Glaxo in 1982-83, 50 per cent for May and Baker, 88 per cent for Richardson Hindustan, 70 per cent for Pfizer and 33 per cent for Merck Sharpe and Dohme.

Despite the stipulation in the drug policy that foreign-owned companies must concentrate on the production of bulk drugs, most of them have preferred to focus their efforts on the technologically simple and profitable downstream business of formulations. Thus, in the six years to 1982-83, the foreign companies' production of bulk drugs actually fell, from Rs 63 crore to Rs 55 crore, while their formulation activity expanded rapidly, from Rs 292 crore to Rs 615 crore. In contrast, Indian-owned companies have shown a willingness to manufacture bulk drugs. Bulk production in the Indian-owned sector rose from Rs 87 crore to Rs 270 crore, while formulations grew from Rs 408 crore to Rs 930 crore.

Further, the 1978 policy pronouncement that foreign-owned companies turning out formulations must produce the bulk drugs within two years has mostly been ignored by the companies.

A free hand to the foreign-owned companies will give them free rein to charge exorbitant prices. The case is pointed out of Hoechst Pharmaceuticals charging customers Rs 23,625 per kg of Baralgan Keton, which the company reduced in 1977 to Rs 8,019. The Government, after working out the company's costs, then fixed a price of Rs 1,810. But the drug company took the issue to court, and won its case last December. Critics of the company's record on this issue point out that the verdict was largely on technical and procedural grounds, and that the company has been enjoying substantial profits on this and other drugs.

The broad message is thus clear: allowing the foreign-owned companies free rein will not mean the introduction of new high technology drugs; instead, these companies will move into non-essential areas and charge the prices they want. And national objectives in pharmaceuticals will not be served.

Predictably, the spokesmen of the foreign companies react heatedly to these charges. Arvind Nair of OPPI says: "First the Government does not give us licences to produce basic drugs, then it criticises us for not producing them." He points out that Pfizer wanted to produce the anti-tuberculosis drug Rifampicin, but was denied the capacity it asked for. Similarly, Glaxo wanted to produce Salbutamol, used to treat asthma, but was denied a licence. And numerous other companies were given licences for restricted capacities that made production financially non-viable.

Some of these decisions have certainly cost the country dearly. Rifampicin is now imported in vast quantities at enormous cost: 75 tonnes last year for Rs 16 crore. Similarly, the production of Salbutamol is well short of demand, and 70 per cent of consumption is now met by imports. Clearly, it would have been wise to give Pfizer and Glaxo the licences they wanted.

Meanwhile, R.N. Goel, president of Searle India, argued that his company could not be criticised for registering new projects. "The policy allowed this, and we have made use of it for growth. Many Indian companies have done the same."

Nevertheless, it is also true that most foreign-owned drug companies have chosen not to enter high technology and essential areas in the drug industry, and instead to concentrate on the more profitable, low-priority end of the market. This is the argument deployed by the Indian-owned companies, and Langrani of OPPI conceded its partial validity by saying: "To some extent it is true that the foreign-owned drug companies did not apply for high-technology drug licences." But he adds that this was because of the unattractiveness of the price allowed for these drugs. But that only begs another question: how do Indian-owned companies find the same prices attractive?

In this welter of claims and counter-claims, charges and counter-charges, it is not surprising that the Government has found it impossible to make up its mind on the optimum contours of a new drug policy. The task has been made even more difficult by the active role being played by some influential members of Parliament who have taken up cudgels for one lobby or the other.

In the midst of all this, perhaps the only issue on which the industry agrees is the question of price control. Both competing lobbies argue that the current prices need revision, and that the scope of price control needs to be sharply reduced. The report of the steering committee of the National Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Development Council, submitted last September, argued that the ambit of price control should be reduced from 360 drugs at present to just 90 essential drugs. In its latest round of lobbying, the OPPI has gone a step further and said price control should be restricted to just

"The existing drug policy has helped the leading Indian drug companies to grow rapidly."

HARISH CHAWLA,
resident director, Cipla

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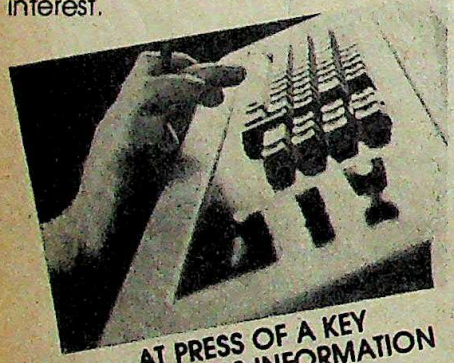

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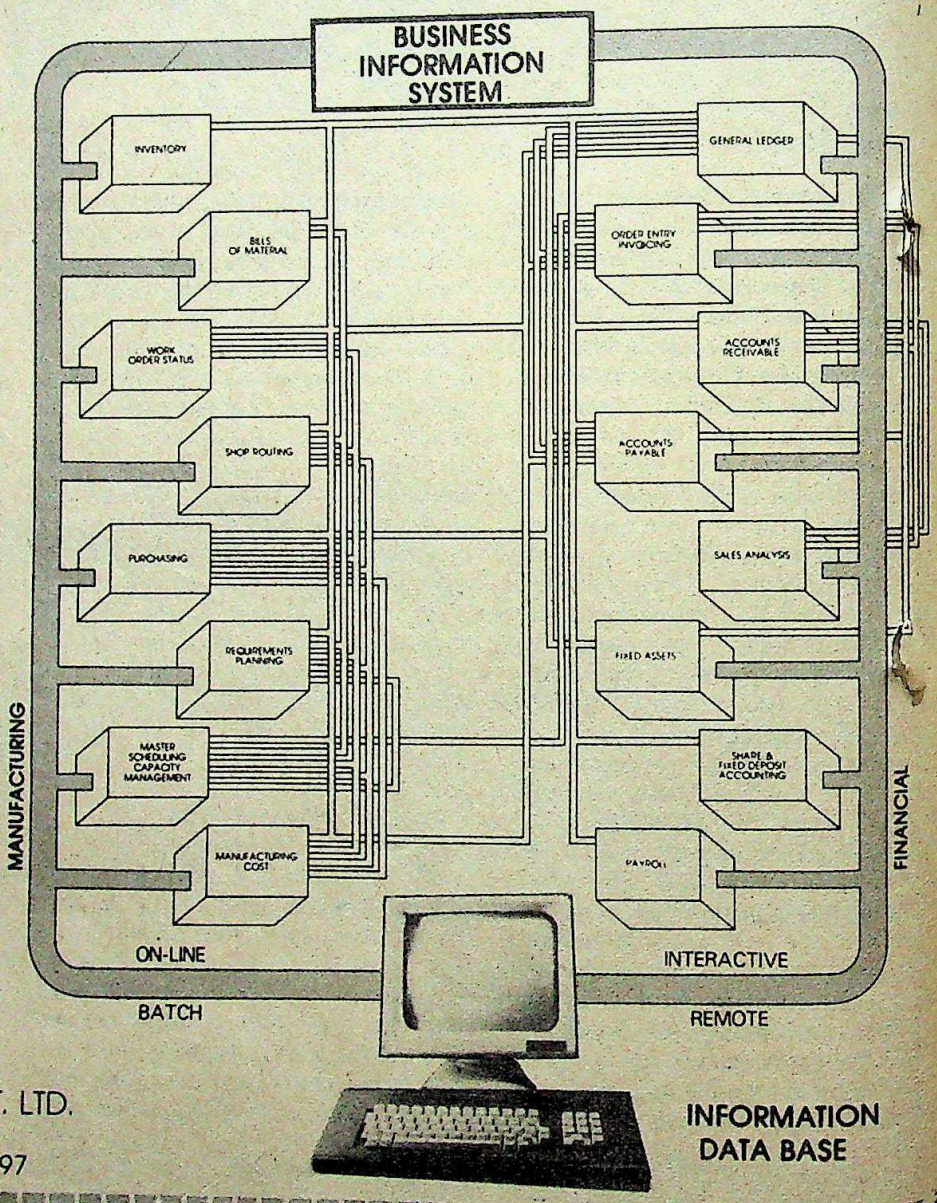

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20 drugs for such common ailments as tuberculosis and leprosy. And both lobbies have asked for higher price mark-ups than those currently allowed. A proposal to announce higher mark-ups was considered by the Government, but a decision was finally deferred until the rest of the policy on drugs also gets finalised.

This new policy, however, may be a long time in coming. At the consultative committee meeting of the Chemicals and Fertiliser Ministry last month, Veerendra Patil deferred a discussion of the new policy by promising to convene another meeting specifically to debate the issue. But this might well have to wait for the monsoon session of Parliament, after which the Government may need still more time to do its final sums. Most industry observers feel that the new policy is now unlikely to be announced for another six months. And if influential Indian companies insist that there is no need for a new policy at all, and that the existing policy should be persisted with, a final decision may take still longer. Clearly, manufacturing a new drug policy seems more difficult than producing the drugs themselves.

—T.N.NINAN

LIQUOR SMUGGLING

Dubious Despatches

THE SMUGGLING of foreign liquor into India has long been big business but equally lucrative, apparently, is the running of ordinary Indian brands of rum, gin and whisky across the state borders within the country. This was discovered by the West Bengal Excise Department when it stumbled upon a massive inter-state liquor smuggling racket recently. The state Excise Commissioner, A.M. Chakrabarti, disclosed last fortnight that "just a few checks conducted on liquor imports from two major distilleries in the state during the last year have revealed that we have lost over a crore rupees in excise duty". Consequently, the Excise Department is checking every import consignment sent out from the two distilleries—Shaw Wallace's Bengal Distilleries at Bhandrakali and Carew's at Asansol—during the past 10 years. All liquor despatches out of the state from the distilleries have been suspended for the present. "What has come out so far is only the tip of the iceberg," Chakrabarti said. Since excise rates vary in each state, the liquor manufacturers have to pay duty to the state where the liquor is consumed. If the inter-state despatches were fictitious, the companies paid excise neither to West Bengal nor the state where the liquor was supposed to have been delivered.

The authorities first sat up last year when, says Chakrabarti, "we found Carew company's own men submitting import indents and insisting on immediate clearance". Acting on a hunch, the Excise Department sent some of the import permits to their counterparts in Bihar and Haryana, from where most of the orders appeared to generate. The documents and signatures were fake.

Excise Inspector Moloy Mitra, deputed to investigate the matter in March 1984, discovered that Messrs Skyland at Motihari in Bihar, who were supposed to have imported 13,746 liquid proof litres (LPL) of liquor from Carew during 1983-84, did not even have a bond licence so the local excise authorities could not have issued any import permit. In Chapra, Mitra found that the local dealer, Prabhu Charan Sahu, who was supposed to have imported 9,636.5 LPL of liquor, had not been issued any import permit. A third fictitious importer, Messrs Wine Traders Bonded Warehouse, located in Sonepat, Haryana, had been despatched 83,463 LPL of liquor. Mitra, in his preliminary report, concluded that there was "prima facie complicity of Messrs Phipson and Company and Messrs Carew and Company". (Phipson is a sister concern of Carew and markets and distributes Carew products.) The investigation, however, received a setback following Mitra's sudden death.

> **If the inter-state despatches were fictitious, the companies paid excise neither to West Bengal nor the state where the liquor was supposed to have been delivered.**

Shaw Wallace was dragged into the picture when it was discovered that Prabhu Charan Sahu had also been sent six consignments of liquor from the company during 1983-84. Excise officials further discovered that Shaw Wallace had been sending huge consignments to a non-existent Suman Enterprises in Cuttack. According to the Excise Department's estimates, between October 13, 1982 and January 17,1983, it had lost duty worth Rs 33.8 lakh on the consignments. In March this year, the department launched a case against Bengal Distilleries.

The two companies, however, seem to be in the clear. As an official of Phipson explained, "If both the import permits and the verification certificates submitted after delivery of the consignment turn out to be fake, it is not our responsibility." Added Shaw Wallace Vice-president K. Srinivasan: "We cannot be held responsible if someone gives us a counterfeit note. It is the excise official at the distillery who is paid to see that everything is in order." Indeed, according to the prescribed procedure, liquor is issued from a distillery on the production of an import permit granted by the excise authorities of the district where the importer is based. The local excise department's distillery officer then issues an 'export pass' that accompanies the consignment to its destination. Finally, the excise officer of the importing district is supposed to return the export pass along with a certificate of verification.

It is primarily the job of the excise officials to see that everything is in order. "But in this case, we have been left holding the baby," laments the Phipson official, adding that the fake importers have now all disappeared. Chakrabarti, however, feels it is not so simple. "What the companies cannot explain," he says, "is to whom did the company deliver the consignments if the importers did not exist at all?"

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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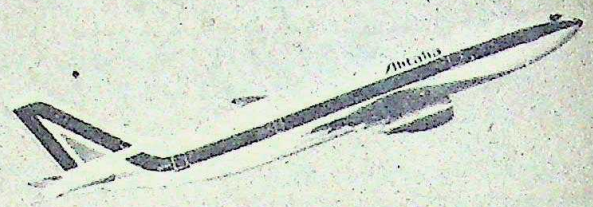

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BANKING

A Dramatic Turn

STAID central banks are not supposed to send shockwaves through the banking system with hasty announcements and dramatic somersaults. But that is precisely what the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has done in the last two months by first announcing sharply increased rates of interest on short-term deposits, and then partially retracing its steps seven weeks later.

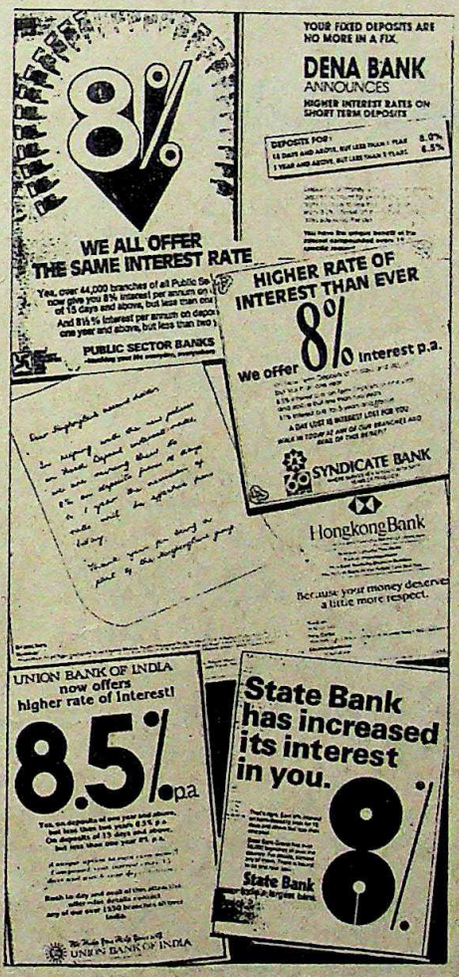
In the resultant downstream melee, the banks first tried to form a cartel and stick to the old, low interest rates, some among their ranks then broke loose, so everybody was forced to up the ante, numerous bankers forecast dire financial disaster because of the increased cost of money, and pressure was mounted on the RBI to retract, which it finally did late last fortnight.

The banks are naturally relieved. Said the chairman and managing director of a nationalised bank: "If we had been forced to pay 8 per cent interest on deposits of up to a year, large amounts of money would have been shifted from current accounts and savings accounts, and the banks would have been in the red by Rs 150 crore or more."

But the shoe is on the other foot as far as journalist Paran Balakrishnan is concerned. He had invested Rs 12,500 in a short-term deposit just before the RBI changed its mind, hoping to get 8 per cent interest. Now, with the rate of interest more than halved, he does not know whether he will get the old rate or the new one.

The re-revised interest rate structure could also throw a spanner in the works of companies like the public sector behemoth, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL). The company was among the first to take advantage of the higher interest rates on short-term deposits, and within a week of the rates being announced in early April, had deposited Rs 100 crore with various banks, and later added another Rs 15 crore. By last fortnight, the company had netted a handsome Rs 33 lakh as interest. But such fun and games must now end, for the 8 per cent interest rate now applies only to deposits of more than six months.

The initial RBI announcement was clearly conceived in haste, without full thought being given to the downstream consequences. But the RBI did have a certain logic to back its decision. As RBI governor R.N. Malhotra told the chief executives of public sector banks in early April, the RBI wanted to introduce genuine competition in the short-term money market by expanding the interest spread permitted. In the process, it had also hoped to expand the size of the short-term money market, and expected the banks to attract money away from the short-term inter-corporate market.



Bank ads: short-lived splurge

What actually happened, however, was quite unexpected. First, the banks got together under the banner of the Indian Banks Association and refused to raise the interest rates; then, equally unexpectedly, everyone went to the top of the range and offered 8 per cent, led by the two banks that first broke ranks: Bank of America and Bank of Madurai. In between, a flaming row had erupted among the banks, with the nationalised banks accusing their foreign counterparts of playing dirty, and the latter retorting that there was no justification for trying to form a cartel. But with all the banks now paying out 8 per cent because no one wanted a flight of deposits away from their accounts, the financial outlook turned distinctly cloudy. For while on the one hand the borrowing rates had gone up, on the other lending rates had been reduced only a few months earlier, from a maximum of 19 per cent to 17.5 per cent. The Indian banks were handicapped for another reason: with their social banking obligations, their average return on loans is 14 per cent, while the foreign banks earn 17.5 per cent. This puts the latter in a more comfortable situation financially, so that they can afford higher deposit rates, while the Indian banks cannot. So the lobbying for a fresh change of policy began, with the Indian Banks Association writing to the RBI formally on the subject. As a senior banker argued, "The Reserve Bank can't just stand by and watch the banks lose money." With a fresh change of policy coming in short order, that comment proved uncommonly prescient.

The episode had other side-shows too. The more enterprising banks, for instance, tried to attract floating cash by offering compounded interest rates despite the RBI frowning on such innovations; the foreign banks operating in the country began advertising the new interest rates while a government ban on all public sector advertising prevented the big Indian banks from following suit. Eventually, however, the nationalised banks too were able to start advertising campaigns, but within the banks themselves both officers and clerks seemed occasionally to be unaware of the new short-term interest rates. Banks were also searching for ways of simplifying the paperwork involved in renewing 15-day deposits. New Bank of India, for one, was toying with the idea of providing depositors with passbooks in which entries would be made.

That problem has now been solved, but at the end of the entire episode, two lessons seem clear. As Ambi N. Venkateswaran, vice-president and manager of the Bank of America's New Delhi branch, puts it: "The signal from the RBI was that banks have to be more conscious of costs and have to be more productive." The pity is that neither the RBI nor the banks knew very much about how to usher in a new era of competition without botching up the job.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

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The textile mill: valuable real estate

DCM

Controversial Move

SOME companies lurch from controversy to controversy. For DCM, there was first Swraj Paul's stock-market raid, and then a messy tussle for succession to the top slot. Now a storm is being kicked up over the move to close a textile mill sited on valuable real estate in the capital. Both the Government and most members of Parliament joined hands last month to roundly condemn the company's move to close its 96-year-old mill at Bara Hindu Rao in the heart of the old city. Charges of corruption were aired, and members of Parliament and government officials voiced the suspicion that the company wanted to move the mill from its 63-acre location primarily in order to cash in on the fat sums that commercial redevelopment of the plot would inevitably bring.

DCM's move to close its mill, made public when it informed the mill's 6,109 workers in March that they would be laid off, from July 1, has kicked up dust on two counts: the jobs of the workers, and the green signal given by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to the company to put up small multi-storeyed factories and residential flats on the land once it is vacated. Said a Union minister who spoke to INDIA TODAY on the condition of anonymity; "The DDA was wrong in clearing DCM's redevelopment proposal. Obviously, some influence was used."

DCM has promised to take on as many as possible of the mill's workers in a new mill it plans to put up outside the city, but that mill may not come up for the next two years and the more modern plant will not require more than 2,000 workers. The number of those affected by the closure of the old mill could swell to anything over 50,000 if workers' families and small businessmen whose survival is linked with the mill are taken into account.

The inevitable result of all this is that the Government has been brandishing the big stick. Should the company go ahead and down shutters at the mill, the Centre may refuse to license new projects for DCM companies—as a Central minister warned. The Government is also holding out the threat of taking over the mill. The ball was set rolling last fortnight when Delhi Administration Labour Commissioner Nita Bali wrote to DCM asking the firm whether it still intended to close the mill. Bali ended her terse letter to DCM Chairman and Senior Managing Director Bansi Dhar on an ominous note: "Needless to say, in the event of a possibility of a closure, all possible steps will be taken by the Government to prevent the same."

Officials also suggested that the DDA might be asked to revoke its 1983 resolution clearing DCM's proposal to redevelop the mill site. And Union Works and Housing Minister Abdul Ghafoor was setting up a committee to look into how the DDA arrived at its controversial decision, fulfilling a promise he had made to agitated members of Parliament earlier.

The increasingly hard line that the Government has taken on the closure issue has clearly rattled the company. Last fortnight, the DCM board met and asked the company's Managing Director, Vinay Bharat Ram, in whose bailiwick the mill falls, to seek a "graded" solution to the contentious issue. The management now proposes to shift the mill in stages to either Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh or Hissar in Haryana, where DCM has both mills and land. And in statements to the press, Vinay Bharat Ram said that the company would help workers who were not absorbed in the new mill to set up weavers' cooperatives.

While that does represent a climb-down of sorts, the company has not gone the whole hog. It has not gone back on its resolve to put up factories and flats at Bara Hindu Rao, which it will sell or lease to find the money for the new mill. Nor has it so far withdrawn a writ petition it filed in the Delhi High Court challenging the Delhi Administration's ruling that the mill cannot be shut "in the public interest." Company insiders believe that DCM's decision to go to court caught some members of the firm's board by surprise. According to them, Vinay Bharat Ram did not consult either the board or Chairman Bansi Dhar on the matter, though strictly speaking he may not have been obliged to do so.

NEVERTHELESS, Vinay Bharat Ram himself was sufficiently alarmed by the flak the company's closure move has attracted to write to Union Labour Minister T. Anjiah on May 12 expressing his dismay about statements made in Parliament by the minister that the Government might consider taking over the mill's management, and about the "baseless and unfounded" charges levelled at the company in Parliament. He pointed out that DCM could not sink money into modernising the mill because it falls into the heavy industry category in Delhi's 1962 master plan, is located in a nonconforming area, and was legally bound to move out by 1982. The Delhi Administration has therefore been repeatedly advising DCM to pull up stakes and move the mill out of the area.

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In another letter to Delhi's Lt-Governor M.M.K. Wali, he pointed out that more than half the retrenched workers would receive over Rs 40,000, depending on the number of years they had put in. Those who get less than that would have 20 to 35 years of working life ahead of them. He argued that these workers could find new jobs as the absenteeism figure in mills in a 200-mile radius around Delhi exceeds the DCM mill's labour strength. These arguments would look impressive were it not for the fact that most (though not all) of the compensation DCM is offering its mill workers is legally due to them anyway.

The management has also argued in the letter to Anjiah and in the writ petition that the mill's plant and machinery are obsolete, that the buildings are old and unsafe and that modern machines cannot be installed there. (Vinay Bharat Ram went so far as to claim in a press statement that a Bhopal-type tragedy could occur in the crowded locality since operating the mill there is hazardous.) Demolishing the building and putting up new ones would mean a bill of several crores. Moreover, the mill is overstaffed, with 4.5 workers per loom as against the norm of about 2.5 in profitable mills. As a result of all this, the mill has piled up losses of over Rs 33 crore over the past decade or so. The only solution then is to put up a modern new mill elsewhere—and the Rs 50 crore to Rs 60 crore required for this can only come from developing the Bara Hindu Rao site commercially.

No one can quarrel with the assessment that the mill's machinery is old. But a company spokesman admits that the firm has sunk about Rs 7 crore into new equipment in the last few years. Also, the mill's losses have not been mounting significantly in the last two years and Bansi Dhar has all along argued within the firm's top management that he can pull the mill out of the red given the chance.

The company's case rests heavily on the premise that the Delhi Administration and not the firm, took the initiative to shift the mill, and it presents considerable evidence to suggest this. The story goes back to June 1981 when DCM received a letter from the Administration's directorate of industries pointing out that the mill was in a nonconforming area and inviting it to shift to Narela, an industrial belt 18 miles from the capital. In January 1982, the then DDA vice-chairman V.S. Ailawadi advised the company in a letter that "it appears that the shifting of your unit is inevitable".

In the same month, Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking Chief Engineer A.S. Pinto informed the Delhi Factory Owners' Association, to which the firm had complained about interruptions in power supply, that it would be in the mill's interests to shift to an industrial area "so that the power supply could be more dependable". Next, DDA's technical committee passed a resolution in February 1983 clearing the company's move to put up factories and flats on the Bara Hindu Rao premises. Subsequently, DCM wrote to the DDA seeking 200 acres of land to shift to, a request that was turned down. Finally, in November 1984 the company's mill land was exempted from the provisions of the Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act.

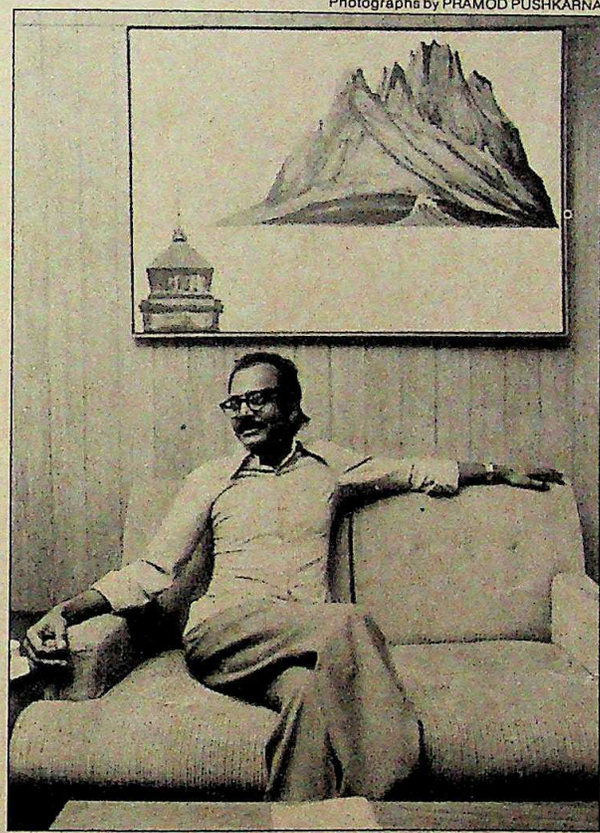
That roster looks impressive, but at least one of the mill's labour leaders regards it as a carefully orchestrated sequence of events. Contends Lalit Maken, Congress(I) member of Parliament and general secretary of the Textile Mazdoor Congress: "The whole case was so built up in connivance with DDA officials that it would look as if the only option the management had was closure." That may or may not be true, but it is curious that the company applied for as much as 200 acres of land. DCM argues in its writ petition that 150 acres were to shift the mill to, and the additional 50 acres were meant for future expansion. A company spokesman also says that the present mill premises are overcrowded and the intention was to lay out the buildings and the workers' colonies in a better manner. But a Delhi Administration official points out that at no time was the company seriously questioned as to why it had demanded such a large plot of land.

Meanwhile, the DDA has added a fresh twist to the story. It has claimed in briefings to the Union Works and Housing Ministry that DCM, and not the DDA, made the first overtures for shifting the mill. Adds DDA Vice-chairman Prem Kumar: "We've never insisted on their shifting immediately." That certainly undermines DCM's case, but the DDA could be trying to wriggle off the hook now.

But the DDA cannot get off scot-free. It can be indicted on a number of counts. For instance, why did it permit DCM, a private company, to develop the mill property? Says Prem Kumar, who took charge of the DDA after its 1983 decision on DCM: "The point is, who should do it? Why should a private entrepreneur be allowed to develop land?" There is also the procedural matter of whether the resolution adopted by the DDA's technical committee is valid. Labour Commissioner Bali believes it is not, since it was not subsequently endorsed in writing by the various departments of the Administration involved, though their representatives did verbally concur with the resolution at the committee meeting.

A far more serious question is why the DDA zeroed in on the Bara Hindu Rao mill while overlooking Swatantra Bharat Mills, another DCM mill in the capital. Both are required to move out of the capital under the master plan, as is the company's chemical plant in Delhi. Some regard the plant, which stores some 280 tonnes of chlorine, as far more hazardous to the community than the textile mills, though it has received a clean chit in the past from official bodies. But the Centre is now worried enough by it to have asked the Delhi Administration to set up a four-man committee to assess whether the plant is hazardous or not. Whether it will stay at its present site depends on the committee's report. Lalit Maken, for one, argues that the company's approach is inconsistent: "DCM does not

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Vinay Bharat Ram: prime mover

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want to shift that far more hazardous factory because it makes huge profits, while it wants to move the mill out."

So DCM plainly is on a sticky wicket. The only broader issue it has going for it is whether firms that in future want to put up more modern and less labour-intensive plants, should be forbidden from closing old and losing establishments solely to protect jobs. The issue seems to have escaped official attention so far. But even if it is taken up, it is hardly likely to affect the immediate outlook for DCM. Its unions may oppose even phased shifting unless houses are first provided at the new site and unless a guarantee is given that no worker is laid off. So the company may well find itself with a new crop of labour problems on its hands.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

LOTTERIES

Out of Luck

TWENTY- five- year-old Revathi has been working for a lottery ticket vendor for the last three years, manning a sales stall at a busy Madras thoroughfare. But her normal sense of optimism has given way to gloom: the daily sale tally has unexpectedly dropped from Rs 70 last year to Rs 30. "I don't know how long the stall owner can afford to keep me." Revathi says.

Twenty-nine-year-old Mumtaz Ali has been selling lottery tickets for the last 13 years. But with sales dropping, he has been forced to take up a regular job. "Lotteries are a dying business," he says.

Such examples can be multiplied in Tamil Nadu, traditionally the best bet for lottery organisers. Of the estimated nation-wide lottery ticket sales of Rs 800 crore in 1983, the state accounted for 37 per cent. But sales have suddenly nosedived, and the bulk of the 1.85 lakh vendors of tickets have now been forced to switch to other means of earning money.

A pioneering agency in the city which dealt exclusively in tickets for the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh lotteries and which had a turnover of Rs 6 crore last year has now downed its shutters. Said the agency's proprietor: "We have suspended all our operations, and don't sell tickets any more. We are only running a small office now because we have our agency in Bangalore and need some administrative staff here." Added the managing director of another major lottery agency: "We used to have 700 people on our staff, now we have barely 150. And our monthly turnover has come down from Rs 1 crore to Rs 13 lakh."

Clearly, the once booming lottery business in the state is now on the decline. Adverse publicity regarding the questionable practices of lottery organisers, the repeated postponing of draws, improper and delayed payment of prize money, the introduction of very high-priced tickets (up to Rs 50 and Rs 100) have all contributed to the sudden and unexpected slump in the state that is really the heart of the business. Says M.V.C. Kutty, general manager of a leading lottery agency group in Madras: "All these factors have eroded the ordinary man's faith in the genuineness of lotteries." That point is borne out by Ramachandran, an employee of a state government khadi showroom: "Previously I used to buy five tickets for every Tamil Nadu raffle, and I did this for five years. But I don't think I can waste money like this any more. I only buy one ticket now, and hope for the best."

S.H. VENKATRAMANI

Lottery stall in Madras: no takers

But according to Sugal Chandra Jain, president of the Tamil Nadu Raffle Dealers Association, "the most important contributory factor behind this sudden decline is the imposition of a 20 per cent sales tax on lottery tickets last year. This killed the goose that would have laid the golden eggs. Nobody will buy a lottery ticket if you add on 20 per cent sales tax and a 2.5 per cent surcharge on top of that."

H. Anuraj, the association's joint secretary, seconds this but adds that specific Central Government guidelines on the conduct of the lottery business are habitually flouted. These guidelines relate to the maximum ticket price, the percentage of the take that must be given out in prizes and the minimum margin that the state Government must keep back. Says Anuraj: "The flouting of these guidelines has led to a situation where the common man is gradually becoming indifferent to lotteries."

Several downstream ripples are now being witnessed. The printing of lottery tickets in Tamil Nadu has dropped by an estimated 50 per cent, and the Tamil Nadu Government's profits from the lottery business have dropped from Rs 2.5 crore to Rs 90 lakh. In fact, a couple of months after imposing the 20 per cent sales tax, the state Government responded to the sharply declining sales by absorbing the sales tax burden on its own lottery tickets. Sales picked up after that, but remain much lower than before.

Lottery agencies in the state have taken the sales tax issue to the Supreme Court, which is expected to give its judgement after the summer recess. If the tax is struck down, and if the lottery organisers respond to the new market situation by offering better terms to their clientele, the business might pick up once again. But at the moment, the only agency which has gained so far is the state Government. For despite the dropping revenues from its own lottery, it is raking in fat sums from the tax that is being levied. While officials are tight-lipped about financial details, it is reliably understood that the revenue from the 20 per cent sales tax now adds up to over Rs 8 crore annually on total ticket sales of Rs 40 crore. But when one considers that two years ago monthly sales used to be close to Rs 30 crore, this must be cold comfort. The tax revenue can also be of little use to the 1.85 lakh people who made a living from the lottery business, and who now find that their livelihood is threatened by factors beyond their control.

—S.H.VENKATRAMANI

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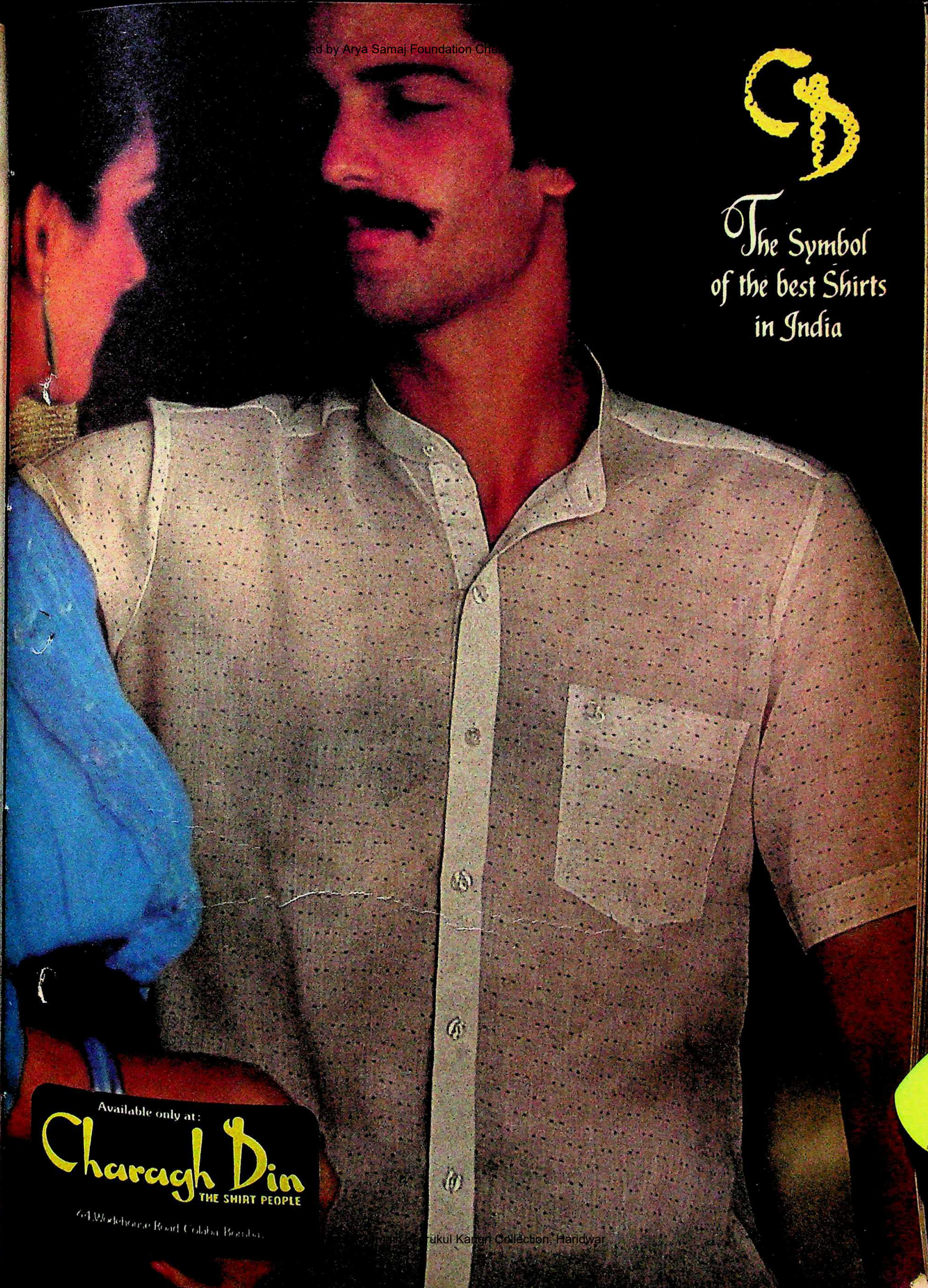

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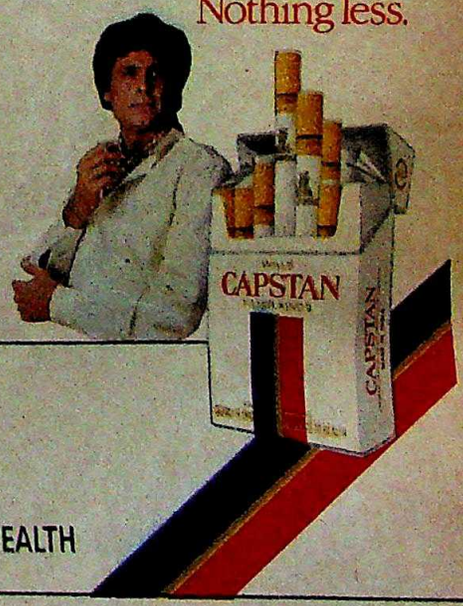

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FICCI

Unseemly Quarrel

THOSE who fail to get their way in committee meetings know that lost ground can be made up by influencing the writing of the minutes. And so it is that the contentious minutes of the meeting called to work out a compromise between the warring factions of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) eventually caused the split last fortnight.

A split seemed to have been prevented early last month when a group of senior industrialists met in Bharat Ram's house to work out a solution to the question of bogus membership (INDIA TODAY, May 31). But within a few hours of that, when the minutes were sent around for the signatures of those who had been present, all hopes of a compromise quickly ended. For the Birla-Modi combine that has been accused of enrolling bogus members and thus building up vote-banks refused to sign the minutes. It contended that there was no need for a super-committee to oversee FICCI's functioning and that its members could not be prevented from exercising their right to elect the federation's office-bearers.

The inevitable counterblast came quickly from Bombay in a couple of days, when the incensed members of the Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC) decided that there was no point in continuing to stay in FICCI, and decided to pull out. Said an irate Pratap Bhogilal, president of IMC: "No useful purpose would be served by continuing the association with FICCI." Bhogilal added that "we had little choice. Suggestions were made that we should wait till after the elections to the FICCI committee, but with the clout that the other side commands, they couldn't but have won. And if we left after that, it would have been described as a case of sour grapes."

The unseemly sight of the captains of Indian industry caught up in a market place brawl did none of the protagonists much credit. In one important sense, it was in fact counter-productive. The control of FICCI is important not least for the opportunity it gives individual businessmen to meet government leaders and decision-makers. But the quarrel, in any case, kept the country's top politicians away from the organisation's annual jamboree.

The IMC walk-out, the accompanying resignations by a few other trade associations in the western region, the simultaneous withdrawal of their candidatures by leading industrialists from Bombay who had been contesting the election to the FICCI committee, and the resignation by some sitting members of the committee, quickly overshadowed FICCI's annual session last fortnight. FICCI's leading lights mouthed platitudes about burying the hatchet. The resignations of those who had quit the FICCI committee were not accepted, and a two-man committee was asked to try to persuade and bring the IMC back into the FICCI fold.

However, there was little evidence to suggest that a patch-up was being seriously sought. For one thing, leading members of the rival group were being removed from important posts within FICCI. One FICCI member pointed out, for instance, that former FICCI president Hari Shanker Singhania had been removed from the chairmanship of the Indo-Japan joint business council and made the head of a far less prestigious Indo-Korea joint business council. "Even if his term as head of the Indo-Japan body was over, he could have been given another important post," the member contended. Also, some leading lights of the rival group had been removed from the powerful administrative committee.

A patch-up seemed unlikely for yet another reason: with the Birlas and Modis steadfastly refusing to discuss and sort out the issue of bogus memberships, their rivals have little chance of winning organisational elections in the future. So even senior members like Singhania and Ashok Jain will have to resign themselves to having to play a secondary role in FICCI, or leave.

Finally, the Birlas and Modis have been enrolling new members (their opponents say bogus members) from the south and winning over some existing members by promising them electoral support. As one result, the south withdrew its objection to being passed up for the vice-presidentship this year. Even in the angry west, a breakaway rump is now headed by Shantilal Somaiya.

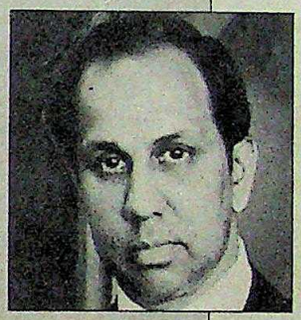
Clearly, the Birlas and Modis are sitting pretty: they now have total control of the FICCI committee, they have garnered some support in both the south and west, and they dominate the north and east already. It is true that K.N.Modi has been talking the language of compromise and appeasement after earlier saying that those who wanted to leave FICCI were welcome to leave, but industrialists from Bombay charge that he will concede nothing. One western businessman recalled that at the meeting in Bharat Ram's house, Modi declared: "We don't mind if IMC leaves. After all, when IBM and Coca-Cola left India, the loss was theirs, not India's."

The one slight hope of a settlement lies in the hands of newly elected Vice-President R.P. Goenka, who is a born diplomat and who can hardly relish the prospect of heading a truncated body when his turn comes around next year. And with the representatives of large business houses like the Mafatlals, Bajaj, Walchand Hirachand, Kirloskar, Bombay Dyeing and others having expressed their displeasure, the possibility of a mass walk-out cannot be treated lightly. Goenka will be doubly anxious to preserve FICCI's prestige as it nears its diamond jubilee in 1986, when it is also scheduled to host the International Chamber of Commerce. But for the moment at least, the chances of a rapprochement appear exceedingly slim.

— T.N.NINAN with JAGANNATH DUBASHI

RAGHU RAI

R.P. Goenka



S.K. Birla

R.P. Goenka and S.K. Birla have been asked to work out a compromise, but the chances of rapprochement appear slim.

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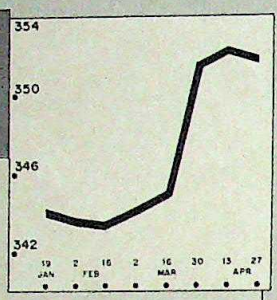
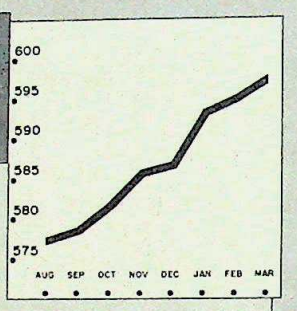
CONTRARY to popular belief there is no evidence yet of widespread inflation—the wholesale price index actually dropped marginally last fortnight. Money supply has been relatively tight although bank credit to firms, one of the important constituents of money supply, has loosened up slightly. Foreign exchange reserves were up sharply last month but the trade gap has widened.

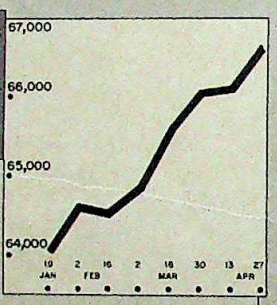
ALL DATA are seasonally adjusted. The current trend is completed on the basis of the past six months data to which a regression is fitted.



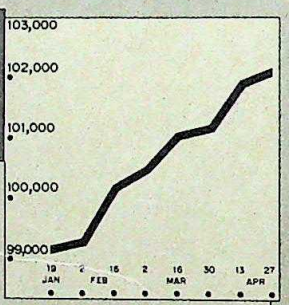
Wholesale prices declined very slightly last fortnight with most items remarkably steady and non-food articles dropping by 1.4 per cent.



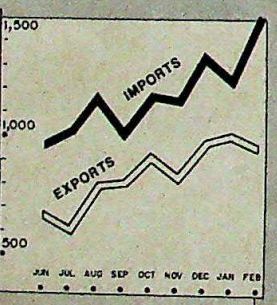
Consumer prices registered an uptrend of 0.4 per cent in March remaining below the long term trend.



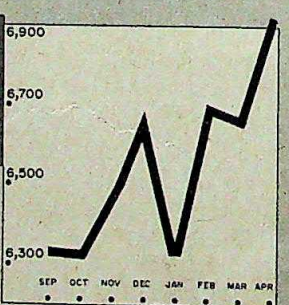
Bank credit to firms was up 0.8 per cent last fortnight indicating some loosening up after a very tight fortnight previously.



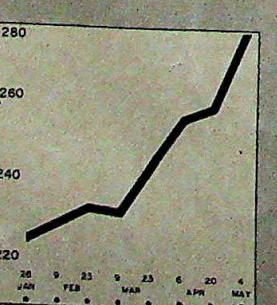
Money supply has been exceptionally stable last fortnight growing by a mere 0.2 per cent far below the trend rate.



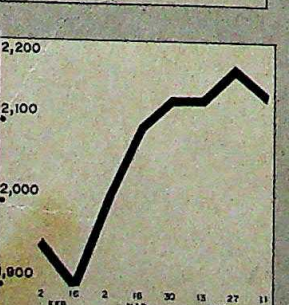
The trade gap rose sharply to Rs 540 crore in February following three months of relatively small deficits.



Foreign exchange reserves registered a sharp jump of 3.7 per cent last month following a decline in the previous month.



The boom in share prices continues unabated with a whopping gain of 6.7 per cent last fortnight with gains in several sectors.



Gold prices slumped by 1.5 per cent last fortnight after steady gains over several weeks, which have propped up the long term trend.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Items with maximum growth in April 1985

	%Growth
Boilers	16.83
Hides	15.67
Tubes	13.22
Diesel	11.80
Electrical Motors	11.08
Khandsari	10.87
Lubricating Oil	10.77
Furnace Oil	10.30
Petrol	9.25
Masoor	8.97
Sugar	8.37
Polythene Moulding Powder	8.09
Onions	7.70
Tin Containers	6.75
Raw Cotton	6.75
Arhar	6.61
Kerosene	6.46
Logs & Bamboo	6.140
Diesel Engines	5.74
Tea	4.97
Raw Tobacco	4.73
Buses	4.61
Linseed	4.60
Betel-Nuts	4.58
Cotton Seed	4.39
Whiskey	4.20
Soda Ash	4.20
Jute Textile Machinery	4.18
Oranges	4.15
Gur	4.02
Tapioca	4.01
Iron Ore	3.96
Zinc	3.95
Chillies	3.82
Trucks	3.80
Maize	3.72
Synthetic Fibres	3.77
Caustic Soda	3.61
Steel Furniture	3.60
Groundnut Oil Cake	3.10
Board	3.03
Wheat	2.98
Tyres	2.88
Raw Hides	2.85
Cigarettes	2.75
Ragi	2.67
Cement	2.65
Groundnut Seeds	2.62
Vanaspati	2.54
PVC Compounds	2.50
Rice	0.29

Of 139 important series considered, 78 with a weight of 53.9 accelerated while 61 with a weight of 32.7 decelerated.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	19
Coal Thousand Tonnes, April	10439	11686
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, April	468	477
Cement Thousand Tonnes, April	2323	2211
Fertilizers Thousand Tonnes, April	368	346
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, April	10.0	10.0

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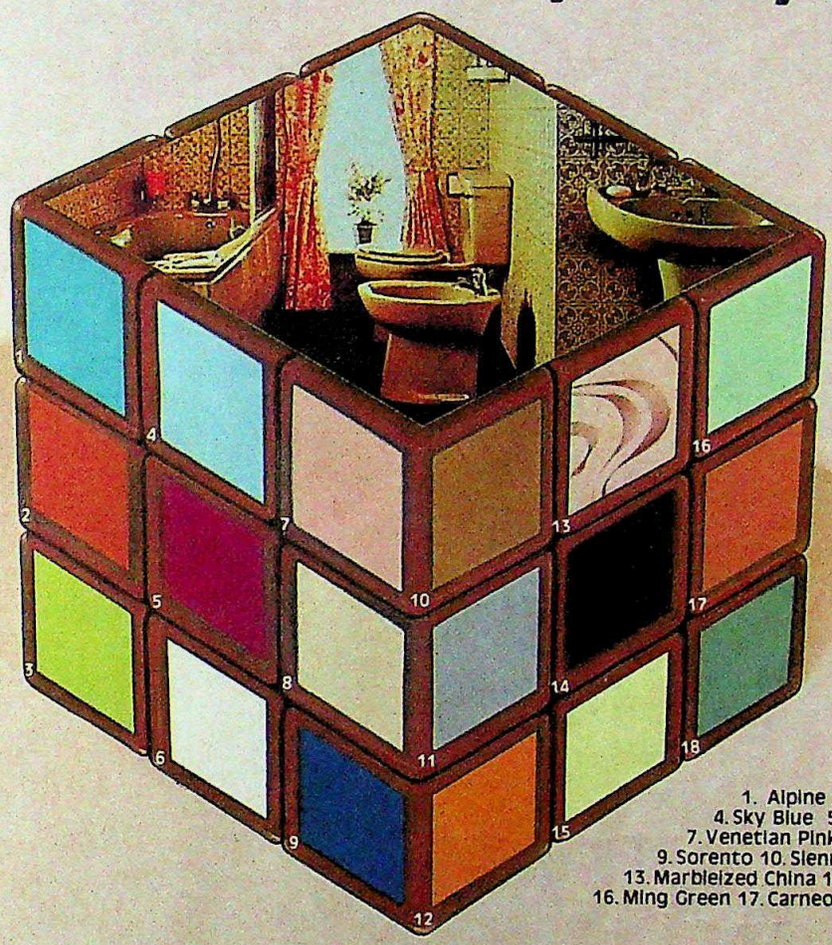

1. Alpine 2. Roman Brown 3. Fern Green
4. Sky Blue 5. Burgundy 6. White
7. Venetian Pink 8. Champagne
9. Sorento 10. Sienna Gold 11. Sapphire 12. Orange
13. Marbleized China 14. Sepia 15. Citrus Yellow
16. Ming Green 17. Carneol 18. Silver Grey

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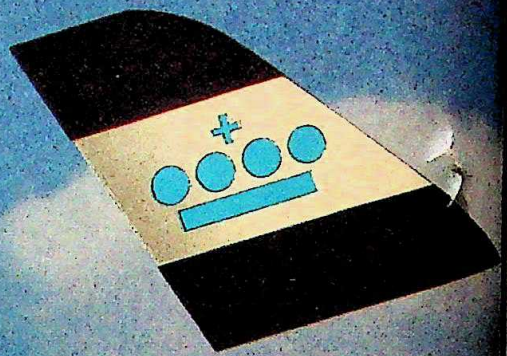
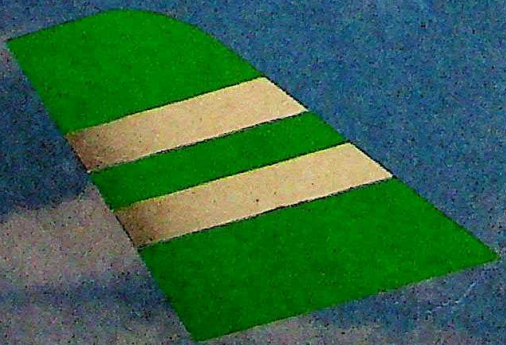


Which international carrier flies more



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LINTAS (I) Thai

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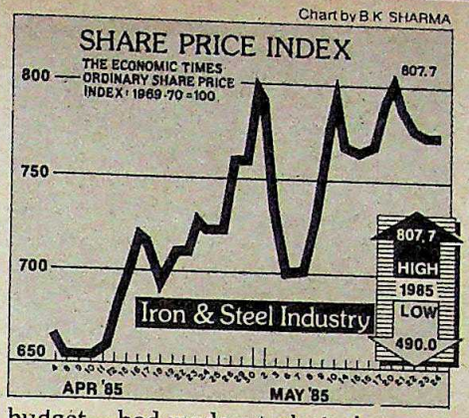
THE MARKETS

Raging Bulls

THE STOCK-market seems hell-bent on trying to defy the laws of gravity. Despite the Government and the stock exchange authorities doing their best (or worst) to make sure that what has gone up on the market must come down, the rampaging bulls seem about to jump over the moon, while the media laughs to see such fun. The boom on India's stock-markets has now started attracting attention abroad, with the *Asian Wall Street Journal* calling Bombay the fastest growing market in all of Asia.

Nevertheless, the Government's efforts produced a brief hiccup on the markets last fortnight. The successive imposition of margins on shares, starting with 10 per cent and rising to 25 per cent (in the case of Tata Ordinary on the Delhi Stock Exchange, even 100 per cent) put a brief brake on the resurgent mood of optimism. Also, the unbridled rise in share values—ranging from 25 to 100 per cent in the six weeks since the budget—had made a technical correction inevitable. After all, the bulls on the market would want to cash in on their profits by liquidating some of their purchases. The Government's measures, extreme as they were, almost pushed the bulls against the wall for a while, but they were far from being in a mood for surrender to the market authorities. And before you could say Reliance Textiles, share prices were on the up again.

Chart by B.K SHARMA



Paper company shares were punctuated with purchases and spurts following reports that the Government might end the price control on paper and paper products. But textile and pharmaceutical shares languished and even recorded reverses because the Government delayed announcing favourable policy changes. Tea shares seem destined to begin a slow slide because the increased crop this year could mean a drop in prices and, hence, lower profits. Tata Tea was the exception here last fortnight, following the announcement by the company of an attractive convertible bond issue, and the scrip more than made up the ground it had surrendered earlier because of the absence of a bonus issue. The share's price touched an all-time peak of Rs 112. The TISCO share also progressed on a rally to a new high-point of Rs 638, but rolled back mildly after that.

But how long can the fun and games last? The AICC(I) stress on socialism seems to have gone unnoticed so far; or else the market chooses to dismiss it as being irrelevant to the true direction of economic policy now being charted. But this extreme optimism must yield to some extent, and there should be some nervousness building up in the coming weeks over the fate of the year's monsoons. So the bears might creep out of the shadows in a little while, but there is no sign of them yet.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	1985 LOW	CLOSE 21.5.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	38.00	29.00	31.50	6.50 –
Associated Cement	474.00	385.00	414.00	46.00 –
Atlas Copco	52.00	37.50	47.50	0.50 –
Avery India	74.00	56.00	73.00	1.00 +
Bajaj Auto	1340.00	855.00	1340.00	30.00 +
Ballarpur	50.00	45.00	48.50	0.75 –
Baroda Rayon	375.00	281.00	350.00	25.00 –
Bata India	65.00	48.00	63.25	1.05 –
Bayer	395.00	305.00	325.00	15.00 –
Best & Crompton	83.00	61.00	80.00	1.50 +
Bharat Forge	57.00	35.50	56.00	8.00 +
Blow Plast	55.00	36.50	46.00	4.00 –
Blue Star	55.00	33.00	55.00	9.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	139.00	66.00	128.00	4.50 –
Brooke Bond	65.25	47.50	62.75	0.25 –
Ceat Tyres	210.00	180.00	200.00	5.00 +
Century Spinning	945.00	810.00	910.00	35.00 –
Chloride India	83.50	56.90	81.00	1.75 –
Cituria	54.00	32.25	45.50	6.00 –
Colgate	272.00	147.00	265.00	3.00 –
Cyanamid	66.00	33.00	61.00	3.00 –
DCM	93.50	45.00	93.50	20.00 +
Dunlop	29.00	22.30	25.50	0.50 +
Elecon	88.00	54.00	78.00	8.00 –
Escorts	67.00	49.87	60.00	2.00 –
Finolex Cables	29.00	22.00	27.50	1.25 +
Food Specialities	175.00	86.00	167.50	19.25 +
Garware Nylon	39.00	24.50	34.00	4.50 –
Glaxo	48.50	24.00	42.50	6.00 –
Gujarat St Fertilisers	680.00	537.00	660.00	5.00 +
Gwalior Rayon	64.00	53.75	59.50	1.00 +
Hindustan Lever	90.00	51.25	87.00	2.00 –
Hindustan Motors	48.50	37.50	46.00	0.80 –
Indian Cable	34.50	21.75	32.50	1.25 +
Indian Explosives	55.00	33.00	53.00	0.75 –
Indian Hotels	114.00	76.00	101.50	10.50 –
Indian Organic	79.00	50.50	76.00	3.00 –
Indian Rayon	91.00	66.00	78.50	12.50 –
Indrol	165.00	90.50	143.00	12.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	222.00	162.00	210.00	10.00 –
ITC	36.20	29.00	33.50	0.50 –
J K Synthetics	69.60	52.75	68.50	0.75 –
Kinetic Engineering	208.00	128.00	205.00	5.00 +
Kirloskar Oil	33.00	23.00	23.50	0.50 –
Lakme	94.00	74.00	88.00	3.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	120.00	72.00	119.00	7.00 +
Lipton	40.10	26.50	36.50	2.50 –
Lohia Machines	58.00	42.00	49.00	5.75 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	63.00	48.00	54.50	5.50 –
Motor Industries	445.00	32.25	445.00	22.50 +
Mysore Cement	42.00	30.00	31.00	5.00 –
National Organic	355.00	240.00	355.00	17.50 +
Nirlon	55.00	37.75	45.00	10.00 –
Peico Electronics	88.00	38.40	86.00	11.40 +
Premier Auto	435.00	322.00	435.00	27.00 +
Ranbaxy	107.00	49.00	101.00	9.00 +
Raymond	95.50	59.00	85.50	6.50 –
Reckitt & Colman	75.00	57.00	72.00	3.00 –
Reliance Textiles	197.00	120.00	196.00	1.00 +
Sandoz	55.00	31.00	47.00	3.00 –
Shriram Fibres	50.00	34.00	40.50	4.50 –
SPIC	81.00	43.50	80.00	nil
Tata Steel	628.00	381.00	613.00	3.00 –
Telco	595.00	409.00	586.00	9.00 +
Vulcan Laval	101.00	64.00	98.00	3.00 –
20th Century Leasing	74.00	31.50	70.00	2.00 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.7370	8.5466
Austria	Schilling	100	58.2575	56.8689
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.2535	32.6081
Bangladesh	Taka	1	0.4867	0.4532
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1496	8.9726
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1404	1.1169
Egypt	Pound	1	notavailable	
France	Franc	1	1.3452	1.3188
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6099	1.5813
Indonesia	Rupiah	1	0.0114	0.0105
Iran	Rial	1	0.1363	0.1239
Italy	Lira	1	0.7846	0.6303
Japan	Yen	100	5.0121	4.9142
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7940	0.7547
Kuwait	Dinar	1	41.6345	40.7114
Malaysia	Dollar	1	5.1016	4.9973
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.8109	0.7586
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6906	0.6886
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.6292	3.5566
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7932	0.7639
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.6875	5.5725
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0725	0.0709
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4601	0.4481
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4160	1.3880
Switzerland	Franc	1	4.8576	4.7553
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7201	0.7159
Thailand	Baht	1	0.4628	0.4546
UK	Pound	1	15.9451	15.6617
USA	Dollar	1	12.5700	12.4300
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4353	3.3126
USSR	Rouble	1	14.9635	14.4146
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.0947	4.0147

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd, New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 22.5.85.

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CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH

DR. CHARAT RAM

THE JAY ENGINEERING WORKS LTD.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A year of record profit.
- Higher dividend; prospects of further improvement.
- Notable progress by the Company's diesel injection unit.
- New project for manufacture of Engine Valves.
- Need of the hour: political/social harmony; improving capital-output ratio nationally; "making investments pay"; most modern international technology for agriculture; cost control nationally.

Friends,

I am happy to welcome you to the Company's forty-eighth annual general meeting.

The directors' report, and the accounts for the year are already with you, and you would have noted that the Company made a record profit ever, last year. The gross profit was over rupees 3 crore against 1.26 crore in the preceding year and about 2.5 crore in the best year before that. The directors have, therefore, proposed to raise the equity dividend from 10 to 15%. It is expected that we may be able to sustain this level of dividend in the years to come, and maybe better it.

Before proceeding to make observations on our operations of the year, I would like to refer to some significant events of the last few months.

The brutal assassination of the late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, in October last year, was a great national tragedy. Such a catastrophe could have thrown any country into chaos; the test was all the more severe for our country, which is not only the largest democracy in the world but also comprises some highly individualistic components. It is a sign of the maturity of the Indian people, and testimony to our democratic tradition, that we were able to ride the crisis with total calm and equanimity.

The smooth transition of Government to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has earned international acclaim. The credit for this must go, in no small measure, to Shri Rajiv Gandhi, whose hallmarks of sincerity and forthrightness have earned him the confidence of all Indians regardless of caste or creed or political affiliations.

In the parliamentary elections held a few months ago, Shri Rajiv Gandhi led the Congress party to a historic victory. Inspite of having a massive majority in the Parliament, he has followed a policy of harmony and national consensus. The results of the recent elections to the State Assemblies present a picture of stability, blended with democratic diversity. All this augurs well for the political future of our country.

The country is undoubtedly faced with enormous problems, but there is an unprecedented sense of confidence in all social groups of our country — the Government, the business, the labour, the intelligentsia and the people at large. This is vindicated by the proposals presented to the Parliament a few days ago, which show a bold and imaginative approach to all issues of economic development and place a premium on efficiency of management of national enterprises.

I would like to assure Shri Rajiv Gandhi that we, at The SHRIRAM GROUP, would indeed give our best hand to him in the task of achievement of our national, social and economic goals.

Since Jay Engineering is an integral part of the national milieu, I would like to make some observations on a few significant aspects of the national business and social situation:

1. Political and social harmony is vital for the economic progress of any country. The economic progress of Japan is an outstanding model for us. In our country, there have been, unfortunately, symptoms of declining political and social harmony in many spheres. It is critical, for the achievement of the desired momentum of economic activity as well as for ensuring an improved living standard for the people, that the trends of disharmony be arrested and high levels of harmony be developed in political and social spheres. This, in my view, is the foremost task requiring the joint efforts of the Government and the people alike.
2. The country would soon be launching its 7th Five Year Plan with a total expenditure of about 3,20,000 crore rupees; this is double of the expenditure of the 6th Plan, and by any reckoning, it is a very ambitious target. For its effective implementation it will require close monitoring and fine-tuning all along the way.

   Such a vast expenditure has built-in seeds of massive inflation. This phenomenon is more pronounced if output does not grow commensurately with outlay. Regrettably, our capital-output ratio has been worsening progressively; from 3:1 in 1950, the ratio has gone up to 6:1 today. The position now is that it takes twice as much to produce a given level of output than it did at the time of our independence

   We have, therefore, to concentrate on output, more than on outlays, if we want to have growth levels of countries like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, and at the same time keep prices in check.
3. Some of the factors responsible for high capital-output ratio are, inordinate delays in project approvals, and effectuation of projects and, continuing low capacity utilisation in critical industries. It is imperative that our economic system should provide inbuilt incentives for efficient project management, and optimum capacity utilisation, and penalties for failure, more

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SHRIRAM

particularly in key areas like power generation and other capital intensive projects.

4. The immediate area of attention for the Government is to be for achieving an accelerated rate of economic growth for the country. The annual rate of growth of GNP in the last 35 years has been 3.5%. This is inadequate for India by any standard; neutralised by over 2% growth in population, the per capita increase in national income is practically negligible. It is my belief that a stable national income growth rate of 10% per year is achievable within our existing resources of men, materials and money. We have to learn from countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan etc., which have all registered growth rates of over 10% for decades, by making their investments pay. I repeat — "By Making Their Investments Pay". This is the key to sustained growth, in a country's economy no less than in corporate enterprises.

5. It is a happy augury that our food production has been going up for some time now. However, the effect of record food production last year must be somewhat clouded by the fact that per capita availability of food actually went down. Clearly, we must avoid being pleased with selective statistics. What is called for, besides of course population control measures, is vastly improved farm management and introduction of most modern international technology in agriculture, so that we can look forward not only to achieving self-sufficiency in agricultural production, but also to becoming a major exporter of foodgrains and other agricultural produce like the United States. We indeed can achieve this with but little financial inputs.

6. Wholesale and consumer prices is another area of dichotomy between statistics and reality. While the public statistics on price situation appear soothing, the actual cost of production of all categories of goods, and household budgets of citizens are escalating at steep rates. Not only does it affect the quality of life of the people, but it also makes export of Indian goods more difficult, and cramps domestic consumption. Our economy is clearly becoming a high cost economy and this trend must be reversed.

I would now like to present to you briefly a resumé of our last year's operations :

FANS

Consumer sale of 'USHA' fans was the highest ever in the history of the Company, and the Company maintained its leadership in the market. While competition in fan business has been getting sharper, USHA was able to maintain its market leadership through continuing emphasis on modern techniques in production and marketing both.

Our Hyderabad and Agra operations showed substantial gains; the Calcutta unit continued to require an out-of-proportion management input.

SEWING MACHINES

Operations of the Sewing Machine Works at Calcutta showed some improvement. This unit however, suffers from the basic malaise of being heavily overstaffed, and worker productivity being incorrigibly low. Management efforts continue to be made to improve the situation, but unfortunately the required response needed from the workforce for turning the tide is not available due to union pressures.

SHRIRAM DIESELS

Shriram Diesels Unit at Hyderabad, producing diesel fuel injection equipment, made notable progress. The unit achieved the highest production and sale since its commencement in 1979. Your directors have sanctioned substantial investment for expanding the production capacities of this unit, and further expansion plans are on the drawing board.

NEW PROJECTS

We have received a letter of intent and approval of technical collaboration for the manufacture of Engine Valves, which is a critical component of all automobile engines, including cars, commercial vehicles, etc. Fuji Valves Company of Japan, which is the largest manufacturer of engine valves in Japan, will provide technical know-how for this project.

GENERAL

You would notice from the balance sheet that lands and buildings of the Company have been revalued, adding about 17 crore rupees to reserves. This will augment our capital base and facilitate raising of funds for our expanding business and for new projects. Proposals for issuing debentures etc. will be placed before you at an appropriate time.

Friends, Jay Engineering is the engineering flagship of the House of Shriram and it holds a pre-eminent position in industry with the nationally and internationally popular 'USHA' and 'SHRIRAM' brands which is quite independent of its relative size and product range. We have succeeded in maintaining a lead in our conventional industries, and are forging ahead in new, high-tech ones. The emerging national scenario offers challenges for those prepared to meet them, and a threat for the laggards. We started out as pioneers and are gearing ourselves so that we shall be counted as pioneers in the new milieu as well.

In closing, I must convey our thanks to the financial institutions, our bankers, business associates, directors, shareholders and all our personnel, from whom we have received complete support.

Statement made by Dr.Charat Ram, Chairman, The Jay Engineering Works Ltd., at the forty-eighth annual general meeting at New Delhi, on March 21, 1985.

Note :
This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the annual general meeting.

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PARLIAMENT

Meaning Business

A HOUSE with a steam-roller Congress(I) majority, a ruling party dominated by greenhorns, a decimated and demoralised Opposition, a young and inexperienced prime minister —the formula seemed perfect for a fiasco. The reality, however, turned out to be very different. As the Lok Sabha adjourned for its summer break last fortnight, the mood was an unusual one: of quiet satisfaction, a rare feeling of a job well done.

Not many sessions in the Lok Sabha's 33 years have been watched with as much interest as the budget session which ended on May 20. Technically, it wasn't the new House's maiden session: the Lok Sabha had met for a fortnight, a mere curtain-raiser, in January. It was the budget session that parliamentarians and politicians were waiting for to test the mettle of the new House.

Interest in the new, eighth Lok Sabha was heightened for several reasons. It wasn't just the overpowering majority of the Congress(I), which for the first time spilt over five of the six wedges that make up the semi-circular Lok Sabha, or the fact that the Opposition came to do battle with its stalwarts missing. For the first time, a majority of the House comprised those who were not in the previous Lok Sabha. Of these 261, a majority were freshers. And the question was whether they would be paralysed by stage fright or whether they would be able to make a meaningful contribution. Rajiv Gandhi's new parliamentary party had film stars, ex-bureaucrats, even a dancer. Would they take well to their new vocation?

There was mystery about the Opposition too. For the first time, the leading opposition party was a regional party. The 30 Telugu Desam MP's were virtually unknown commodities in the Lok Sabha with no known parliamentarian figuring in their ranks. Would they be able to discharge their responsibility of leading the Opposition ? But above all there was curiosity about how Rajiv Gandhi would treat Parliament: would he, like his mother, regard it as a necessary nuisance that had to be put up with or would he, like his grandfather, Nehru, treat it with respect, and fashion it into a powerful instrument of democracy?

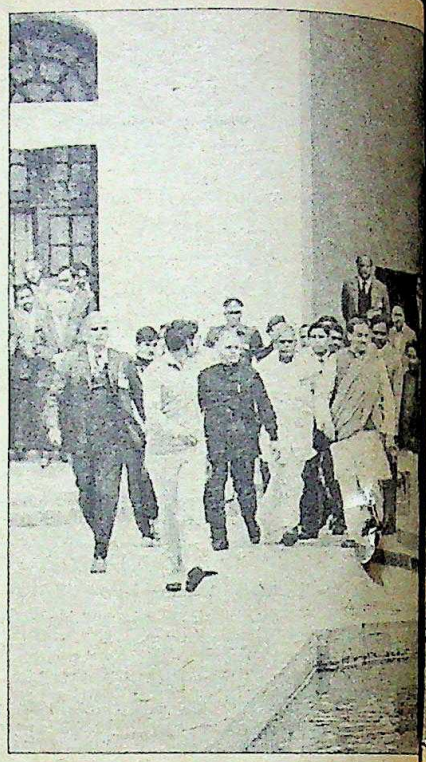
The answers came fast and furious through the marathon 68-day session. Parliament has rarely had as constructive a session. More business than normal was conducted in an atmosphere of rare congeniality and seriousness. Not everybody was euphoric and a confrontation between the Opposition and the Government shaped up on some issues, but as Secretary-general of the Lok Sabha secretariat, S.C. Kashyap, said: "This house shows the potential of being the best ever." Kashyap should know: he has worked 32 years in the secretariat and seen all eight Lok Sabhas at close quarters. The Speaker, Balram Jakhar, was even more ecstatic. Buoyed by the manner in which opposition parties set aside their traditional fear of the ruling party and cooperated with the Government on the prevention of terrorism bill, Jakhar was moved to say in his concluding remarks: "I am proud to have presided over this House."

Everybody, it seemed, had reason to look back with satisfaction. Jakhar was happy that cooperation had replaced confrontation so that both decorum and schedule were maintained. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs H.K.L. Bhagat was only too pleased to hand out statistics showing the session's good track-record: an unprecedented 102 hours devoted to discussing the demand for grants made by 15 ministries, a record in itself.

The Opposition was pleased that it made an unexpected impact. Said Indrajit Gupta, leader of the CPI parliamentary party: "The Opposition did much better than expected. Our lack of numbers was made up by effectiveness in debate." The Janata Party's Madhu Dandavate, acknowledged as the most outstanding parliamentarian in this House, added: "There was more unity among the Opposition than there has been in the past."

The Government too had reason to be content. In spite of a potentially inflationary budget and numerous flip-flops on Punjab, it emerged virtually unscathed from 48 sittings of the House. And the vigilance and forthrightness of some of its new members came as a bonus. Said Bhagat: "Our MP's showed they were good all-rounders and a very large number of them opened their accounts."

It wasn't hard to see why the House should have worked so harmoniously. Punjab dominated the session and



though the Opposition was critical of the Government's handling of it, Rajiv Gandhi met opposition leaders twice to thrash out a consensus on the issue. In other matters too the prime minister took care to carry the Opposition with him on major issues. When the Opposition wanted more time to study the terrorism bill, he readily agreed. Later, the Government even accepted three of Dandavate's amendments to the bill. As Gupta commented: "In all fairness it must be admitted that the Government's majority was not used to stifle debate or to suppress the Opposition's views."

"I am proud to have presided over this House"

BALRAM JAKHAR
Speaker, Lok Sabha

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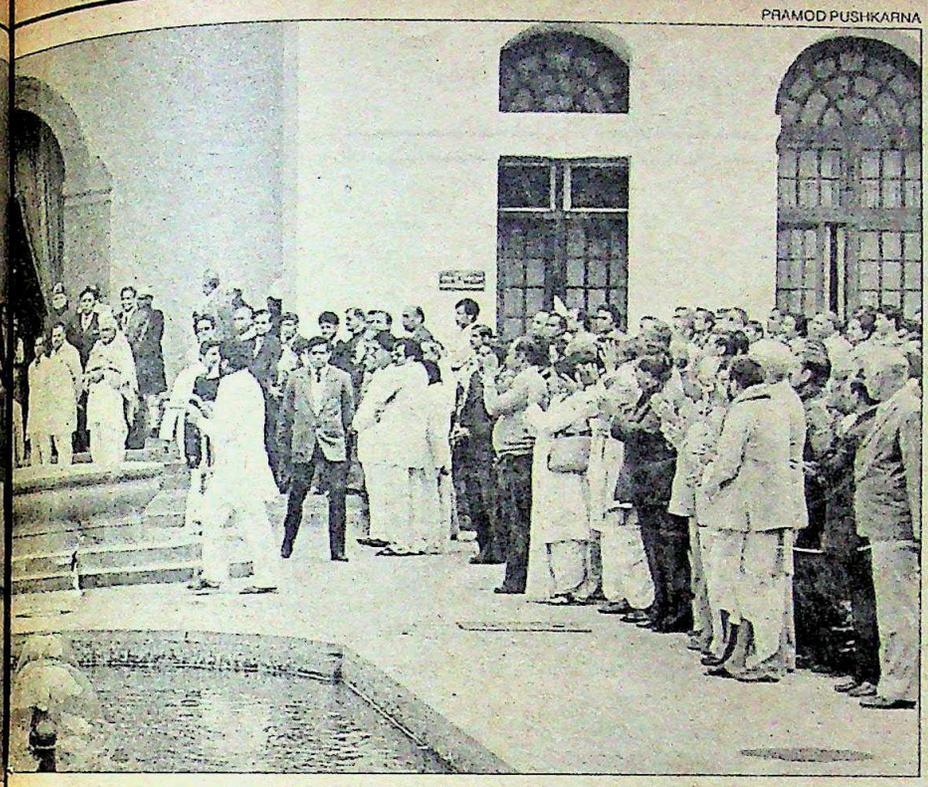
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



MP's accompany Rajiv into the Central Hall: positive step

With the eclipse of Sanjay Gandhi's boisterous cadre, there was no pre-planned heckling of the Opposition; on the contrary, some of the Congress(I) newcomers impressed even opposition leaders. Admitted Dandavate: "The standard of the debates was better because the newcomers on the treasury benches argued more seriously." Nor were such across-the-fence accolades rare; virtually every fresh Congress(I) MP named Dandavate as the parliamentarian who had impressed them most.

All this does not mean, however, that there was no reason for disquiet and disappointment. As usual, many MP's spent time gossiping in the Central Hall, often missing out the volatile question hour and important debates. Jakhar once found that eight MP's in a row, whose questions were accepted for the question hour, could not be found when their time came. C. Madhav Reddy, 59, leader of the Telugu Desam parliamentary party and one of the few MP's who were members of the first House (he was then in the Socialist Party), admitted quite candidly: "More than half the time there is no quorum in the House but we carry on because of an unspoken understanding that nobody will raise the issue of quorum."

The inexperience of members was sometimes obvious. More than once Jakhar had to remind MP's not to read out their supplementaries as doing that gave the impression that they had been tutored to ask the question. In exasperation, Jakhar once even agreed to hold lessons for new members in parliamentary behaviour after the session ended. Opposition old timers like Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram were conspicuous by their absence, as also were cine stars Amitabh Bachchan and Sunil Dutt, both of whom are yet to make their maiden speeches.

But these worries took a back seat in the face of the overall optimism. The attitude and performance of Rajiv Gandhi, it was widely felt, was the main reason for the upbeat mood. His frequent consultations with and concessions to the Opposition were not the only departure from his mother's methods: he attended Parliament far oftener, sat through question hour even when his ministries were not listed, intervened several times to elaborate a point that his minister had not made lucidly enough and often just sat and listened to the people's representatives. Said Bali Ram Bhagat, former speaker of the House: "Quite clearly, the prime minister finds attending Parliament a greatly educative experience." Bhagat, Dandavate and virtually every media regular at Parliament noted with satisfaction that Rajiv was consciously trying to emulate his grandfather in his approach to Parliament. But as Kashyap chuckled: "The only difference is that Nehru used to often lose his temper but Rajiv Gandhi has yet to do so."

Congress(I) MP's speak enthusiastically of how Rajiv encourages them to participate. Said K.K. Tewari, the most strident in-House critic of the party who shot into the limelight by his controversial references to the Rashtrapati Bhavan: "The prime minister has told us not once but several times to be vigilant, to even embarrass ministers who don't come prepared. He says this isn't against the party nor will it displease him. In fact, he asks us, 'Since the Opposition is non-existent, whose duty is it to make Parliament interesting?'" The outspokenness of some Congress(I) men has even caused confusion. Lalit Maken, 33-year-old freshman MP who forced the Government to put its foot down on a proposal to let DCM close down its textile unit in Delhi, relates with relish how an opposition MP came up to

"The opposition did much better than expected. Our lack of numbers was made up by effectiveness in debate."

INDRAJIT GUPTA
MP, CPI

"The prime minister has told us not once but several times to be vigilant, to even embarrass ministers who don't come prepared."

K.K. TEWARI
MP, Congress(I)

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him and asked if he was with the CPI(M). On learning the truth, the MP exclaimed incredulously: "But how can that be? You are always speaking against the Government." Both Tewari and Maken maintain that they have not been censured by the party bosses.

Rajiv's attempt is to involve more MP's in the business of Parliament in an organised manner. Eduardo Faleiro, the 44-year-old MP from Goa who is now in his third term, says the prime minister has been encouraging his partymen by setting aside two hours every day for them and by restructuring the party's 27 standing committees (attached to each of the 27 ministries) so as to promote participation and specialisation. Similarly, Rajiv is also keen that members of the consultative committees, which comprise both Congress(I) and opposition members, should proffer advice to the ministers rather than grill the latter like they would in Parliament.

Not everybody, of course, believes that Rajiv's performance has been outstanding. Referring to the prime minister's needlessly controversial remark about Calcutta, Saifuddin Chowdhury, a young CPI(M) second-termer coming into prominence, said: "Rajiv Gandhi needs to be more mature." Madhav Reddy felt that he was too indulgent with ministers who were clearly lackadaisical, unlike his grandfather who would never tolerate a minister being casual or arrogant. Sudini Jaipal Reddy, firebrand Janata Party MP from Andhra Pradesh who was an MLA for 17 years, feels that Rajiv still does not have the calibre to deliver major speeches. "In his reply to the debate on the External Affairs Ministry, he was required not merely to refer to our contentions but also to paint on a wide canvas; but his reply was so brief it was little better than an intervention."

Opposition members also felt dissatisfied with the performance of some ministers. At least three ministers, including Finance Minister V.P. Singh, held press conferences on issues they should first have come to Parliament with. Even some partymen could not conceal their disappointment with their own ministers. Noted S. Krishna Kumar, bureaucrat-turned-Congress(I) MP from Kerala: "There are not many ministers who carefully listen to debates."

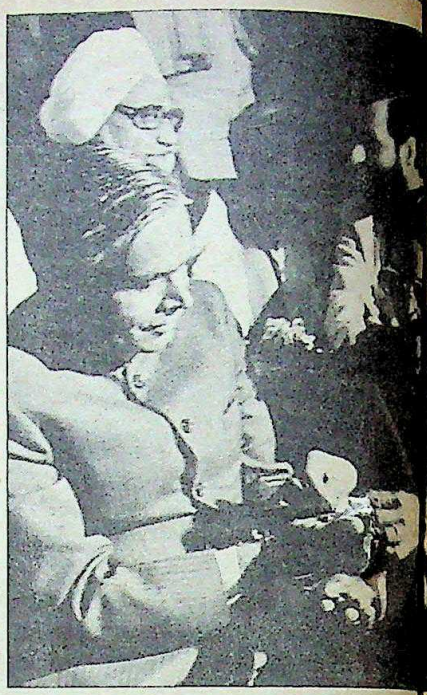
But perhaps the best thing that has happened to the Congress(I) is the induction of independent-minded elements like Kumar, Maken and Rangarajan Kumaramangalam—all first-timers and far removed from the stereotype dyed-in-the wool, power hungry Congressmen. Some of the new MP's make points that should have been made long ago, as Parliament slid towards irrelevance. Kumar feels that many more brainstorming groups like the existing ones on space and population should be set up so as to study subjects in depth and offer suggestions to the Government. Maken, who admits to being a little disappointed with his colleagues ("I have yet to see a ruling party MP who works hard"), feels that MP's should be given the help of a panel of experts to evaluate the many bills they are required to vote on but which they rarely even read. Kumaramangalam, an exuberant labour lawyer who admits he is "thrilled" by the presence in Parliament of people who would never have taken to politics had Rajiv not persuaded them, feels that every day time should be set apart for a discussion on matters raised in the zero hour.

"We decided we would be a vigorous but dignified opposition....our maximum protest would be a walk out."

MADHU DANDAVATE
MP, Janata Party

Kumaramangalam also feels that an hour is too little for the question time and is quite aghast that a ballot decides which questions will be starred (answered orally on the floor of the House and given more prominence) and which unstarred (answers written out and generally ignored by the media).

But quite clearly the biggest problem that Congress(I) men faced was lack of time and opportunity to speak. With 403 members in a house with a current strength of 513, B.R. Bhagat calculated that with the present convention of giving the Opposition 40 per cent of the time, and with ministers taking up most



of the time for the ruling party, less than 75 hours were left in the whole session for the rest of the MP's from the ruling party. Account also for the fact that those who move motions get more time and the average partyman can hope to get no more than five minutes in an entire session. The apathy among Congress(I) men towards the peregrinations of Parliament begins to make sense.

The Opposition, of course, could not complain of lack of time or opportunity. What it needed were replacements for the many heavyweights who had lost in the elections. Admitted Dandavate: "There is no doubt that the absence of able parliamentarians like Vajpayee, Somnath Chatterjee, Era Sezhiyan and Satya Sadhan Chakraborty was keenly felt. Whenever veterans like Vajpayee and Sezhiyan got up to speak, the ruling party and the presiding officers had to take note." But thankfully the Opposition did not let its losses weigh it down. Dandavate and Gupta emerged as its two pilots. In fact, the absence of party stars proved to be a boon for people like Saifuddin Chowdhury. Said the boyish-built Chowdhury: "CPI(M) members Satya Amal Datta, Basudeb Achariya, Satya Gopal Mishra and I were silent last time but now there is no alternative so all of us are taking part."

Confident of itself, accorded respect by the prime minister and not needing to counter the aggressiveness of Sanjay Gandhi's storm-troopers, the Opposition too did not indulge in any of the contemptuous of people like Raj Narain and Mahesh Ram Bagri. Explained Dandavate: "The

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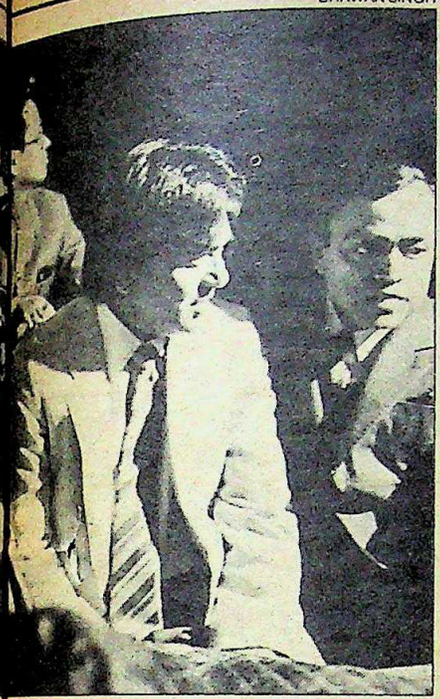
BHAWAN SINGH



Natwar Singh, Vyjayanthimala, and Sunil Dutt: adding a new dimension

has to be a difference in our functioning on the streets and in Parliament. We decided we would be a vigorous but dignified Opposition. We would never go into the 'well' of the House (just below the speaker's podium where the secretariat officials sit); our maximum protest would be a walk-out."

Seconding that was Madhav Reddy, leader of the Telugu Desam parliamentary party, who argued: "We have a dozen fellows who can outshout the best. Shouting does not require much talent, does it? But we took a conscious decision not to go in for confrontation." Reddy's defensive and explanatory tone was not without reason. The general assessment, both in the Congress (I) and among other opposition parties, was that the Telugu Desam party had lacked spine and substance.

What was remarkable about the Opposition was the rare unity displayed. Indrajit Gupta explained this "high degree of like-mindedness" as "probably due to the virtual absence of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Lok Dal with their overtones of communalism and casteism". As a result, said Gupta, the "Opposition showed a more 'leftist' stance in its critique of government policies". But as the session progressed some cracks became evident, notably between the Janata Party and the Telugu Desam. When Madhav Reddy thanked the Union Government for agreeing to abolish the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, Jaipal Reddy was quick to point out that there was no reason to thank anybody because the Centre had merely righted its earlier wrong in refusing to abolish the council. Reddy later explained that he had thanked the Government only because of the speed with which it had acted on the state Government's request. Behind Jaipal Reddy's criticism was the feeling that the Telugu Desam was taking after the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham, which is nominally in the Opposition but is an ally of the Congress (I). But Madhav Reddy argues that a wrong perception of his party's decision to be different and pragmatic is responsible for the misunderstanding. As he told INDIA TODAY: "In the past my party was on a confrontation path against the Centre as we had many complaints. So people expected us to oppose for opposition's sake. But now the confrontation is over and relations are normal. Besides, all non-Congress (I) governments are working out their own defence mechanisms. We came determined to be responsible because we have a state government to run."

"More than half the time there is no quorum in the House but we carry on because of an understnding not to raise the issue of quorum."

C. MADHAV REDDY
leader, Telugu Desam

Some Congress (I) MP's still believe that the Opposition continues to oppose for the sake of opposing the Government. Mamata Banerjee, the voluble giant killer from Jadavpur whom Dandavate fondly calls the "light of the house", feels that the 28 MP's of the two communist parties are still recalcitrant. "Whenever I got up to speak, two dozen communist MP's would get up and start shouting," she lamented. Vyjayanthimala Bali, who impressed with her sincerity and desire to learn, shared Banerjee's impatience with the Opposition. As she quipped at one stage when she felt the opposition was needlessly being difficult: "*Hain adat se majboor, isliye bolenge zaroor*" (Don't blame them; they have a habit of saying contrary things). Outside the House there was a feeling among opposition leaders that the opposition had been too soft with the Government. Janata leader George Fernandes criticised opposition MP's for not putting up a fight against the anti-terrorism bill. There was also the fact that the Opposition had let off the Government on the alarming price rise immediately after the budget.

One issue that threatens to develop into a major bone of contention is the Government's alleged partiality towards the Italian firm, Snam Progetti. Jaipal Reddy raised the issue of Snam's alleged role in the Government's decision to reverse its decision on the Hazira-Bijapur-Jagdishpur pipeline. Unnikrishnan feels that the "Italian connection" is shaping up into the "Achilles' heel" of this government.

Opposition members continued to be unhappy with the attitude of the presiding officers. Dandavate conceded that Jakhar had "grown with the job" but still felt that the chair had not been as sensitive to the Opposition as its status of a "political minority" demanded. Jakhar was visibly agitated at the charge but expressed his helplessness: "Even God cannot please them." He is convinced that the doubts about the speaker's impartiality can only be dispelled if India's political parties adopt the English convention of not contesting against the speaker who, on his part, stands as an independent. Jakhar is keener, however, on other important changes, most notably the introduction of parliamentary committees to examine the ministries' grants. Jakhar sees the committees as the only panacea for a chronic malady: currently, there are nine ministries whose grants have never faced parliamentary scrutiny. The proposal has been in the air for several years but, given the prime minister's desire to make Parliament more effective, the chances of its implementation have never been brighter, says Jakhar. For Jakhar, this welcome development was only the crowning reason for looking back on a session that was intensely satisfying. "We have had a good beginning and it can only get better," he said. The nation's taxpayers, who pay for the parliament's price-tag of Rs 3.5 lakh per day, will raise a toast to that. —AJAY KUMAR

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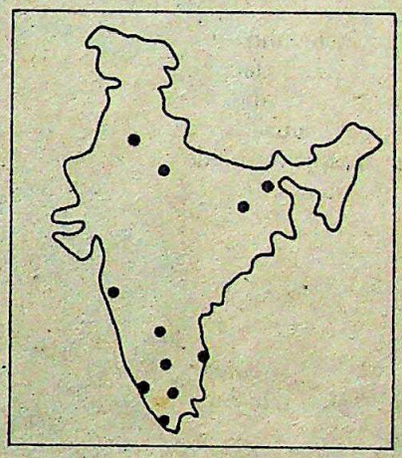

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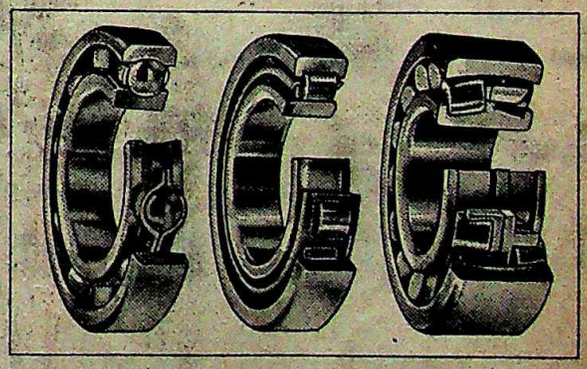

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APPOINTMENTS

Flouted Guidelines

"If the sychophant element amongst the chief justices is not eschewed from consideration, the entire judiciary is doomed."

Justice V.D. Tulzapurkar in the Supreme Court on May 6, 1985

"They (the judges) have also been appointed by someone."

Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar on May 7, 1985

AFTER a short-lived truce, the simmering confrontation between the judiciary and executive surfaced once again last month. In a scathing attack on what it saw to be arbitrariness in the appointment of chief justices (CJ's) to the country's high courts, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court consisting of V.D. Tulzapurkar, D.A. Desai and A.P. Sen accused the Government of packing the judiciary with "sycophant judges" and violating its professed policy which stipulates guidelines for the appointment and transfer of chief justices in the country.

Referring to the Government's policy, Tulzapurkar remarked: "Junior judges in the high courts were being appointed as chief justices under the policy of having chief justices from outside the state." Added Sen: "The policy of appointing chief justices from outside of their own courts seems to be a pernicious principle."

It wasn't the first time that the Supreme Court had pronounced on the policy of the Government to appoint one-third of the chief justices of high courts from other benches rather than from within the court concerned. In fact, the Supreme Court had in 1982, in a majority judgement, agreed that the Government had the right to transfer judges. But this time round, the court's ire was provoked by arguments that Government was flouting its own guidelines.

The occasion for the salvo from the bench was a writ challenging the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, Satish Chandra, in 1983. The writ, filed in the Allahabad High Court in early 1984 by advocate Virendra Singh, alleged that Chandra was shifted in order to benefit some high caste judges who, following Chandra's transfer, were quickly appointed to fill most of the 16 vacancies in the court. The writ questioned this action made on the recommendation of acting chief justice M.N. Shukla.

The high court dismissed the case on the plea that it lay within the powers of the Central Government to transfer any judge to any other high court in the country. Not satisfied, the petitioners took the writ to the Supreme Court in October 1984. Justices D.A. Desai and A.N. Sen admitted the petition and gave the Central Government notice for a reply.

The writ's hearing last month became an opportunity for the three judges to speak their mind. Having criticised the Government for arbitrariness and discrimination in the transfer of chief justices, they also directed the Government to make up its mind once and for all on what policy it intended to follow. Sen specifically asked Attorney General K. Parasaran: "Will you assure us that you don't want judges of a particular kind?" Seen in the context of other remarks from the bench, this was clearly a demand for an assurance that the Government wouldn't resort to manipulation and pack the benches with sychophants.

The bench went on to direct the Government to furnish to the petitioner information detailing:

- the names of acting chief justices in the high courts from which more than one judge had been transferred to another court as chief justice;
- the names of chief justices who would have been transferred had the Government's stated policy been rigorously followed; and
- the names of judges who have actually been superseded with the appointment of their juniors as chief justices in other high courts.

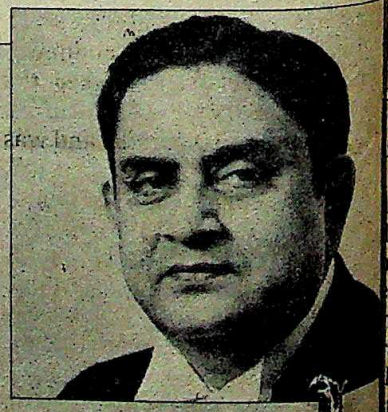
The order was provoked by arguments made before the bench which, accusing the Central Government of being arbitrary in the appointment of high court chief justices, alleged that in some high courts, senior judges had been moved out to clear the way for a junior to act as chief justice or take over as permanent chief justices of their own high courts. Charged prominent Supreme Court advocate Soli Sorabjee: "It is the Government which has breached its own policy for the sake of accommodating some people as chief justices."

Sorabjee was not off the mark. Hardly one in four transfers and appointments of chief justices of high courts has been in accordance with the guidelines since they were adopted in 1983. The decision to adopt the guidelines, which stipulate that all CJ's and one-third of all judges in high courts should be from outside benches, was taken in early 1982 when P. Shiv Shankar was Union law minister.

The policy was, in fact, based on the recommendations of the Law Commis-

"Junior judges were being appointed as chief justices under the policy of having chief justices from outside the state."

JUSTICE V.D. TULZAPURKAR



"The policy of appointing chief justices from outside of their own courts seems to be a pernicious principle."

JUSTICE A.P. SEN

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on. The Centre's hands were strengnened by the Supreme Court's earlier udgement upholding the Government's uthority to appoint and transfer judges.

Armed with its new policy, the Centre rst used its axe on Chandra and chief justice K.B. Singh of the Patna High Court. ingh was moved to Madras and Chandra o Calcutta. Two months later, in 1983 he Government shifted a relatively unior judge, V. Khalid of the Kerala High Court, to the post of chief justice in Jammu Kashmir whose incumbent, Bahad-din, was sent to Sikkim. Since then, 12 f the 18 chief justices appointed have ome from outside courts. Some of them ave since retired, and at the moment ver half the courts are without outsiders s chief justices.

Ironically, these and other judicial ransfers violated the Government's deailed guidelines, including:

▶ a judge who is to retire within a year hould be appointed chief justice only to is own court if he is eligible for elevation;

▶ the all-India seniority of judges must e taken into account while appointing hief justices from outside the states;

▶ a judge who is to retire within a year ill not be transferred away from his ate.

In actual implementation, these guielines were observed more in the breach. f 12 chief justices transferred or eleated, only four—Chandra, K.B.N. ngh, S.S. Sandhawalia of Punjab and aryana and M.M. Ismail of Madras —were according to the guidelines. Of e others, Khalid had less than a year to when he was moved to Jammu & Kashir. In Patna, by transferring Sandhawa, the Centre effectively blocked the ssibility of promoting Syed Anwar Ali ho was to retire in 10 months and was igible for elevation.

The Supreme Court bench last month so learned of the elevation of T.S. ishra as chief justice in Guwahati alough he was only 58th in the all-India niority list. In Kerala, when Khalid and nother senior judge, Padmanabhan Suamaniam Poti, were transferred, Katli Bhaskaran, only 46th in the seniority t on March 31, 1983, was elevated as ief justice.

Among other violations are:

▶ In December 1983, Mohan Lall imal, a relatively junior judge then 91st the seniority list, was elevated as chief stice in Sikkim superseding 40 judges.

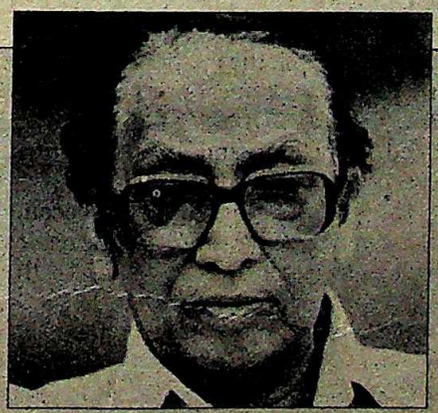
▶ Dambarudhar Pathak, a relatively nior judge, was first elevated as chief stice of his own high court at Guwahati d then moved to head the Orissa High Court superseding 25 senior judges.

▶ Govardhan Lal Jamnalal Oza of Madhya Pradesh, 11th in the seniority list of all-India judges on May 1, 1983, was first made acting chief justice and then confirmed in the same court, superseding five senior judges.

AS IF these weren't enough, the Government was violating its own guidelines by permitting junior judges to act as chief justices in at least 10 high courts for over a year in 1981-82 and again in 1984-85. Nor did the policy change after Rajiv Gandhi took over as prime minister. The three appointments of chief justices since then—to Allahabad, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir—follow the same pattern in violating the guidelines.

The new Government acted true to form once again last fortnight when it confirmed Adarsh Sein, a 51-year-old judge of the Jammu & Kashmir High Court, as chief justice in his own court even though he was 86th on the all-India seniority list and superseded some 50 judges. Nor has the new Government taken steps to fill the vacancies of chief justices in Sikkim, Guwahati, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab and Haryana, all courts which are being looked after by acting chief justices.

The Supreme Court evidently concurs with the widespread belief that all this has been done in order to pack the judiciary with pro-Congress(I) judges. During the hearing, Sen observed that after the retirement of the chief justice in Madhya Pradesh, the next judge in seniority was "kept as the acting chief justice so that he clears all the 10 names recommended for appointment" to the court by the Government. The message was clear: keep a judge in an acting position so that he concurs with the Government's recommendations on appointments to the bench in the hope of getting confirmed himself.



"A loyal judge is not worth his salt. We cannot let the judiciary degenerate as that will undermine the rule of law."

ASOKE SEN
law minister

There is circumstantial evidence to back this: in the last 15 months, of the 53 high court judges appointed, no fewer than 32 were made by acting high court chief justices, and 25 of these were in two courts, Allahabad and Madhya Pradesh. The remaining seven were made in Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir. Moreover, as Sen observed, the Government had recommended for appointment to the high court the names of lawyers who had "never appeared" in the high court.

The outburst against the Government has assumed significance with the appointment of P.N. Bhagwati as the next chief justice of the Supreme Court. The outgoing Chief Justice, Y.V. Chandrachud, was always opposed to the transfer of judges from one court to another without the chief justice's prior approval. It was Bhagwati with three other judges who gave a majority judgement on the right of the Government in this regard, clearing the way for what followed.

The views of the bench headed by Tulzapurkar, who ranks next to Bhagwati in seniority, indicate that the judiciary is likely to remain divided on this issue. But since the Government has already made it clear in Parliament that all high courts in the country will be headed by chief justices from outside benches, the court is unlikely to be able to do much.

Central Government spokesmen deny the charge that it is undermining the judiciary. Says Law Minister Asoke Sen: "A loyal judge is not worth his salt. We cannot let the judiciary degenerate as that will undermine the rule of law."

But judicial circles believe that Sen has not been able to carry the rest of the government with him. Sen's junior minister Hans Raj Bhardwaj has played a key role in many appointments, and he has been touring state capitals to discuss potential candidates for elevation to the high courts. With divisions in the Supreme Court and such differences within the Government, the course of events can hardly be smooth. But eventually it will be the nature of the appointments made which will determine whether the judiciary will flounder or flourish.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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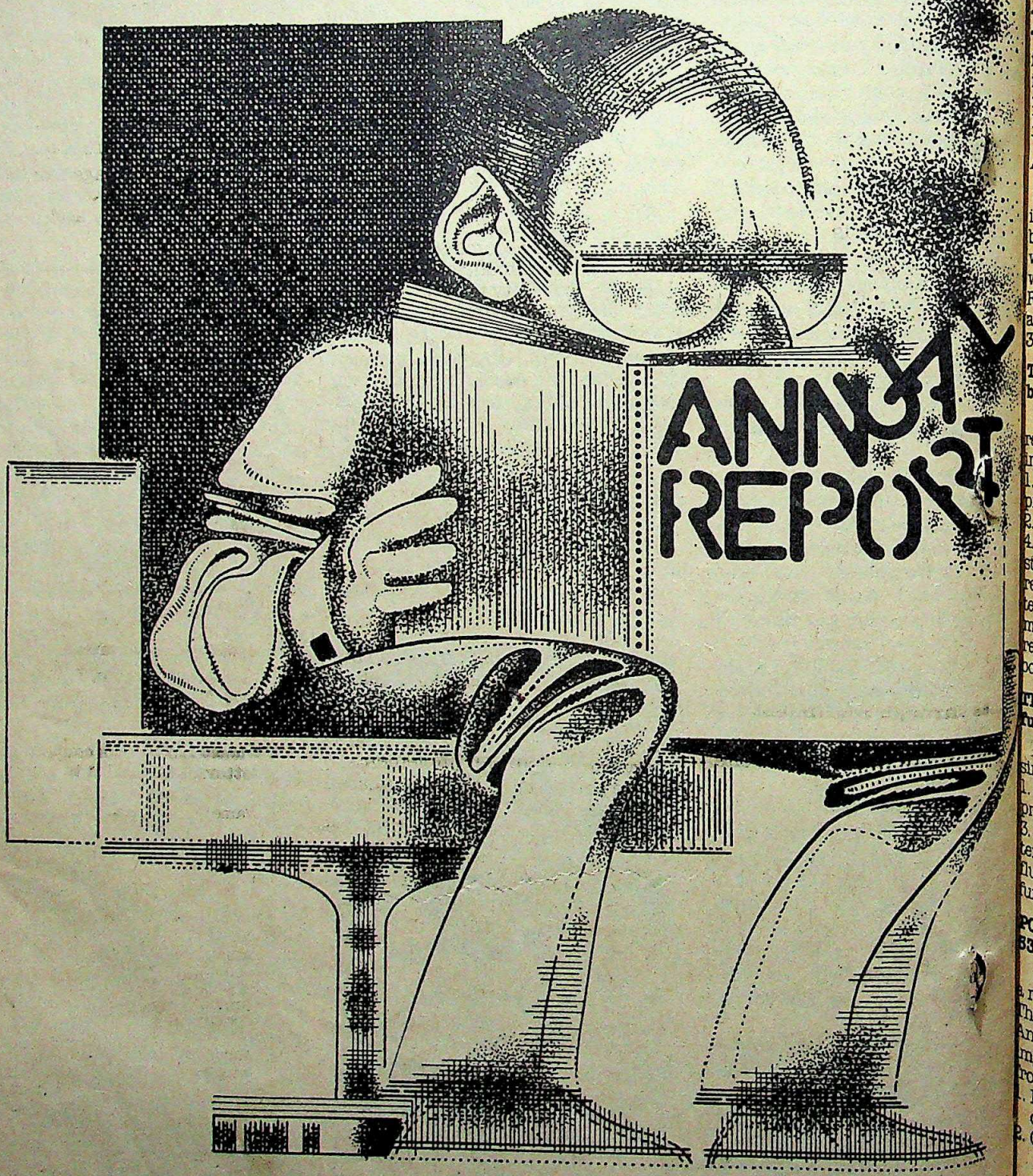

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The loss through inefficient furnaces

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POWER GENERATION

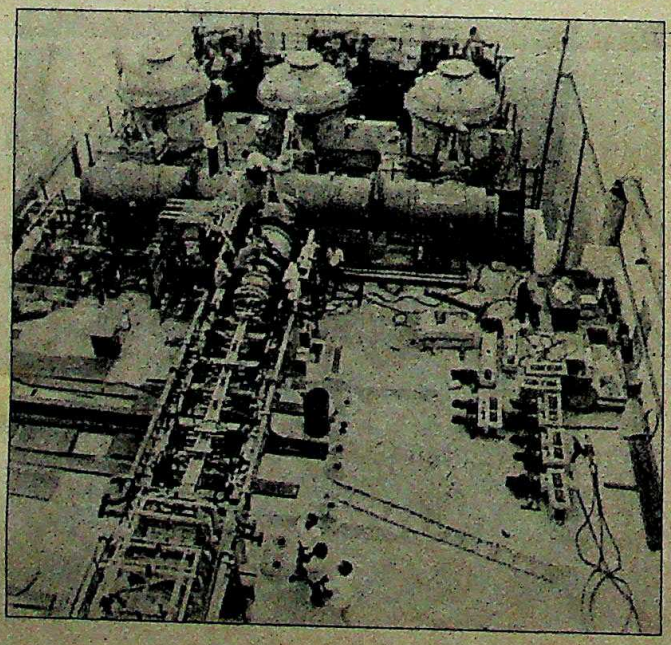
Building up Energy

THE IDEA came at a time when everything from sea tides to garbage, was being investigated to find fuels of the future. But unlike most of the research organised in the wake of the oil crisis of the early 1970s, this wasn't a search for a new fuel. On the contrary, when the scientists of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Bombay and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) in Tiruchi last fortnight successfully completed 'Operation Plasma' after seven years of research, they were reaching back to principles known to every school student of physics: Faraday's law of magnetic induction first enunciated in 1831. Their goal: to find a new, more efficient way of converting coal into electricity.

The joint BARC-BHEL research project, based on a Rs 15-crore pilot plant designed to produce 5 mw of power in Tiruchi in Tamil Nadu, based itself on a sophisticated technology known as magneto hydrodynamics (MHD) which the Soviet Union has been experimenting with since 1964. According to these laws of physics, when a conductor or material is heated to a very high temperature, it gets ionised (converted into electrically charged particles) and creates a 'plasma' or gas in which the number of positive ions and electrons are about equal. When this plasma or electrically charged gas moves at a high velocity across a magnetic field, it gives rise to an electromotive force—or electricity.

In the Tiruchi pilot plant, blue water gas was burnt in oxygen enriched air at 2,700 degrees Celsius under high pressure equal to five times the normal atmospheric pressure. A small quantity of potassium carbonate, which ionises easily, was added to make it a more efficient conductor of electricity, and the resulting plasma was fired through a flaring tube at about 1,000 metres per second. The targeted temperature and conductivity was reached, making Operation Plasma a success. In the second and final phase an electro-magnet will help produce direct current that will be converted into alternating current with the help of an inverter. This is expected to be accomplished by September, after which coal will be introduced as the fuel for combustion. As BHEL specialist S.A. Arunachalam put it: "The MHD generators are like a rocket motor tied to a spot. But instead of generating thrust like a rocket, it generates power."

Operation Plasma has elated the Tiruchi team. A young engineer working on the project said it gave the lie to the sceptics who said that the plant would not be commissioned. Said he: "The plasma was generated the very first time we switched it on. We expected problems but surprisingly, the first run was smooth." MHD project chief and Director of Reactor Research at BARC P.R.Dastidar declared: "The technology has been developed sufficiently to generate the first unit of power by September at the latest," adding that there was still a long way to go. Heartening though it is, the Tiruchi plant is actually running three years behind schedule. To some extent this is due to red tape and the usual bureaucratic delays associated with tendering processes. As Dastidar admits: "The delays are a common phenomenon in a research project of this complexity." The problem, he says, was accentuated by the need to import ceramics and refractory materials.



The MHD plant at Tiruchi: a dream no more

In spite of that, it is successful, and as BHEL's senior executive at the project, S. Sridharan, said: "The pilot plant is totally indigenous in manufacture and to a considerable extent in design." BARC was responsible for the scientific aspects including the supply of a massive, 300 tonne electro-magnet, the power channel in which the plasma is generated and the complex instrumentation associated with the experiment. BHEL chipped in with components such as the main combustor or vessel in which the fuel was ionised, the sophisticated high temperature valves and various other components of the project, not least the experience available at its Tiruchi unit.

The effort is being vigorously pursued because the MHD route for generating electricity from coal offers several advantages. It is almost 33 per cent more efficient than conventional generating plants and though the capital cost is higher, the ultimate unit cost of electricity is lower. The technology is such that it uses up less water, leading to all-round conservation of natural resources.

India isn't the only country going ahead with this research. The Tiruchi project puts the country in the select company of those on the front line in this field. The Soviets apart, this includes the US, Japan and China though they haven't gone in for an experimental MHD power station like the one at Tiruchi. Britain gave up its research years ago in the belief that nuclear power offered better hope. The Soviet Union is the farthest ahead, having generated continuous power for 260 hours from an experimental 25 mw natural gas facility. They hope to have a commercial 500 mw plant next year.

India intends to go ahead with the Tiruchi experimental project seriously and hopes to graduate to a commercial plant in the future. Says Dastidar: "This is a far cry, but with some minor break-throughs in materials technology to develop high temperature-resistant refractories it should be possible to scale up operations." The route to clean coal-based technology may still be distant, but it is at least no more a wistful dream.

—AMARNATH K. MENON
in Tiruchi

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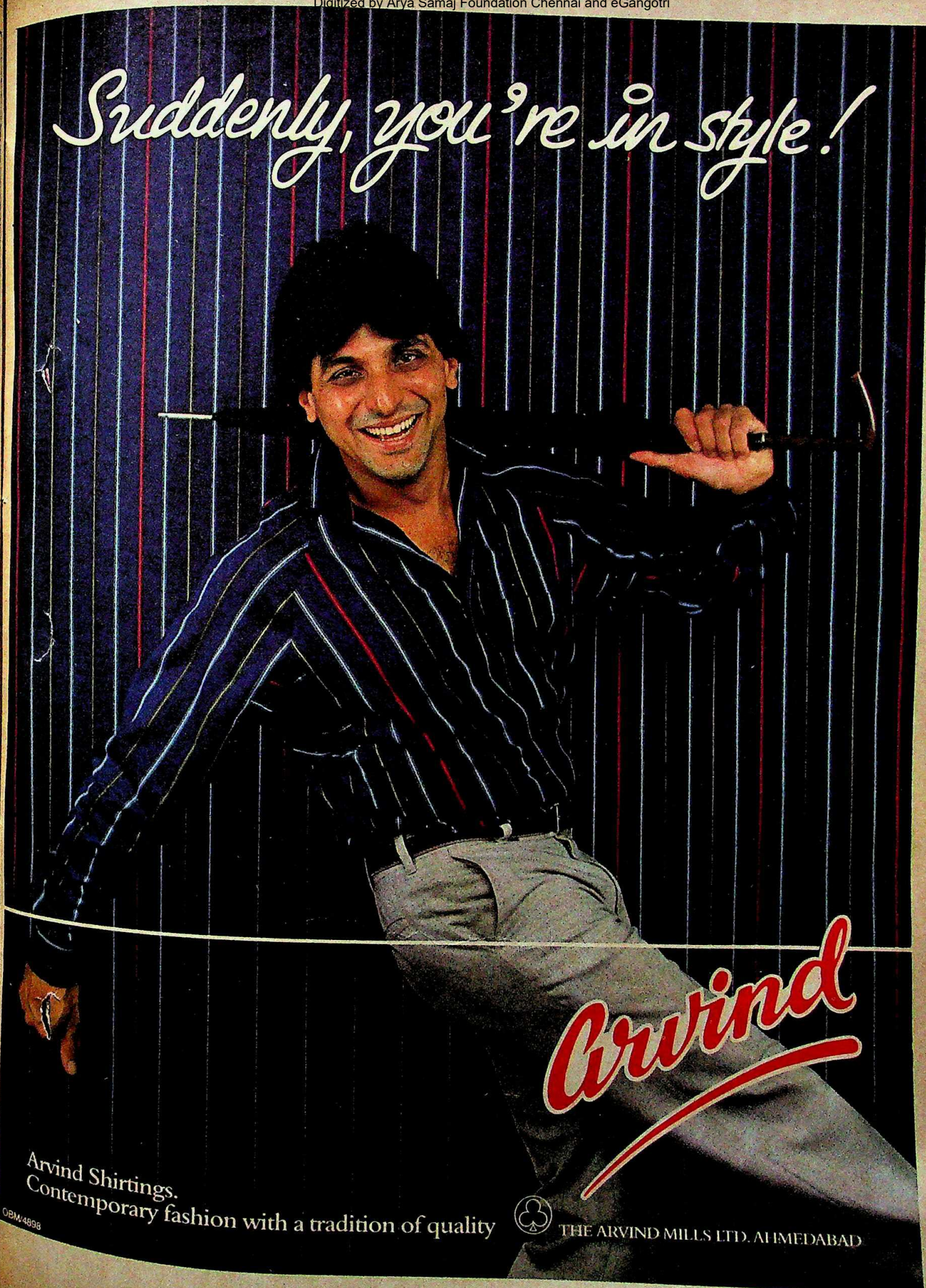

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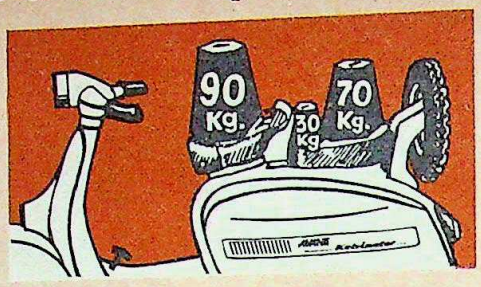

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GURUVAYOOR

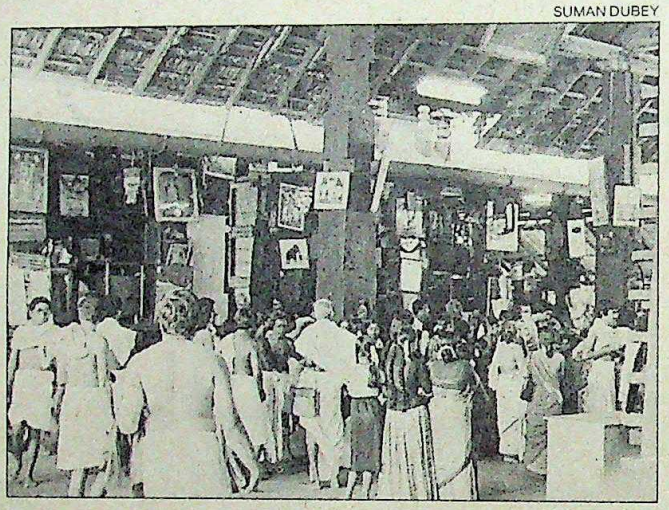
Trouble in the Temple

KERALA Chief Minister K. Karunakaran's favourite deity is Lord Krishna at Guruvayoor, and he makes it a point to visit the temple on the first day of every month of the Malayalam calendar. But in the process he has also got the temple embroiled in more controversies than is seemly for a place of worship. Only last year the withdrawal of temple funds from the private Dhanalakshmi Bank (INDIA TODAY, August 31, 1984) at Karunakaran's instigation caused an uproar when it was discovered that the chief minister was out to spite the bank's chairman, H. Iyer, over the dismissal of some Congress(I) men from his staff. Later, in a bid to thwart the opposition CPI(M)'s bid to put its men on the Travancore and Cochin dewaswom (temple management) boards he succeeded in pushing through an ordinance that made it compulsory for all members, including atheists, to profess faith in "God" before the voting to these temple boards.

But the latest scandal to hit Guruvayoor puts everything in the past into the shade. This time the mismanagement of the board took on a more unsavoury hue when it was discovered that some gold ornaments for use on the idol and stored in the sanctum sanctorum were missing. The temple board only compounded matters by initially trying to hush up the affair, but confessing later that they had known about the missing ornaments when the previous melsanthi (chief priest) relinquished his post (every chief priest is appointed for a period of six months). At the time of his departure, the head priest K. Damodaran Namboodri admitted his "carelessness" in mixing up the ornaments with used garlands and flowers adorning the idol and readily agreed to pay up the Rs 50,000 the missing jewellery was assessed for by the temple authorities.

The temple authorities may have thought the matter was happily closed. But a week later newspaper reports appeared about the missing jewels and the public outcry knew no bounds. Prominent Hindu leader of Kerala, Kerala Verma Raja, grumbled: "The fact that not one but three necklaces were missing, that the police were not informed and that the value of the jewels was arbitrarily fixed at Rs 50,000, should open the eyes of the public to the defilement and desecration of the holy atmosphere of Guruvayoor temple." Karunakaran was left with no choice but to entrust the case to the state crime branch.

SUMAN DUBEY



The entrance to the temple: a case of missing ornaments

The nine-member Guruvayoor Dewaswom has six members nominated by the Government, including the Chairman, P.T. Mohankrishnan of the Congress(I). Says Vishwa Hindu Parishad state Secretary K. Rajashekaran: "The situation at Guruvayoor is alarming. A set of politicians is running the show, which has resulted in all sorts of irregularities."

The recent happenings in the temple have also given the Hindu Front in Kerala a new opportunity to press for the implementation of the Sankaran Nair report of 1984. Nair had stressed in that report that temples in the state should be administered by Hindu organisations and not by nominees of political parties. And this campaign for the reform of temple administration is not a new thing. For the past few months it has figured on and off in the state Assembly. Says Kerala Verma Raja: "If Karunakaran is sincere about protecting Hindu rights, he should ask his cohorts to resign from the Guruvayoor temple management board and give it to Hindu organisations."

Against this background, it is not surprising that many people in the state believe that the affairs of Guruvayoor temple have reached new lows as controversies continue to build up. There is one thing, however, that the temple management board does not lack, and that is money. A few months ago it used up Rs 15 lakh of its cache to produce a full length feature film *Guruvayur Mahatmyom*. The film was not a success. Interestingly, Mohankrishnan has a major role in the film. So does his wife. Said an angry Rajashekaran: "Producing films at devotees' expense and then having the chairman of the dewaswom and his wife in it is the most sacrilegious incident in the history of the temple." But Mohankrishnan says: "If we had signed top stars it would have been expensive, so to cut down the production cost I decided to act in it. As for my wife she appears in only one scene."

Mohankrishnan pooh-poohed the idea of the temple being handed over to Hindu organisations. "I may be a Congress(I) man, but I am a Hindu as much as the so-called Hindu leaders." But Rajashekaran, who recently took part in the mass prayers conducted under the auspices of the Hindu Front in the Guruvayoor temple, says: "We will not rest until we cleanse the temple of unholy politicians." In the coming weeks the Hindu Front plans demonstrations to "arouse the Hindu conscience" against the irregularities in the management of temple affairs. For the Kerala Government, Guruvayoor remains a place where the mixture of the sacred and the profane has obviously not worked out too successfully.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI in Guruvayoor

Mohankrishnan in *Guruvayoor Mahatmyom*: cost conscious

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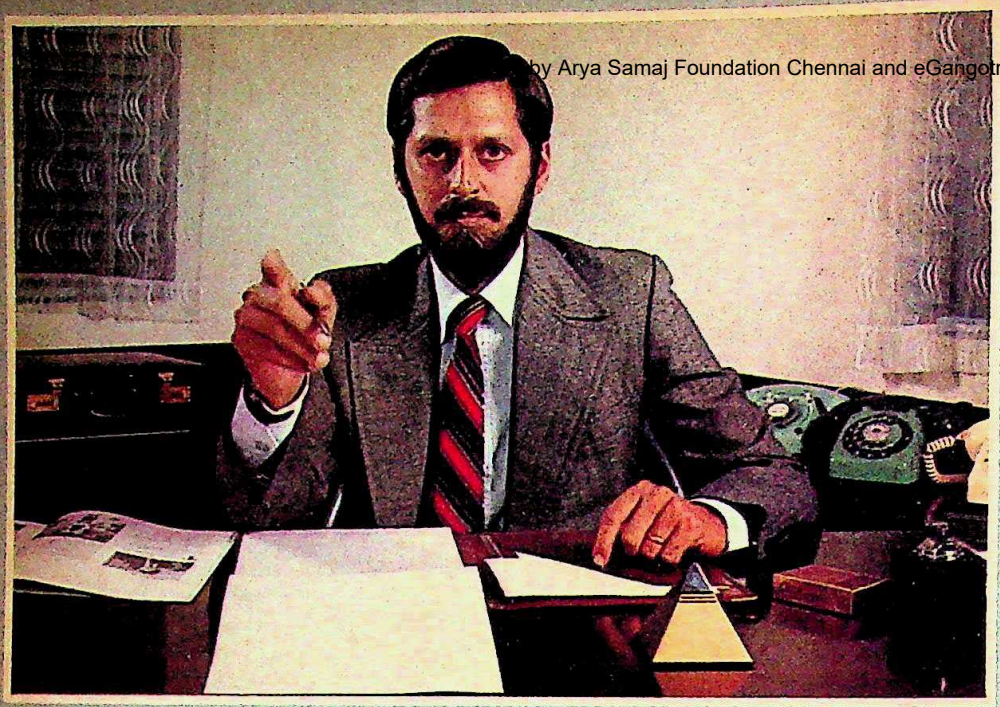

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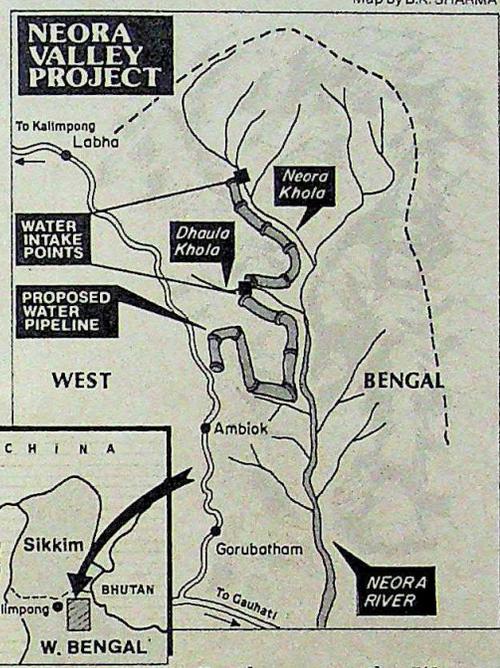
NEORA VALLEY

Out of the Woods

RISING from the north Bengal Dooars to a height of over 7,000 feet in the eastern Himalayas is a little-known valley called Neora. Untrodden for the most part by humans, this valley has for the past four years been the subject of a controversy over the West Bengal Government's plans for setting up a Rs 22-crore drinking water project in its upper reaches. Last fortnight, however, when the Government revealed its final plans, duly approved by the Central Environment Department, even the most strident critics of the project fell silent. For, as the state Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) chief, D. Dasgupta, puts it: "This is the first time that a development project has been designed to preserve the environment rather than destroy it."

Map by B.K. SHARMA



The situation, however, had not been so reassuring in 1980, when environmentalists first got wind of the project. The valley, ecologists pointed out, was a "gene pool reserve" where evolution had progressed without interference and contained a veritable treasure-house of endangered plants and animals. An expedition to the Neora valley in 1982, sponsored by the Himalayan Club and the World Wildlife Fund, sighted the rare clouded leopard, the lesser panda and musk deer, besides spotting numerous unclassified species of plants and an incredible 2,000-odd varieties of orchids. The Neora valley also contains the only surviving forest in the entire 2,500 km length of the Himalayas where different types of vegetation covering an altitude range of 100 to 3,500 metres exist.

The late prime minister Indira Gandhi's intervention in December 1980 stalled the project and the Government was asked to prepare an alternative scheme in the area since both Kalimpong town and its adjoining army cantonments faced an acute shortage of drinking water. The Neora Valley Project was designed to supply 1.5 million gallons of water per day as against the existing supply of only 0.4 million gallons. Curiously, the Government took almost two-and-a-half years to submit a detailed alternative scheme for pumping water to Kalimpong from the Teesta.

By then even the West Bengal Environment Department had realised that the Neora project, as it was envisaged, would adversely affect the valley's ecology. According to a report prepared by the Forest Survey of India, the valley had "survived depredation so far on account of its inaccessibility, but with the extension of roads to its fringes by the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation, which has plans to clearfell the forest for conversion to an exotic monoculture plantation, this distinctive ecological niche is already gravely imperilled". Moreover, the Central Environment Department felt that the construction of a pipeline with a service road following the entire length of the densest forest segment would "result in degradation of a largely intact ecosystem".

The alternative scheme for pumping water up 4,000 ft from the Teesta river to Kalimpong, however, proved to be unfeasible. The state Environment Secretary, K.C. Sivaramakrishnan, pointed out that the heavy-duty pumps, diesel generators, access roads and high-pressure pipes required for the Teesta alternative would be far more disastrous ecologically than the Neora valley scheme. Apart from deforestation, the Teesta scheme would cause atmospheric pollution and create the risk of major landslides.

With the army clamouring for water, the Government perforce had to fall back on the Neora project. Judging from the modifications made in the PHED's final plans, the environmentalists have apparently made their point.

To begin with, the Government accepted the Central Environment Secretary T.N. Khoshoo's logic that clearfelling of virgin forests in the valley area would not only destroy the precious soil cover of the unstable mountainsides, but would also result in the drying up of the existing perennial water source. Khoshoo suggested that the practice of converting forests into timber plantations after clearfelling could be disallowed under the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, which stipulates that Central clearance is required for utilising any forest for non-forest purposes, including timber plantations. The West Bengal Forest Development Corporation was initially disallowed from carrying out forestry operations in the 38 sq km project catchment area in the upper part of the valley, though it had already converted 40 sq km of the total 116 sq km area of the valley into monoculture plantations. Later it was decided that the all the intact forests in the valley would be protected and a buffer zone created around it to prevent encroachment.

Fears of the lower reaches of the valley dying out due to the withdrawal of all water from its upper reaches during the lean summer months were also dispelled by the PHED. The Centre was informed that only two streams in the valley—Neora Khola and Dhaula Khola—would be tapped in the upper reaches by constructing weirs. Says Dasgupta: "No part of the valley will therefore be submerged and all excess water will flow over the weirs."

Moreover, instead of constructing 38 km of roads through densely forested portions of the valley as originally envisaged, only 14 km will be constructed. "We will either demolish or permanently close this road after the project is completed," says Dasgupta.

To ensure that the PHED sticks to the approved plans, a special committee has been set up. Efforts are also being made to declare Neora valley a national park which will be guarded by army personnel. If all of what the environmentalists have been demanding comes about, Neora valley could well be a paradigm for future development projects in the country's remaining virgin reserves.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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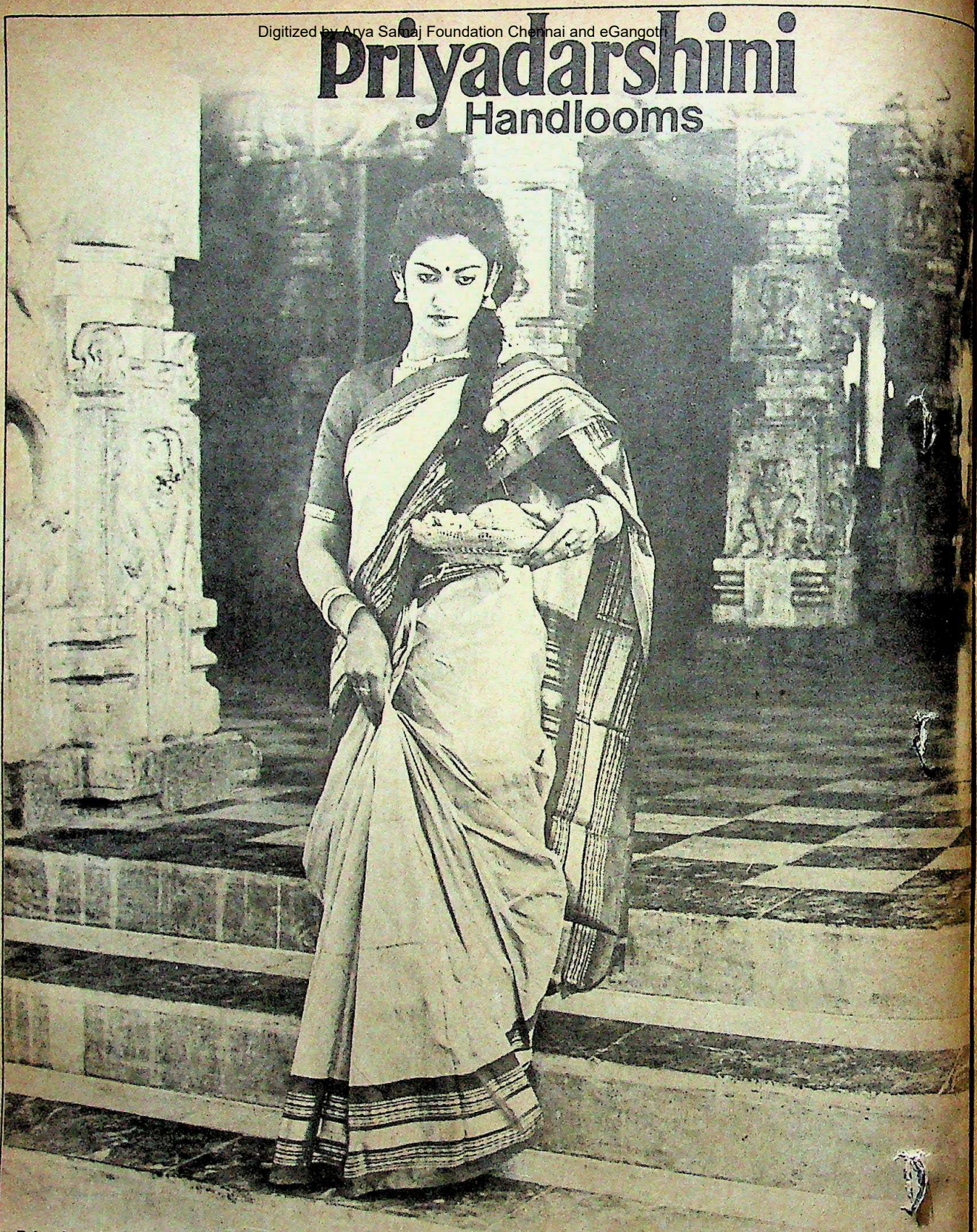

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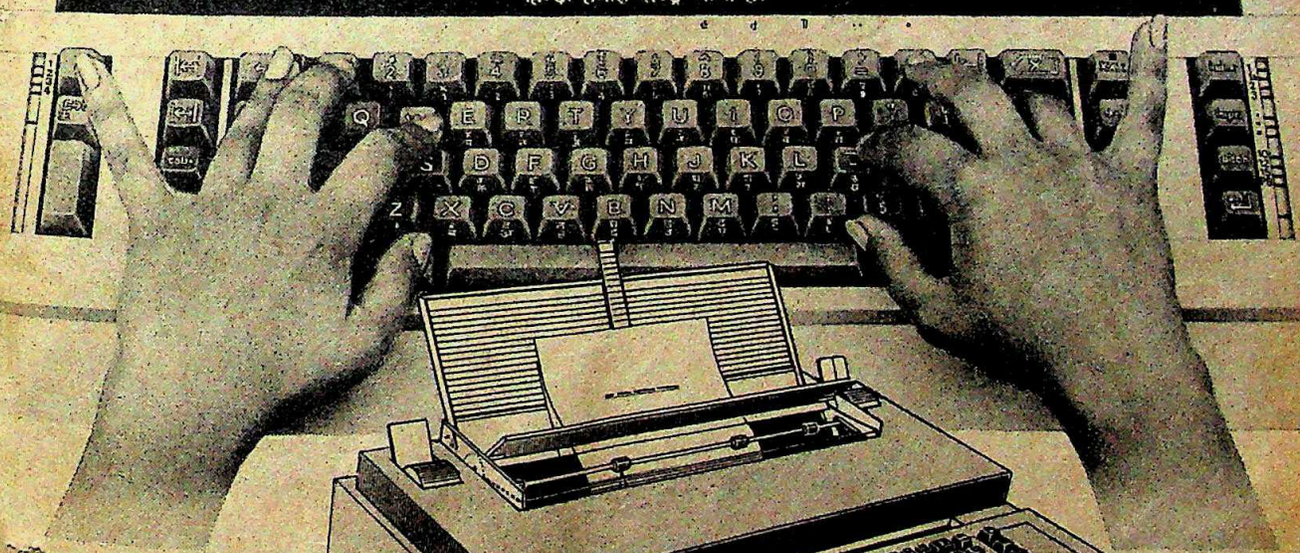

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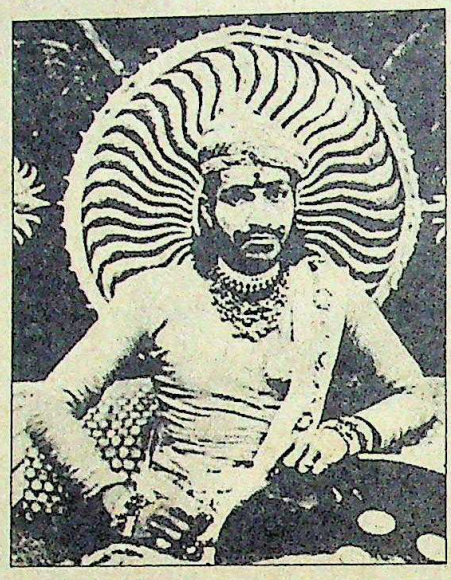
JAIPUR

Ancient Images

THE IMAGES are familiar but it takes the eye a little while to comprehend them. Here is the Taj Mahal looking much as it does today though the trees seem bushier and more plentiful. Jaipur's famed Hawa Mahal looms loftily over a deserted street rather than the busy thoroughfare that skirts it today, and Delhi's Jama Masjid with a—now unbelievable—expanse of space in front of it. The portraits are forbidding, the expressions suitably remote. But that is only to be expected: the collection of photographs on display at Jaipur's Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum were taken a hundred years or more ago. What is more, they are the handiwork of India's first "photographer prince", Ram Singh. Not only do they bring Jaipur and its royal family of the mid-19th century vividly to life, they are obviously a privileged glimpse into a royal way of life.



The exhibition includes Ram Singh's camera (bought in 1864 for Rs 250, it is recorded) complete with a set of diaphragms and lenses, dark-room equipment, an ancient camera stand, albums, negatives, prints and the prince's personal diary.

If the photographs—only some 400 items of a total of 10,000 prints and negatives located—are amazing, no less is the story of their find in 1978. The museum's keeper, Yaduendra Sahai, 44, who has been with the institution since he was 20, says that his curiosity was aroused by Louis Rousselet's 100-year-old book

Sawai Ram Singh II (left); and Deen Dayal's view of Jaipur in 1868

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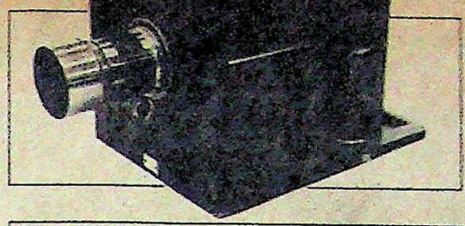
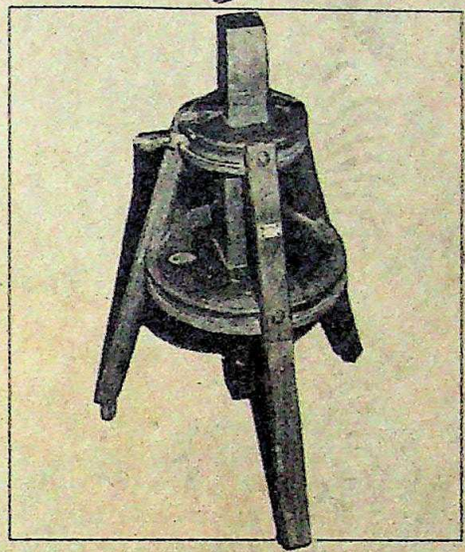
India and Its Native Princes. Describing his experiences in 1864 in it, Rousselet, himself a keen photographer, writes in the context of Ram Singh: "The conversation then turns on photography (he is not only an admirer of the art, he is himself a skilful photographer)."

Till then, says Sahai, he had heard that there had been a raja who was a keen photographer, but here was a definite pointer to his identity. Sahai started out by talking to the city palace's 40 full-time *farashs* (dusters) whose job is, literally, to prevent dust from settling on the exhibits and the uncounted treasures wrapped up and stored in its vaults and rooms. None of them could recall having seen anything relating to photography. But one of them did say there were several boxes lying in what used to be Ram Singh's chambers. These boxes, he said, had been dusted daily for half a century but never opened.

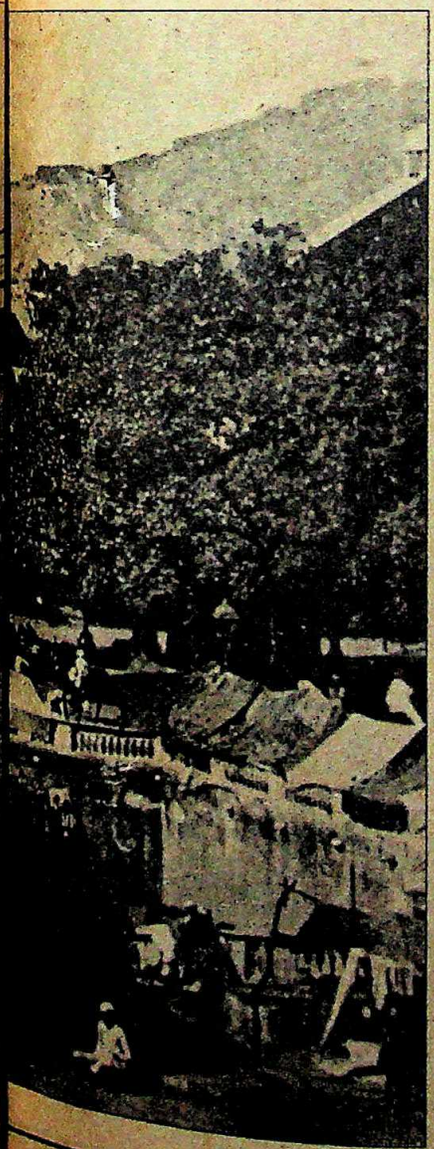




The camera and stand (top) and (right) Ram Singh's picture of a Jaipur market

The museum which was set up in 1959 has slowly been sifting through tonne upon tonne of relics accumulated by the Jaipur royal family over the centuries. Discoveries in these collections have fundamentally altered contemporary understanding of some schools of miniature painting, for example. The discovery of some 3,000 negatives in 1978 and around 7,000 prints three years later (the project was halted because Sahai was ill for over three years) proved to be another gold mine. Sahai believes that there is still more—he suspects that over the years some of these photographic treasures have found their way to private hands.

Ram Singh, who ascended the throne at the age of 17 months in 1835 on his father's death, grew up to marry nine women, three of whom were daughters of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. He had other interests as well, ranging from music to archery, from horse riding to crochet to collecting watches to cricket. Of these many interests photography was one that



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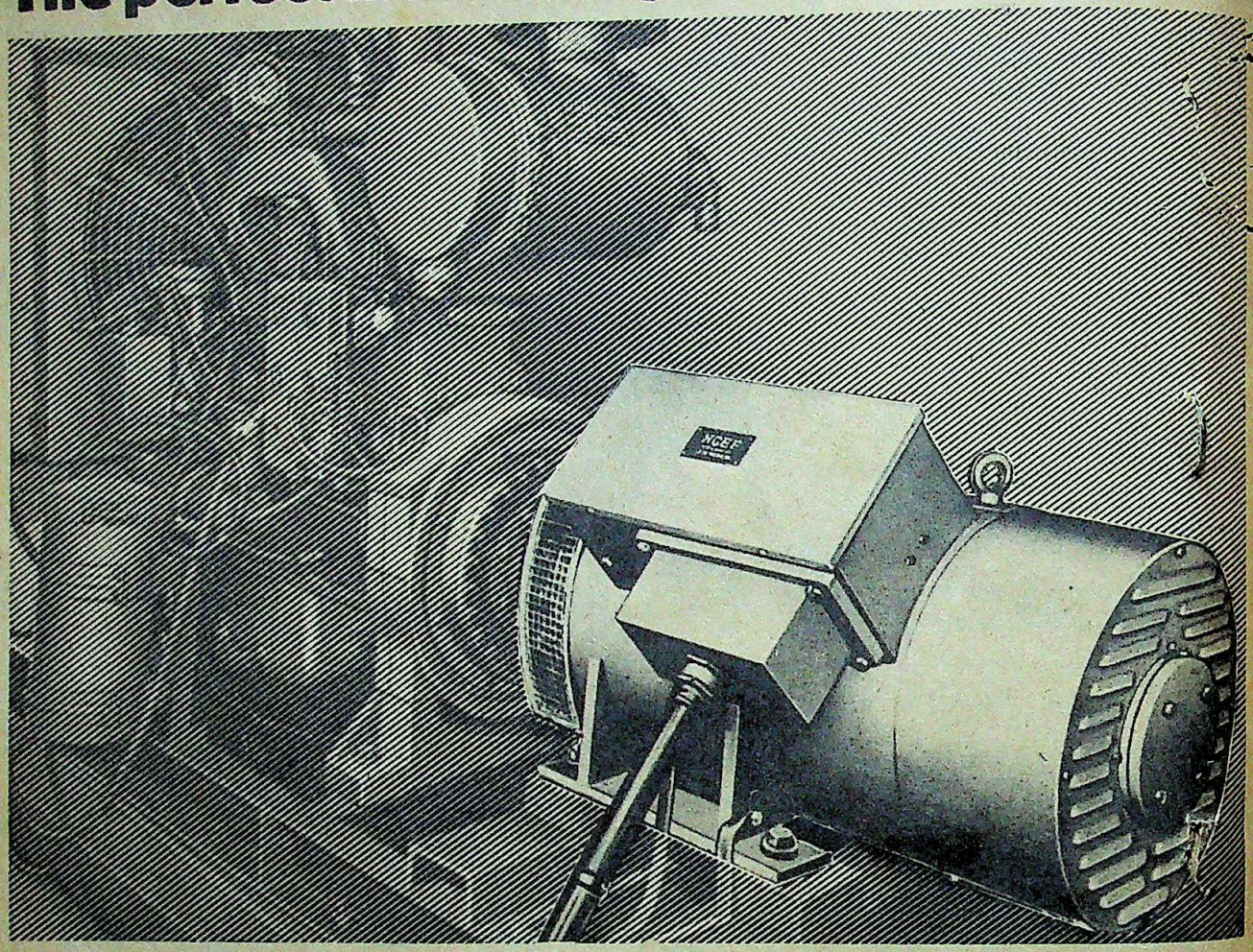

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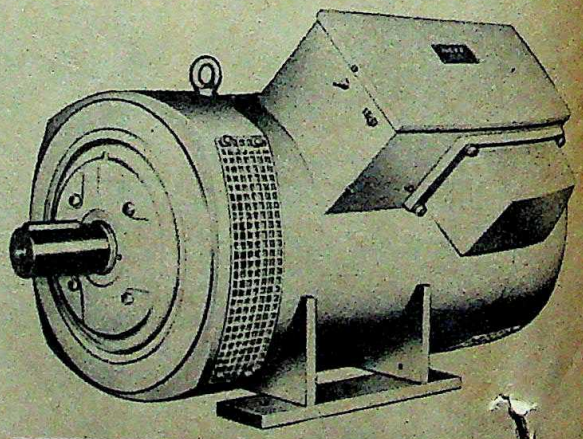

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clearly obsessed him. Apart from clicking himself, he was a collector too. And one day, rifling through several pictures taken mostly at official dos, he decided to try his hand with the camera himself. Sahai estimates that about a thousand of the photographs recovered were taken by Ram Singh himself, and a substantial number were those of his official photographer, T. Murray.

A major find was related to Lala Deen Dayal of Indore—and later Raja Deen Dayal—who finally became official photographer to the Nizam of Hyderabad and was perhaps the best-known Indian photographer of his time. Ram Singh had commissioned Deen Dayal in 1876 to capture Jaipur in frames but Deen Dayal completed his assignment only in 1888, eight years after Ram Singh's death. Forty copies of his album, each with 30 views of Jaipur city, are among the items that have been located. What is important, these do not figure in any of Deen Dayal's works known so far.

Shooting wasn't so simple then. The night before, glass plates had to be painted—on one face—with fish glue and wet collodion which made them light

One of Ram Singh's queens

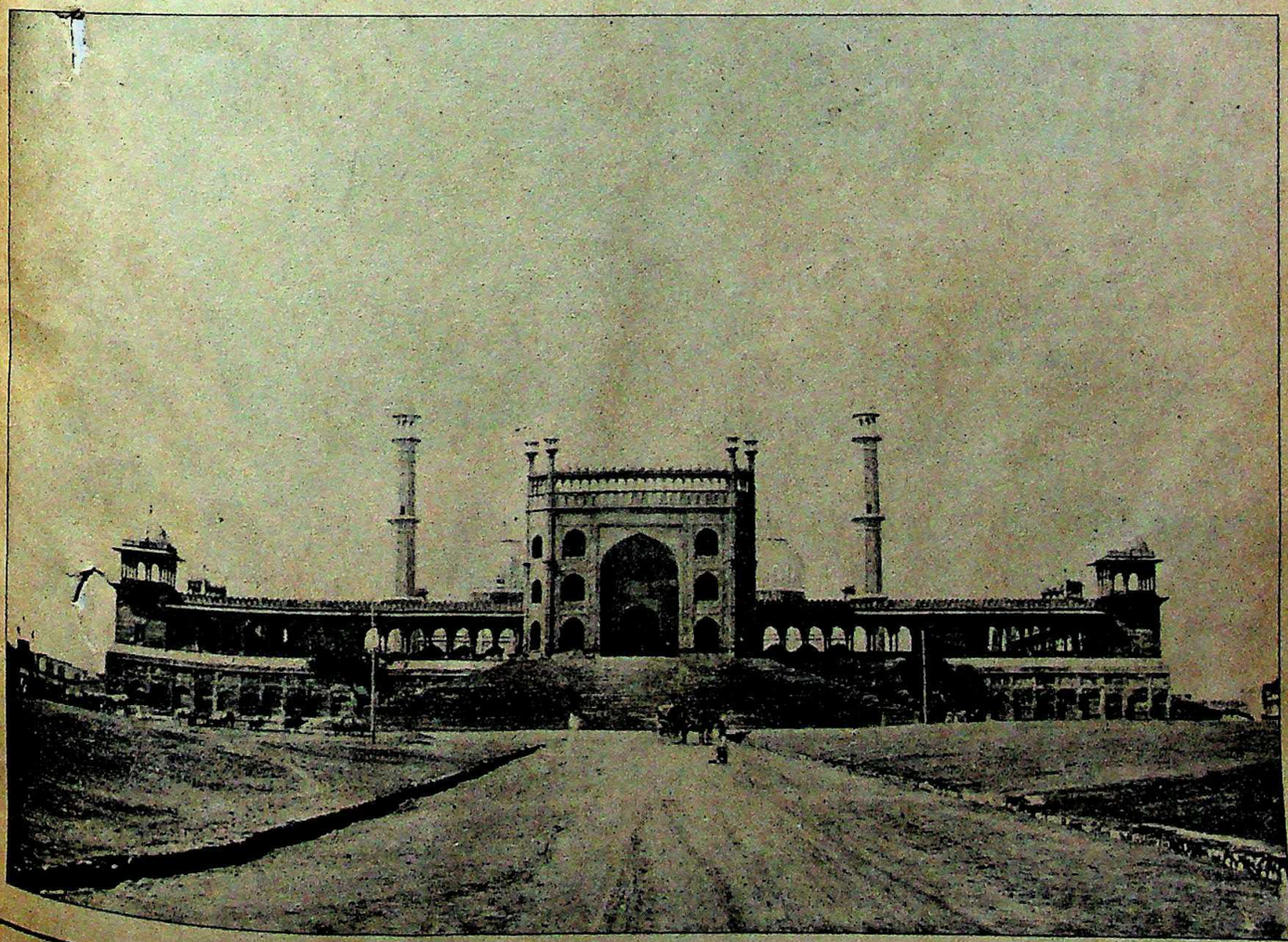
sensitive. The following morning, after they had dried, they were loaded in the camera. Developing and fixing was done in tanks and printing and washing which took hours was achieved by placing paper and negative in the sun. To keep track of time, photographers apparently recited different Sanskrit *shlokas* for different operations. One of the recently found magnifying lenses is nearly a foot in diameter.

Says the museum's director for 13 years, Asok Kumar Das, 47, author of half a dozen books on Mughal art: "The most important set undoubtedly is the one of women from the zenana. There are very few photographs available of these ladies of this period anywhere in India. It gives us a very good idea of the costumes and jewellery of that period." Das feels that the photographs of Jaipur also provide interesting documentation and serves as a base to compare the city's growth since. Says Das: "The bungalow allotted to T. Murray is today with the chief justice of Rajasthan. That gives an adequate indication of the importance that Ram Singh attached to the subject."

A lot more clearly remains to be done in terms of classifying and documenting the thousands of negatives and prints. But what is remarkable about the exhibition at a time when literally crores are spent on cultural extravaganzas, is that the show was put up at the cost of only a few thousand rupees. Perhaps there is a lesson in that for someone too.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

The Jama Masjid in Delhi circa 1875



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Which one is the copy?

Surprisingly, the one on the right!

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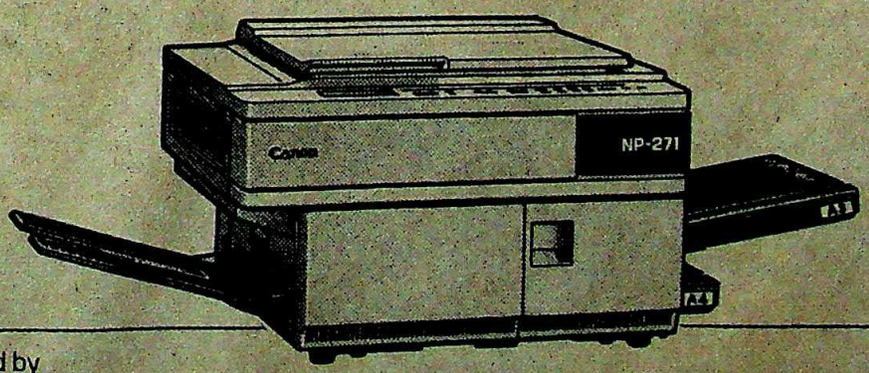

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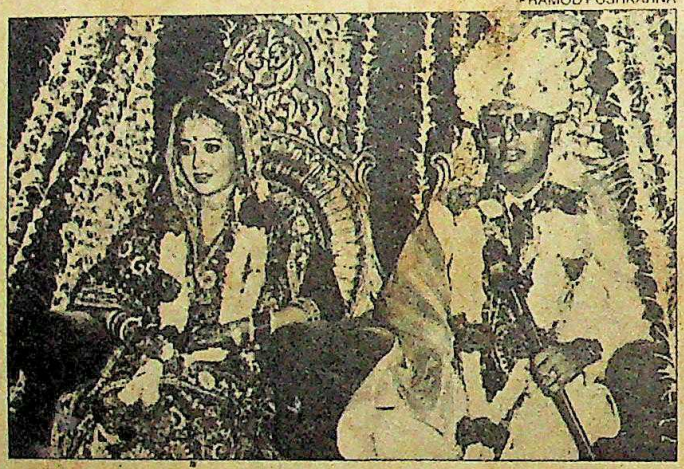
Garewal: limited audience

◆ It's a woman's world. Well, not quite. The razzle-dazzle Sunday morning TV programme of that name hosted by glamorous sophisticate **Simi Garewal** is heading for more of a split than model Shyamolie Verma can perform in her aerobic offering on the programme. The reason: increasing criticism on the frivolousness of the format. "I'll never satisfy women," stormed Simi who has threatened to quit the show, "they'll always be picking on something or the other." Obviously, the "real woman" at whom the show is directed has other things to do on Sunday mornings.

◆ When Papa Babasaheb Bhosale was chief minister three years back, his son **Rajan** cut his first disc for HMV, *Dharkan Dil Ki* with Lata Mangeshkar's sister Meena composing the lyrics. Guitar-strumming Rajan seemed all set for a career in music, but Bhosale insisted that his son's medical studies should come first. Papa obviously knew best. Last fortnight Rajan, 26, was awarded a first class first in his MD in radiology on the very day he was wedded to his singing companion of numerous TV and stage shows, Minu Bajaj. The two music-lovers met five years back as classical music students of the same guru and found they harmonised so well together they decided to make it a permanent duet.

◆ It was a fortnight for Indian prime ministers, past and present. First, Rajiv Gandhi returned from his first official tour abroad as prime minister just in time for the 21st death anniversary of his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru. Then, a day later, **1 Safdarjung Road**, the former residence of his late mother, **Indira Gandhi** was thrown open to the public as a state memorial. It was a moment that brought back memories both triumphant and tragic but nothing was as poignant as the glass-enclosed and blood-encrusted spot where she fell to assassins' bullets on one of the darkest days in Indian history.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The newly wedded couple: love song

◆ It's a question of mind over matter even if the matter does happen to come in a 34-23-35-sized package. "She won because of her confidence and witty replies," said *Femina* Editor Vimla Patil referring to the latest holder of the Miss India title, **Sonia Vallia**, 21, a 5 ft 8 inch model from Chandigarh. Last fortnight's beauty contest, sponsored by *Femina* and DCM Silk Mills, proved that looking good is not enough — little grey matter would also do very well, thank you.

Vallia: beauty with brains

Sonu, as she prefers to call herself, fits the bill quite adequately with a B.A. degree and a journalism diploma behind her and a string of prestigious modelling assignments ahead. But the pot of gold at the end of the catwalk—apart from the Rs 11,001 and a trip to Miami that accompanies the title—is, ho-hum, a career in films. Move over Zeenie Baby.

Rajiv, Sonia and Rahul at 1 Safdarjung Road

SIGN POSTS

Died: Professor Raj Krishna, 59, in Rome. Educated at the Delhi and Chicago universities, he was an expert in agricultural economics and had specialised in the study of employment and conditions of poverty in Third World countries. A senior professor at the Delhi School of Economics, he was a member of the Planning Commission from 1977 to 1979. Professor Krishna was in Rome on a three-month FAO research project.

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The Super Tycoon

Dhirubhai Ambani has emerged
country's most outstanding business
the last two decades, and his company
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did Ambani achieve this? What does h
that others don't? A comprehensive re

COVER STORY .....

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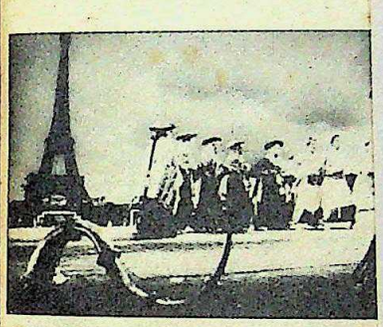

A Spectacular Success

The Festival of India in Paris was ina
rated last fortnight to a rave reception
Mela, with the Eiffel Tower as a back
proved to be as spectacular a success a
rest of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's vi
report with exclusive pictures.

SPECIAL FEATURE .....

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schoolteacher has
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पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय,
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वर्ग संख्या.....आगत सख्या 30 JUNE 85
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ONTENTS

COMMENT .....
VOICES .....
INDIANOTES.....13
CURRENT EVENTS
Maharashtra:
The Succession Stakes 21
Punjab: Mixed Developments 27
Gujarat: Rising Toll.....33
West Bengal: The Left in Front.....34
Uttar Pradesh: House of Horror 39
Congress(I): Remote Rule 45
Amitabh Bachchan:
Playing a Double Role 46
Tamil Nadu: Silent Rule.....51
Andhra Pradesh:
An Erratic Course.....52
Kerala: Short Circuiting.....58
Nagaland: Fighting for Control.....60
SPECIAL FEATURE
Sikh Youths: Wounded Psyche.....62
NEIGHBOURS
Bangladesh:
The Winds of Destruction 68
Arms Purchase:
Delinking the deals 74
SPECIAL FEATURE
Paris Festival:
A Spectacular Success 76
COVER STORY
Dhirubhai Ambani:
The Super Tycoon.....84
TRADE WINDS 97
BUSINESS
Textiles: New Frontiers.....98
Shaw Wallace: Volte Face.....100
LIC: A Problematic Solution 105
Film Imports: Dull Picture.....106
WIMCO: Blazing a New Trail 112
Gujarat: The Raid Reversal.....117
Soft Drink Mixes:
An Instant Success 123
Economy Monitor.....129
The Markets: High Point.....131
INTELLIGENCE
.....133
SPECIAL REPORT
Bhopal: An Area of Darkness 134
LAW
Genetics: Settling Issues.....141
GUEST COLUMN
Terrorists: Dangerous Differences.....142
ARTS
Painting: The Shapinsky Story 146
DEVELOPMENT
Bihar: The River of Sorrow 150
BOOKS
The Growth Debate.....155
EYE-CATCHERS 156

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME X NUMBER 12
FOR THE FORTNIGHT JUNE 16–30, 1985

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LETTERS

WRONG PRIORITIES

Your cover story ("Passage to the West", June 15) gives a comprehensive report of the two festivals being organised at a huge cost to the nation. I hope India is able to reap a rich harvest in trade and international relations by this novel idea of diplomacy through festivals.

The time chosen for the festivals does not seem to be very appropriate. There is problem in Punjab and the national integration seems threatened. Our Neros were preparing for the Asiad and the NAM when there was trouble brewing in Assam and Punjab. And now at a time when the states of Punjab and Gujarat need immediate attention they are busy with the festivals at Paris and Washington.

New Delhi V.N. SOOD

■ I don't understand why we have to go abroad to show our art and culture. Will we get any return on the investment on these festivals? We should organise these festivals in India itself and not risk carrying our sculptures and valuables abroad. What happens if any of these precious items are lost, will the insurance money recover the loss? Why don't other countries have similar festivals in India? Will we ever be able to see the Mona Lisa sitting in our country? The Festival of India, London was a failure in economic terms. Wasn't that a lesson enough?

Falna, Rajasthan SANJEEV KUMAR DEV

LAW AND JUSTICE

After reading your biased (in favour of the criminals) Comment "Embittered Minds" (June 15) I feel that editorials like yours make even potential criminals active. The basic requirement of "Law and Justice" through the proper, unhindered functioning of the police (or the army if the need arises) is to protect the law-abiding citizens from the depredation of the not-so-law-abiding ments of society—be they thieves, ists, arsonists or murderers. Only the "an eye for an eye, and a to tooth", as it is practised with 100 per success in the Middle East, can curb eventually stop all crimes. If the abiding citizens are to be protected the criminals, the latter have to be ished instead of being given VIP treatm *a la* your advice. Editorial responsib does not lie in trying to make the abiding citizens meek and subservien the criminals.

Bombay K.N.N

NEED FOR ACTION

Your cover story "The Return of rorism" (May 31) was revealing. recent bomb blasts warn that terroris still very much active and can raise ugly head at any time and any place. rorism needs to be dealt with an hand. The Government should not time in finding out the root cause of tragedy. Merely treating the sympto won't settle the issue permanently.

In the "anatomy of a bomb" it is m tioned that the explosive powder wa potassium chloride, aluminium pow and sulphur. Potassium chloride is inert substance like common salt (sodi chloride) and therefore cannot be a pa the composition of an explosive su ance. It is potassium chlorate that is explosive substance.

Ollur, Kerala V.P. SUKUMA

■ The bombs which exploded am unsuspecting citizens, have sounde final alarming bell that Sikh terrorism assumed a new frightening dimensi With the extremists having a rollick time killing people with gay abandon, question that has assumed monstrous p portions is the future of the Punjab cr and the solution that has hitherto elu the Government. This diabolical episo is no warning. It is real. The coun deserves an assurance that someth 'real' is being done to combat the mer nary extremists.

Sarani, Madhya Pradesh C.S. NAGESH KU

■ These extremists definitely do belong to any religion, all they are i rested in is to wreck India's unity as w to bring turbulence and instability to country. If they had been Sikhs as claim to be they would not have killed nocent people but found some other to press their demands. The Governm should stop any kind of negotiations

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take stern action to curb the violence. This might save the reputation of the Sikhs from being ruined.

Lucknow SHANKAR SINGH

■ The recent bombing attacks on innocent Indians are acts of terrorism and should, without question, be condemned. While no terrorist group has taken credit for these attacks, Sikhs are being suspected. As a Sikh I deplore any act of terrorism and am sure that a vast majority of the Sikhs feel the same way. In fact, such acts violate the very tenets of Sikhism. It is becoming more and more clear that these actions represent desperate attempts by the extremists to further alienate the Sikhs from the mainstream Indians. Fortunately, the Hindu backlash expected by the extremists was prevented. Serious incidents of this type can take place yet again and the ensuing divisive effects can only be neutralised through restraint and understanding.

Yorba Linda, California SATWINDER SINGH SADHAL

■ The bomb explosions are a grim reminder of the fact that there are elements in the country which do not want to see an amicable solution to the Punjab problem. Every time the Government makes gestures of conciliation to the Sikhs, the terrorists are out to sabotage the efforts for peace. Since the terrorists are trying to stigmatise the entire Sikh community, the Sikhs should denounce them in the strongest possible terms. As long as these terrorists operate freely, the path towards peace in Punjab will remain more and more elusive.

Kathmandu SANJAY UPADHYA

EYE-OPENER

Your article "Blood Banks: Trading in Blood" (May 31) will be an eye-opener to the general public and the elite at large. Dr J.N. Vajifdar has very rightly said that the poor get very good blood and the rich often get very poor blood.

The poster on blood donation was very good and so was the caption. But still, how many persons donate blood voluntarily? We need tremendous amount of visual publicity to educate the public and to drive out misconceptions. The Government should put a blanket ban on private blood banks and labs. No Government hospital should accept any blood from these private places and should also stop this system of reimbursement.

Nagpur DR RAVINDRA JHARIA

■ One way of relieving the scarcity of blood is by efficient use. Seldom does any patient require "whole blood". Most patients require only a particular fraction of the blood. Thus, one patient may need the red cells, another the clotting factors, or the plasma or the platelets or so on. By separating these fractions the same bottle can benefit many patients. In fact, in some patients "whole blood" is not effective and treatment with separated blood is vital. Many of these separation techniques are simple. However, even the blood banks of our prestigious institutions have neglected this aspect.

New Delhi RAJIV BAJAJ

PLANNING GAPS

Jay Dubashi has hit the nail on the head when he says that while our macro-scale thinking is good, our micro-level execution seems to suffer from lack of interest ("Industrial Targets: Thinking Small", May 31). But I doubt whether the Planning Commission is the right agency to see that the targets laid down by it are met. Surely the role of the Planning Commission is to think big and if it does resort to thinking small, it will be missing the woods for the trees.

In our present internal environment, achievement of national targets seems to be relegated to second place as against personal aggrandisement, to a large extent. This reflects a malady in the behavioural patterns of individuals and groups. Unless this pattern is changed the gap between perception and practice will persist.

Bangalore BRIG V. NAGABHUSHAN

MAN MANAGEMENT

It is neither a secret nor a shame that private companies pay their employees well ("PEICO: Executive Cornucopia", May 31). I have worked for many years for a profitable multinational in India, and a great deal of commitment and loyalty I have towards my employer is due to the fact that my personal needs were well looked after—and I have responded by working hard and conscientiously. This is true of all fellow employees, not just managers, and as a result the whole company works efficiently and generates wealth and prospers.

While, of course, all companies must adhere to the laws of the country and pay taxes wherever due, whether they house their managers in five-star hotels or not is nobody's business.

London MUKESH PANT

CALLOUS ATTITUDE

The Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray was quoted saying "Our movement is not an Assam for the Assamese type of agitation" ("Fuelling Fears", May 31). But here in Assam we wonder from where he has heard that. The agitation that has been going on here for the last six years is to drive out the non-Indians from the state and there are several lakhs of non-Assamese living here peacefully ever since the agitation began. Bal Thackeray should realise that this kind of a statement could hurt anyone, whether they are Assamese or Maharashtrians. It is ironical that the very same leaders talk about national unity and communal harmony and then go around making statements that would help in the feeling of growing alienation and incite communal passions.

Guwahati JAYANTA BARMAN

■ Bal Thackeray is behaving as if he holds the key to the metropolis and can play with the lives of the residents of Bombay. His organisation consists mostly of hoodlums, and lumpen elements, many of whom have a criminal past and have been detained under NSA. Bal Thackeray has raised his head again after lying low since the Bhiwandi riots which he engineered. He wants the Muslims to qualify to his standards to be able to live in Bombay. What he doesn't realise is that it is the Muslims along with the Parsis and Gujaratis who have made Bombay what it is today and it was long before Thackeray and his hordes descended the ghats.

He contemptuously refers to the Muslims as traitors. But this so-called super patriot must know that the non-Muslims are ahead of the Muslims in anti-national and espionage activities.

Bombay IBRAHIM NADIM

ADVOCATE FOR PEACE

Your article "Extreme Charges" (May 15) accuses Bhajan Singh Jogi (Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogijar) of being "committed to the extremist cause". Nothing could be farther from the truth. As a spiritual leader, he has always been an advocate for the peaceful resolution of all political problems. He does not now nor has he ever supported the "extremist cause". Your libellous accusation severly undermines his ability to continue to work for peace.

Los Angeles RAM DAS SINGH KHALSA

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How not to grow a lamp-post from a friend's head and a few tips on good composition.

Composition is one of the most elusive and individual aspects of photography. While everyone agrees it's an absolute necessity, they all have their own concept of what it is! There is the modernistic school of thought, the traditionalist, the static and dynamic style and many more. But you don't have to bother about all that. Here are a few simple guidelines that can make your photography so much better ... compositionally speaking.

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Composition and organisation

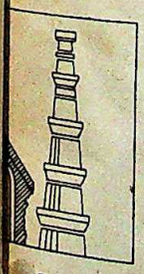
Simply put, composition is visual organisation. It includes, but is not limited to how you place your subject in the frame – and the effect that it will have on all the other elements in the picture. Compose carefully and you can emphasize your subject (which is what you want to do) while keeping all unnecessary and distracting things out of the picture (which is where they should be).

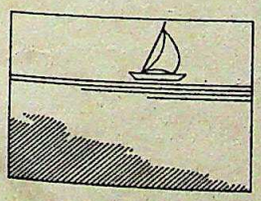
Good composition involves the choice of vertical or horizontal framing, the position of the camera subject placement, contrasts and isolating details.

This isn't as difficult as it may sound, and with a little practice, it will become very easy ... and your pictures better.

Vertical or horizontal

Simple. A palm tree, the Qutab Minar and Amitabh Bachchan need vertical frames. A mountain range or a seascape need a horizontal frame. In both cases, you've added to the height and the width. For portraits, use the vertical format, it adds character.



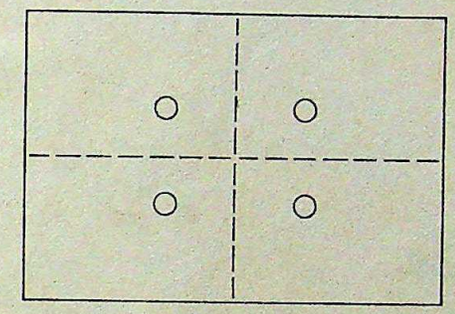


Static or dynamic

Balanced picture makes for a Static composition. It would probably be a picture shot on a quiet, calm day. Dynamic composition is one in which the picture seems to 'move' – a picture tilted, placed at a slant or distorted would be 'dynamic'. Work out your 'response' before you shoot. And shoot.

Framing

While there's nothing wrong with putting your subject squarely in the centre of the frame, you can change your pictures dramatically by placing your subject to the left or right of the centre or a bit higher or lower than usual. One peek through the view-finder should be enough to decide.



Framing action

The ground rule for shooting action: anticipate. Try to set your focus first, try to get to the best shooting point, and get there in time. Not too difficult at all. Fill the frame; get all the action. Pick a shooting distance that lets you fill at least one quarter to one third of the picture area with significant action. And please keep a safe distance if the action is dangerous!

Framing the outdoors

A basic point for shooting the outdoors: find a dominant feature of the landscape and concentrate on it. Filling the frame with the principal subject is vitally important. Frame your scenics with a person or object in the foreground and you'll add interest and depth and that important sense of scale. Remember: a foreground feature that contrasts in colour and/or tone with distant areas is more effective in creating the illusion of depth than one that looks similar.

Contrast and shock

Contrasting elements are the building blocks of intelligent composition. Almost any kind of contrast helps structure a photograph. Contrasts of tone, colour, sharpness, size and subjects are fair game. Like a white flower in a bunch of red roses ... a child in a crowd of grown-ups ... a crow among doves ... just be careful not to overdo it.

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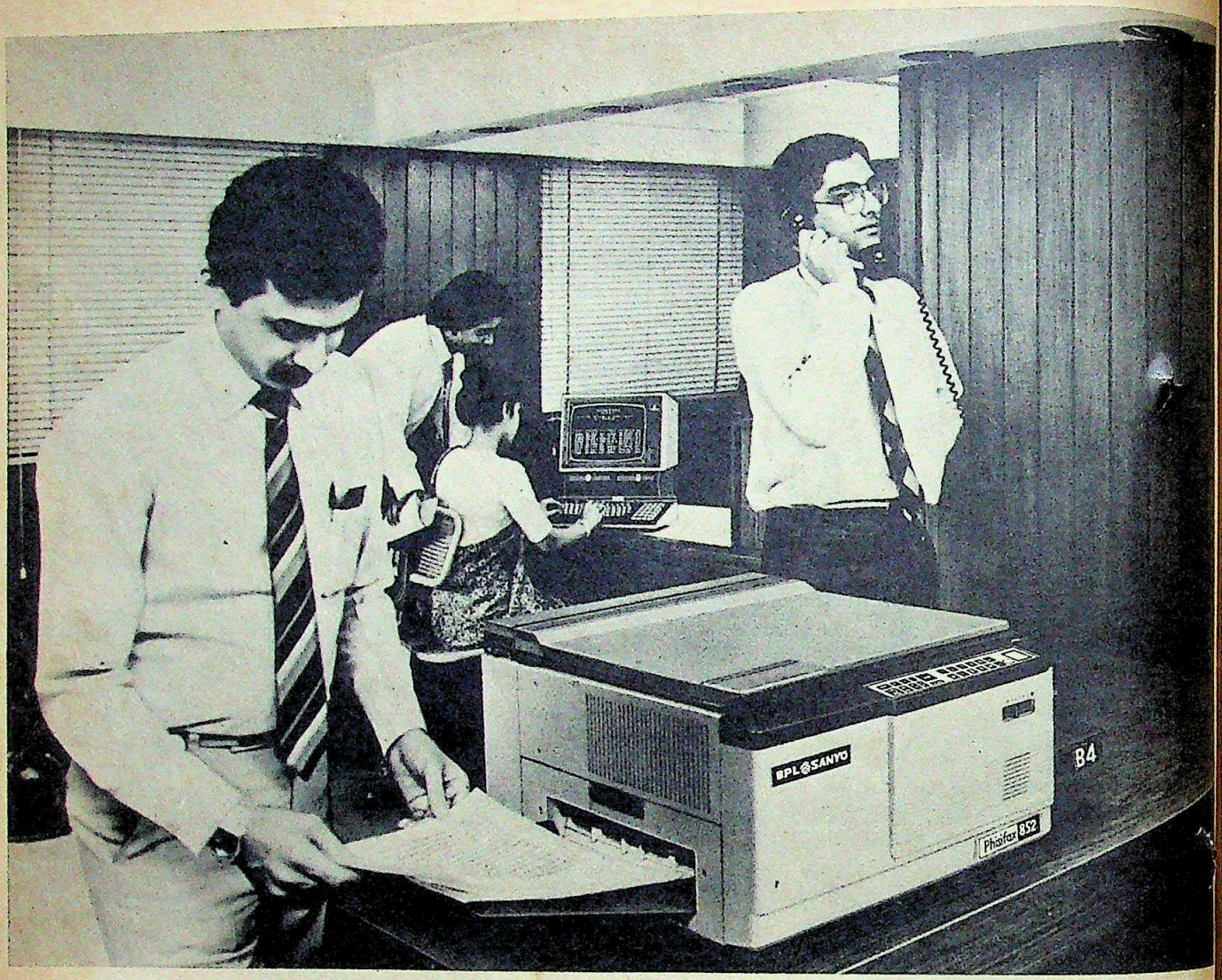

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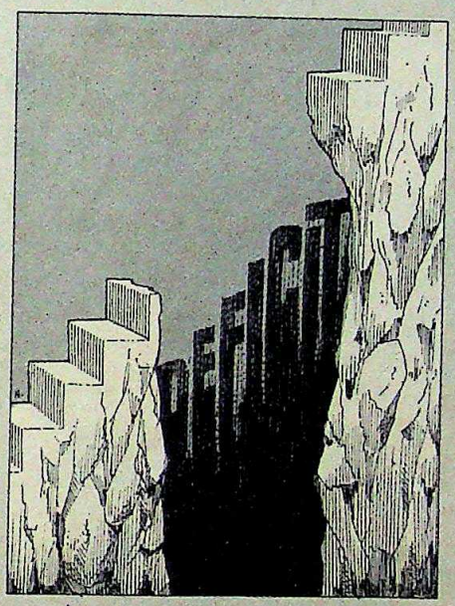
First Things First

THE CONTRASTS are obvious. On the one hand, there is the regular flow of encouraging policy pronouncements, signifying new beginnings, changes of direction, and a renewed will to achieve stated objectives. The new textile policy has been widely hailed for doing away with the irrational shibboleths of the past, for giving cotton textile mills a new chance to compete with powerlooms, and for laying the foundation-stone for the future growth of a troubled industry. Another announcement last month gave a shot in the arm for a second troubled industry that has seen insufficient growth, pharmaceuticals, by freeing 82 drugs from licensing restrictions. Earlier announcements have given a boost to the electronics and computer industries, while the Central Budget and the new export-import policy charted a new course for the economy in significant ways.



If all this underlines the Government's desire to push ahead with economic growth and change, there is an equally regular flow of disturbing economic news carrying a quite different message. The Planning Commission has announced that the Seventh Five-Year Plan will have a Rs 180,000-crore investment programme, as originally scheduled, but this will be at the latest prices instead of 1983-84 prices, thereby implicitly reducing the level of real investment by about 10 per cent. And the details of sectoral financial allocations indicate a serious financial crunch.

The 1985-90 power programme, for instance, will have a 22,000-mw target, only slightly larger than the last quinquennium's initial target of 19,666 mw. The final target for the seventh plan is well short of the initial target of installing close to 30,000 mw. This spells near-stagnation on a vital front, and suggests that there will be no escape from continuing power shortages.

There are other examples. The Communications Ministry had initially hoped for a seventh plan outlay of Rs 12,500 crore so that the endemic shortage of telephones would be a thing of the past by 1990. But only a fraction of this money is now being made available. Even worse, the exploration and development budget of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission has been severely slashed because of the financial stringency, so that the push on the oil front during the last five years will now give way to a slower pace of expansion.

Electricity, oil, communications: these are all basic economic needs, and the absence of sufficient investment in them can only spell trouble. So no matter how encouraging the Government's policy announcements, and irrespective of how enthusiastically the concerned industries respond to these announcements, the economy cannot climb on to a higher growth curve. If that is the central message coming through the scattered bits of economic news in recent weeks and months, the Government must sit up and take notice without delay, and search for appropriate solutions.

If the problem is money, the answer must lie in the budget. Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh introduced a great many changes in his first budget earlier this year, most of which were welcome. But he failed to address himself to the central problem of a growing fiscal crisis, the increasing deficits and the absence of any rise in the economy's savings and investment rate over the last few years. Indeed, the reports now speak of the budget deficit being Rs 1,000 crore higher than the already record level that Singh had projected just a little over two months ago. This may or may not be the case, but there can be no question that the fiscal signals are not encouraging.

Both Singh and his predecessor as finance minister, Pranab Mukherjee, have pointed out that three-quarters of non-plan expenditure by the Government goes on just three items: defence, subsidies of various sorts and interest payments on government loans. Yet this analysis has not so far been used for initiating corrective action. The subsidies may in fact go up, the country seems set on a course that entails large-scale defence spending, and there would seem to be little room for reducing the interest burden on the public debt that the Government has already acquired.

But this cannot be the end of the matter. It is surely possible to cut out the flab in the defence budget without endangering the defence forces' preparedness in any way. And there is absolutely no justification for a situation where the subsidies on foodgrains, fertiliser, exports and some other items, are currently running at well over Rs 2,000 crore. So, clearly, corrective action is possible if the Government puts its mind to it.

What the decision-makers in New Delhi do not seem to have realised is that this is a serious problem which cannot be shelved any longer. The failure to undertake sufficient investment now in key sectors can make nonsense of all the talk of heading for the 21st century, and make the Government's well-intentioned and largely well-conceived policy changes turn out to be non-starters on the ground.

So it is time the Government diverted its attention for a while from the new policy thrusts and went back to the old issues of savings and investment, economic surpluses and fiscal balance. Some of the lost ground in the plan can be regained by ensuring better project implementation and shorter gestation periods. These are somewhat tiresome issues that have evaded solutions for a long time, and they are not very fashionable talking points just now. But if they are not quickly placed at the top of the Government's economic agenda, the economy cannot be expected to perform very much better in the future than it has in the past.

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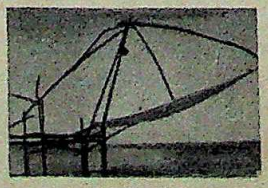

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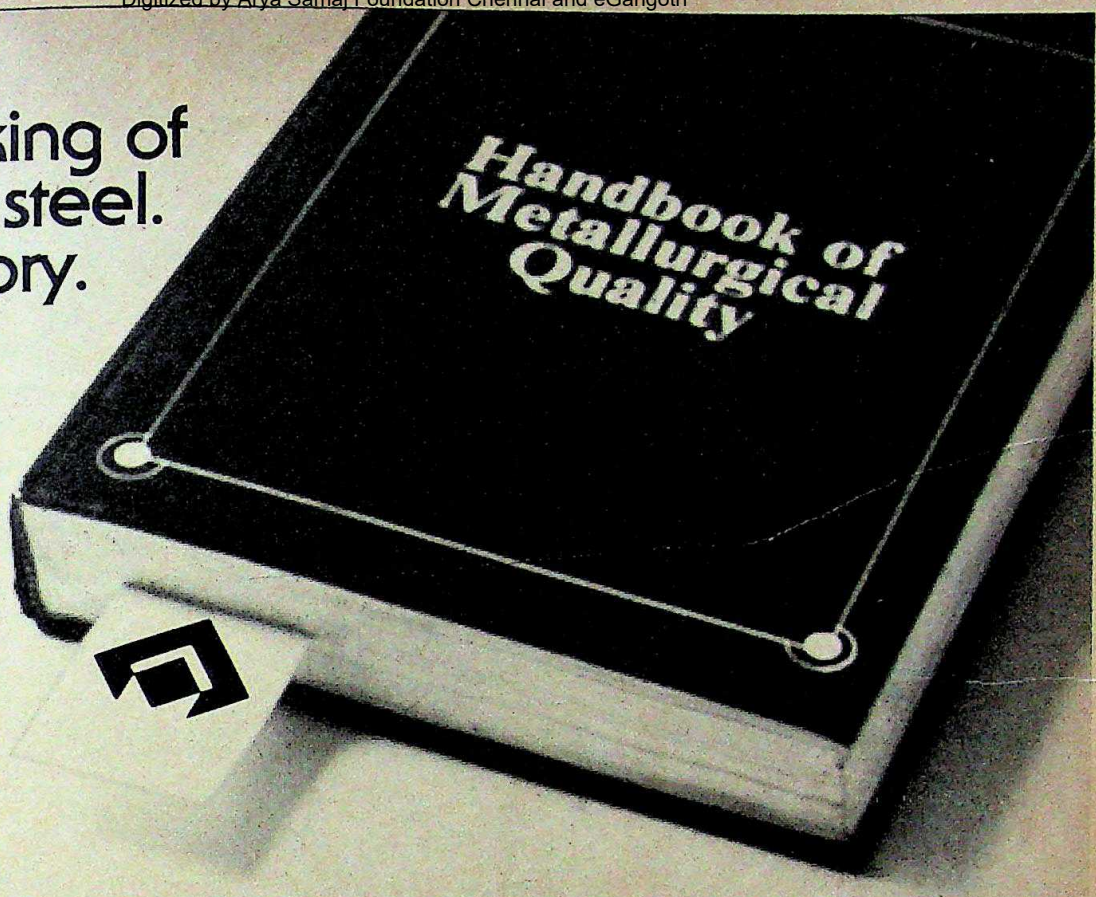

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The Times of India

● *We are wary of large companies (multinationals). You must remember the British East India Co.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI in an interview to *Newsweek*

● *Dada has maintained the pride of Maharashtra and avenged the insult inflicted by the computer boys in Delhi.*

■ MADHAV GADKARI commenting on Vasantrao Patil's resignation

● *I'm concerned about myself and myself alone. That's it. Whether Dada remains CM or not, I should be politically rehabilitated immediately....I am ready to serve any CM.*

■ SHALINITAI PATIL in *Current*

● *The focus (in the US) is on this new man (Rajiv Gandhi), what he is doing, what he is trying to achieve. It is not a backward look, it is a forward look.*

■ HARRY BARNES, US Ambassador in *Sunday*

● *I am not a tough person. I cannot bully or intimidate people.*

■ PRANAB MUKHERJEE in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Nobody can claim that he is always right. Often you feel it would have been better if you hadn't taken that view. Even judges have second thoughts sometimes.*

■ YASHWANT VISHNU CHANDRACHUD, chief justice of India in *Mid-day*

● *I am not like R.K. Karanjia or Girilal Jain. I don't broadcast my own opinions. I am just the voice of the BBC—nothing more. It's not me that's influential, it's the BBC.*

■ MARK TULLY in *Imprint*

● *My upbringing is such that I feel my husband is superior to me and his mother even more superior.*

■ SONIA GANDHI in *Dharamyug*

● *Everyone seems to think that we cricketers are millionaires. It is a very wrong and inaccurate view...we are lucky if we made even a quarter of what people think we make.*

■ KRISHNAMACHARI SRIKKANTH in *Sportsworld*

● *Even God cannot improve Indian football overnight.*

■ P.K. BANERJEE, national football coach in *The Telegraph*

● *Women tell me that I have the most beautiful eyes and smile in this world. Then they ask me not to look into their eyes because they get weak in the knees.*

■ RAJESH KHANNA in *Cine Blitz*

● *I have no rivals. When I do everything they do and they do all the things I can then we will be rivals.*

■ SRIDEVI in *Filmfare*

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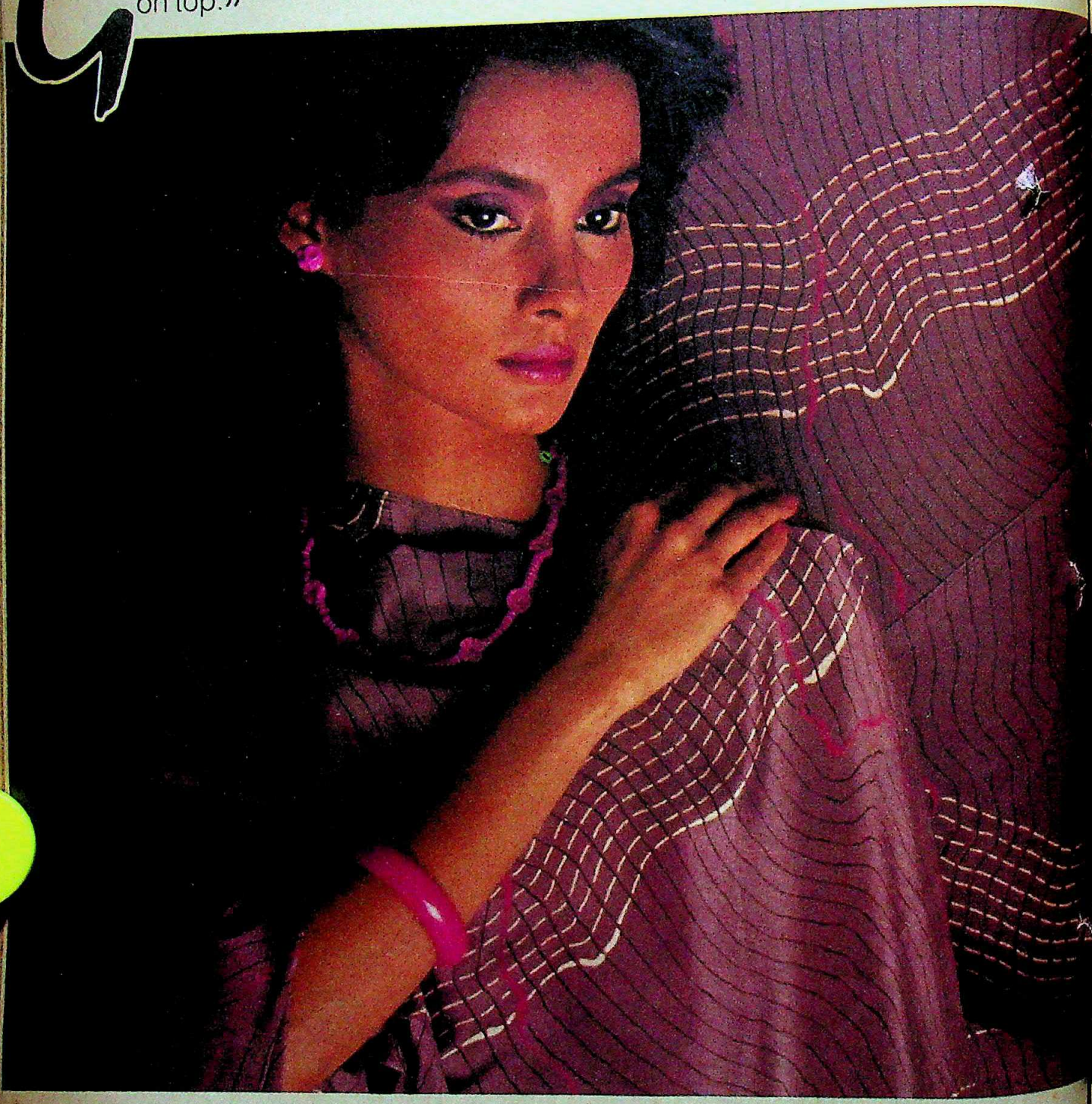
"Geometric designs have always been there. Right now they are on top."



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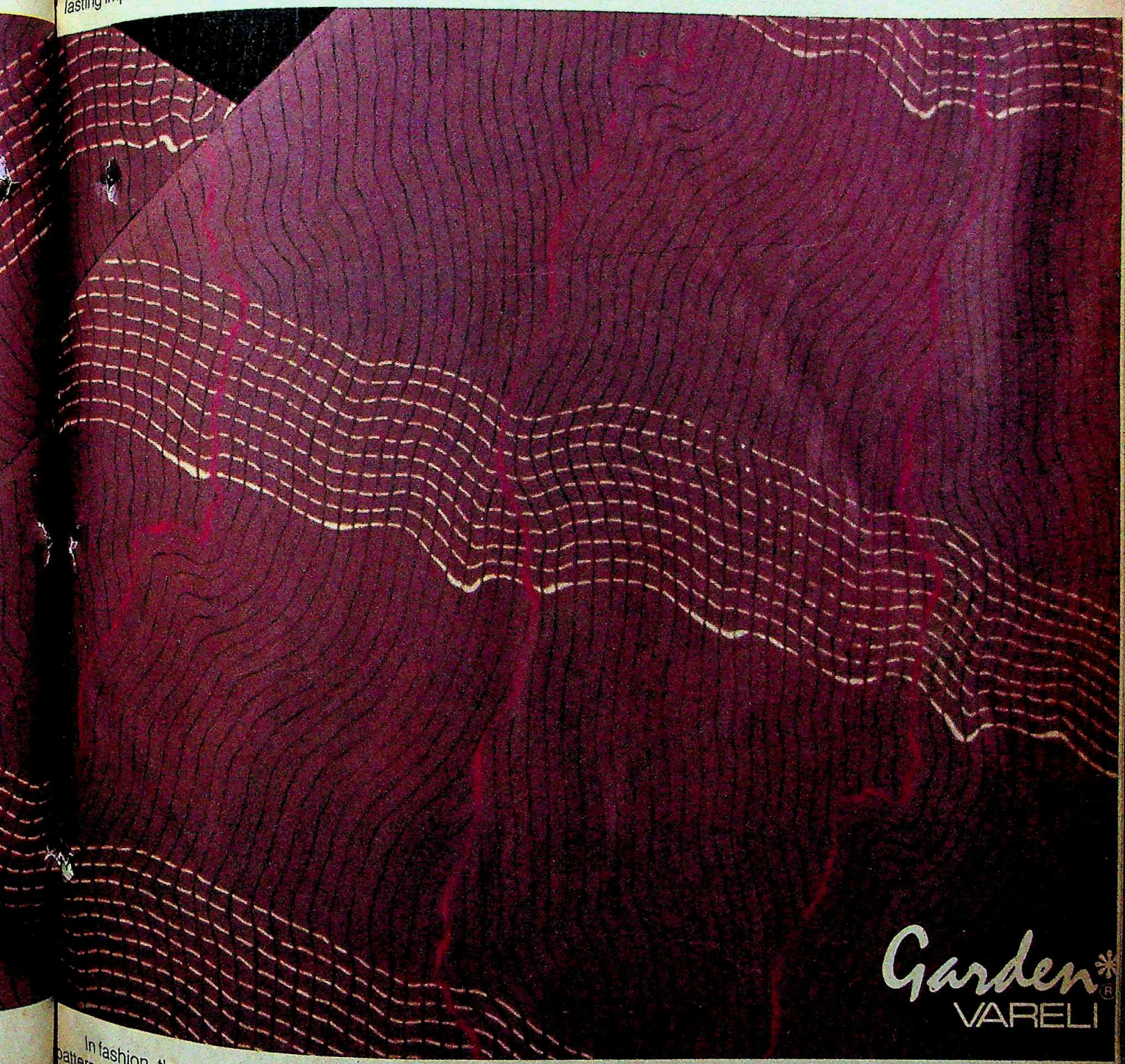
"The geometry factor in art, introduced by early Egyptian architects and artisans, has had a lasting impact on aesthetic concepts of today.



In fashion, the elements of geometry come as a liberating relief from the dominance of floral patterns. The geometric line becomes the fashionable stripe, the point and circle, a dot, the square, a check. Add to these the cube, zig-zag, diamond and arc and we have a panoply of shapes, simple yet permanent. Since these shapes are fundamental, they allow ground colours to have full play.

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PLAYING PANDIT

■ One person essential to the traditional Hindu wedding is the pandit. Indispensable as they are, the pandits find the going good during the marriage season.

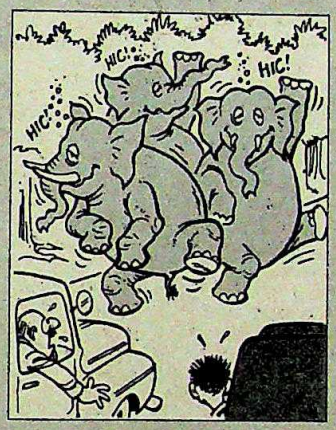
However, they aren't that indispensable. In recent times supply has increasingly tended to lag behind demand and Indian ingenuity has found a way, even though it means bending the rules a bit, as was evident in a number of weddings in Dhule district of Maharashtra.

Even as the bride and groom wandered around the fire, the soothing chant of shlokas could be heard, each shloka tying the nuptial knot that much tighter. Amazingly, no pandit was present at the fireside although the boy and girl received precise instructions on what to do and when. The answer was electronics: a cassette recorder played out a pre-recorded tape of the entire ceremony which went off without a hitch. The electronic priest came cheap for about Rs 50 a tape, and what was more, it didn't have to be fed afterwards. A few doubting Thomases wondered if the whole thing was entirely legal, but their voices were drowned in the general acclaim for the latest indication that India was at last in the 20th if not the 21st century.

TIPPLING TUSKERS

■ Take an elephant, add several pegs, and what do you get? You get a tipsy tusker. If there happen to be three elephants, then you get a vaudeville act in broad daylight, such as travellers on the main road at Nadukanichuram in Tamil Nadu had the delightful privilege of watching recently.

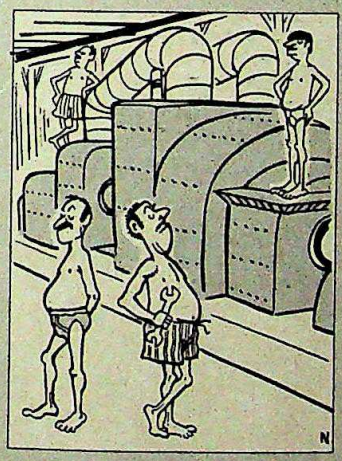
The booze bash began when bootlegger Anthony was arrested by excise men and led them into the forest where he had stored 12 drums of arrack. Before the cops could say "Amar, Akbar..." three wild elephants smashed their way onto centre stage, in time to witness several pairs of heels and 12 lovely brimming drums. They polished off the entire consignment, soon found that the jungle was too restricted a picnic spot, and danced towards the main road, where they got in the way of several bemused trucks and truck-drivers. The jam-session went on until dusk came softly down on the landscape but when the excise party returned with reinforcements the elephants had vanished into the jungles, thoughtfully leaving behind one arrack drum as proof against Anthony.



BRIEF PROTEST

■ India is the land of protests and they come in all shapes and sizes, from the massive demonstrations orchestrated by Datta Samant to the lone hunger-striker squatting outside his office.

Last fortnight, the Tantrik Kamgar Union of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board asked its members at the Koradi thermal power station at Nagpur to do something which will surely rank as one of the more unusual protests: not to wear any clothes—or rather, to wear only briefs and banians when they came on June 1 to collect their pay-packets. The reason for the undress protest is that the workers' demand for better uniforms was not being conceded by the management for a long time and the workers decided to take most of their clothes off to press their point that they needed stronger and slicker uniforms to function better.



The May 1 protest was not just symbolic: a thermal power station is not the healthiest of environments and the union warned of dire physical consequences if the workers strolled around semi-naked in an atmosphere choked with fumes. Thus the union was striking on both the aesthetic and physical fronts, a double-barrelled protest if ever there was one.

MANGO FOOL

■ It was an innocent-looking crate, standing quietly in a corner of the luggage van of the Madurai-bound Pandian Express. However, the officers and men of the Railway Protection Force were convinced it was packed with bombs. Slowly, ever so slowly, the crate was lifted out and drenched with water.

Not entirely persuaded that the *machine infernale* had been rendered harmless, the police took the crate to an open field nearby and carefully pried open the top. Inside were rows of smooth round objects, yellow and red in colour, nestling in straw. The uninitiated would have immediately fallen upon them and stuffed them into their mouths, but the police had other ideas. Positive that they were cleverly comouflaged hand grenades, they poured more water on them.

Dozens of gallons later one police officer plucked up the courage to pick up a piece. He peeled it, tasted it, and —yummi—liked it. And the entire khaki-clad horde fell upon the ripe Alphonso mangoes like so many starved souls and gorged to their heart's content.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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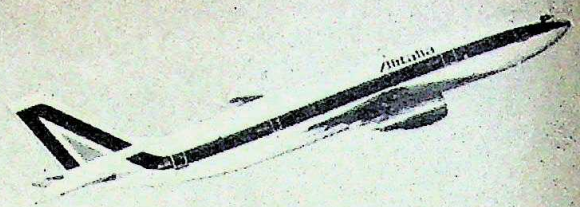

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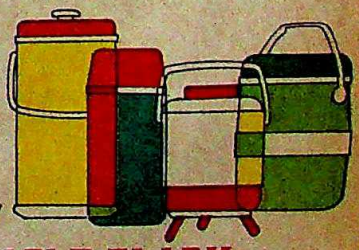

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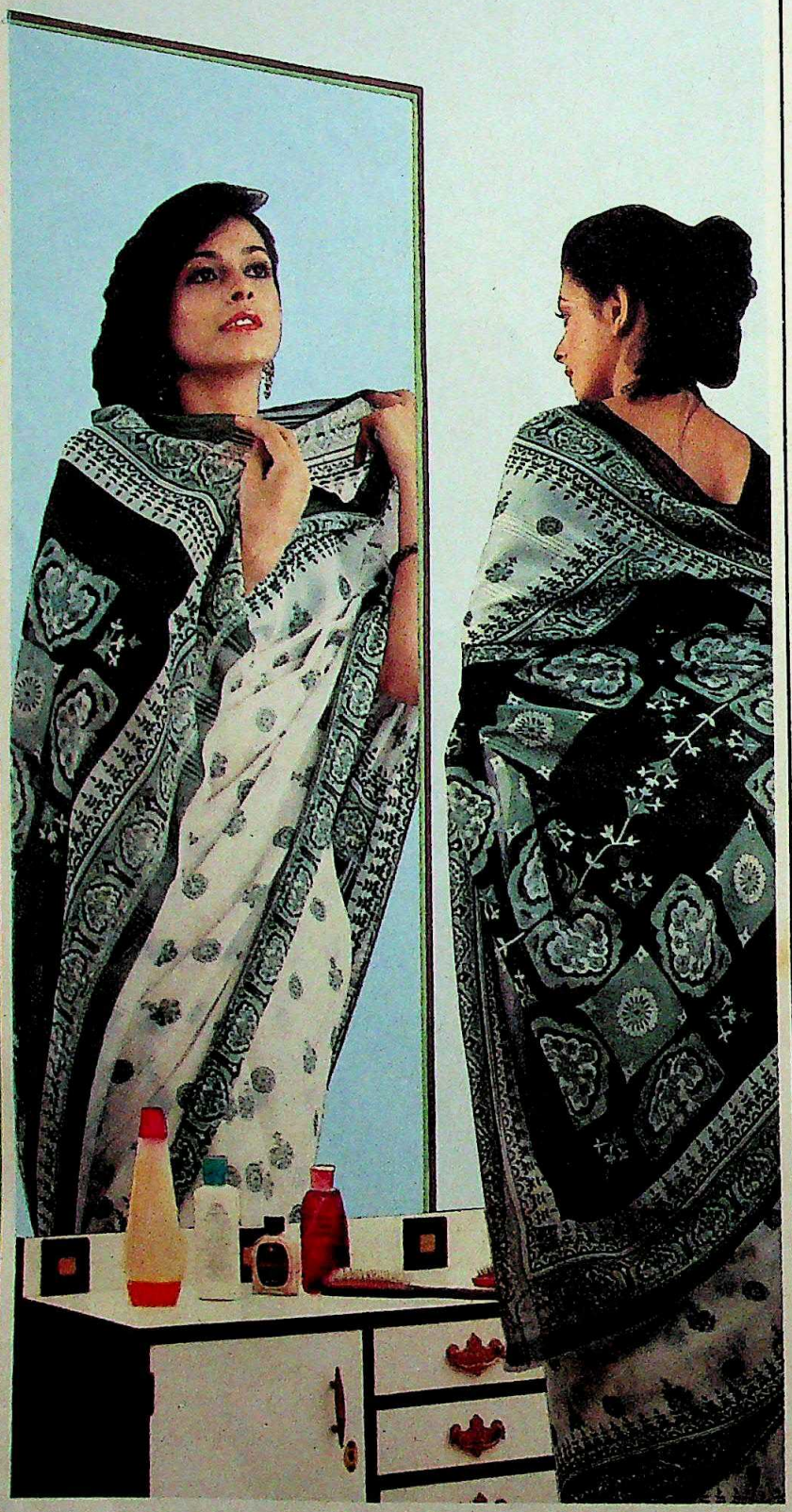

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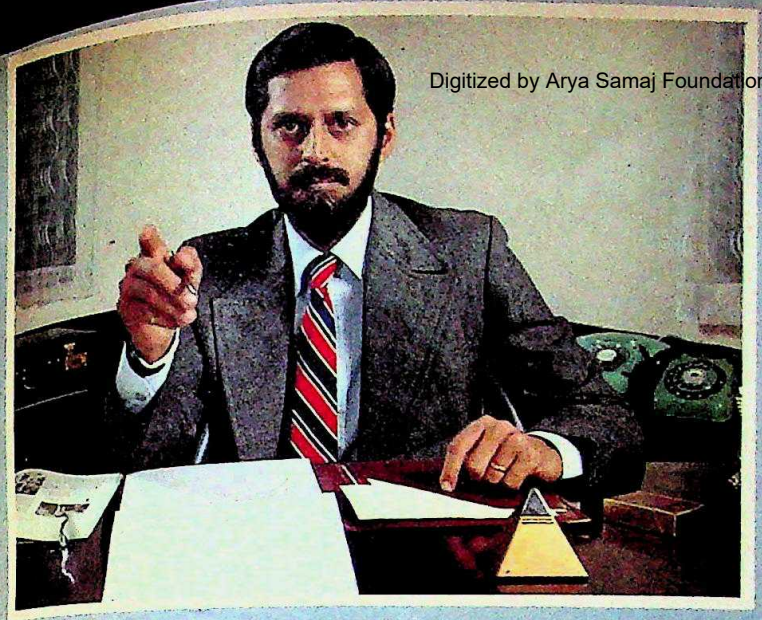

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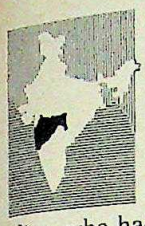
MAHARASHTRA

The Succession Stakes



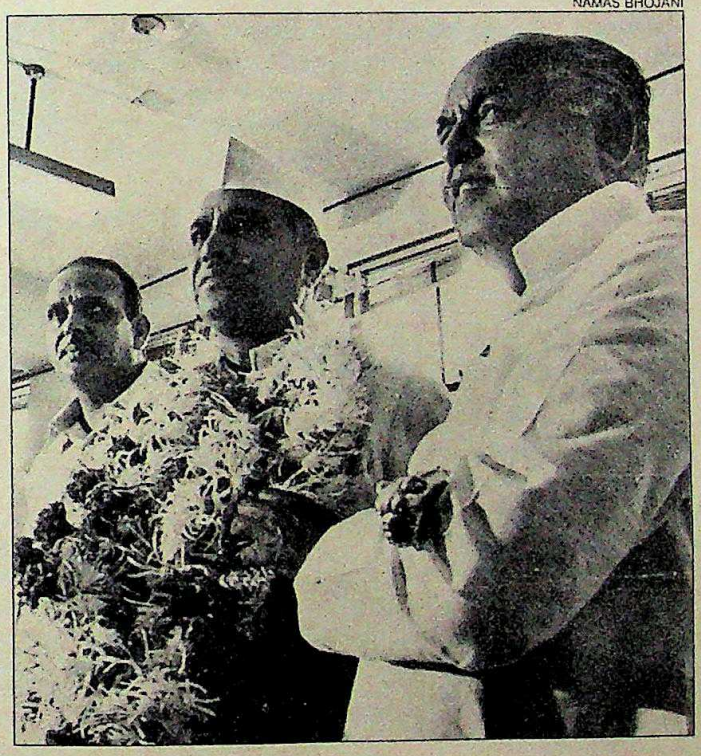
IT WAS late on the night of June 3 when two journalists accompanied by a bureaucrat friend called at "Meghdoot", the house of Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar, who had been sworn in as the chief minister of Maharashtra a few hours ago. Nilangekar, said members of his personal staff, was not home; he had gone to the "chief minister's house" and would be back after two hours. Nilangekar's staff members did not even realise this gaffe till the bureaucrat reminded them that this was now the chief minister's house and not "Varsha", where Nilangekar had gone to call on Vasantrao Patil.

But the confusion in Nilangekar's staff members can be pardoned; though out of office, Patil was still seen as the man in the driving seat. After the new ministry, virtually unchanged, was sworn in, at least a dozen ministers went up and touched Patil's feet; a lady minister even burst into tears. The crowd of callers at Varsha hardly abated as long as Patil was there; the two vast air-conditioned sitting-rooms in the bungalow were always full of favour-seekers. It is rare in Congress politics that a deposed chief minister continues to hog the limelight but clearly "Dada", the last of the charismatic Congress (I) chief ministers, was an exception.

Patil's continued lustre was mainly because he was widely seen to have outsmarted the party high command on the chess-board of politics. In a party where chief ministers are casually changed one day after they have taken the oath of office—remember Arjun Singh?—opinion makers were unanimous that Patil had managed to emerge the victor even though he had lost the battle.

He had questioned the propriety of Rajiv Gandhi being both prime minister and president of the Congress(I); when beckoned to Delhi, seemingly to be reprimanded, he had gone away in a huff when asked to wait for a day to see Rajiv; back in Bombay, he had let it be known that he would rather quit than accept Prabha Rao, the high command's nominee, as the new Pradesh Congress (I) Committee chief; he had steadfastly held to his decision even as four high command observers camped in Bombay, seemingly to persuade him to stay; he had even spurned the prime minister's appeal to change his decision and, as indicated, had announced his resignation within a few hours of Rajiv's departure from Bombay on June 1.

NAMAS BHOJANI



V.P. Singh, Nilangekar and Patil at the CLP(I) meeting: smooth transition

That was not all. He had ensured that one of his three nominees succeeded him—the same Nilangekar to whom the high command had denied a ticket for the assembly elections three months ago. What is more, because Nilangekar is a true-blood Maratha (belonging to the shahanno kuli, the 96 original Maratha families), he had ensured that power had stayed with his traditionally ruling caste. And, finally, he had effectively destroyed the chances of his arch-rival, Sharad Pawar, entering the party as its chief in Maharashtra—as political circles had been speculating. Said Madhav Gadkari, editor of the Marathi daily, *Loksatta*: "Three months ago, Pawar fought the elections on the issue of the *asmita* (self-respect) of Maharashtra being in danger because of growing interference from Delhi but it is Dada who has actually upheld Maharashtra's *asmita*."

Officially, of course, there was no balance sheet being totalled as neither Patil nor the high command were willing to go on record with their version of the events. But power wielders in Delhi saw the situation in dramatically different terms. A member of the high command, who spoke to INDIA TODAY on being assured of anonymity, argued that all media speculation had been wide off the mark. The real reason for Patil's decision to quit was his failing health, he said. Patil, 68, is known to suffer from diabetes, sciatica and high blood pressure but the seriousness of Patil's diabetes is not widely known. Unable to curb his fondness for sweets, Patil has so enfeebled himself that his legs have begun to give way; he cannot walk for more than half an hour at a stretch without getting his legs massaged. "In our system, a chief minister is on the job all 24 hours and Dada was doing his best, but finally his failing health ate into his confidence," he said.

He maintained that there was no rancour between Patil and the high command, so the question of making things difficult for Patil, let alone asking him to go, did not arise. "We have supported him fully all these years. We think Dada is a competent leader, a warm human being and a man of his word. We don't hold his so-called statements against the prime minister against him; Dada has let fly like this so often in the past but we know he does not mean what he says."

The high command source said the selection of Nilangekar was in keeping with the new system of choosing the consensus candidate. "In Maharashtra the consensus was in favour of having a Maratha." Summing up the political developments in the state, he said: "We did not expect the changes in Maharashtra to create more than a ripple and they did not." There is no doubt that Patil's health problems are major, or that Patil,

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who was Rajiv's nominee, had been constantly supported by Rajiv and his men, but there were few takers apart from Sharad Pawar either among the AICC(I) observers or among Patil's men or his detractors within and without the party for the high command members' facile explanation for Patil's resignation.

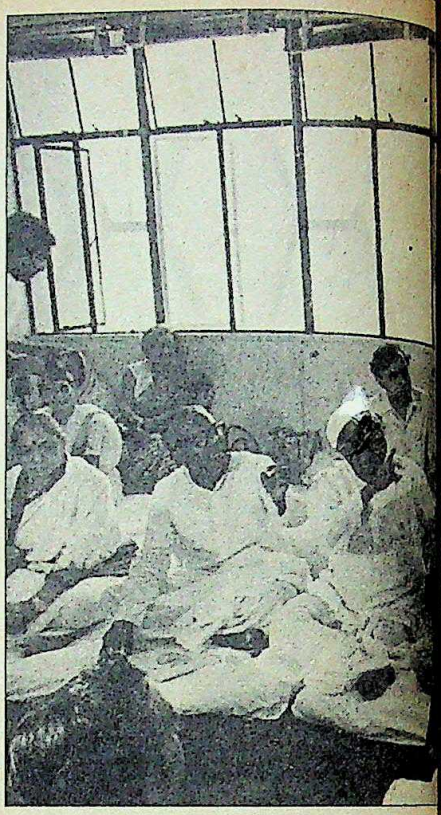
The handful of members who comprise the high command (by common consensus, they are: Rajiv Gandhi, Arun Singh, Arun Nehru and M.L. Fotedar), might claim that there has been no change in the warm vibes they have always had with Patil but there was no dearth of allegations and recriminations in the lower echelons. Of the four AICC(I) observers—Finance Minister V.P. Singh, former Union minister and Rajya Sabha MP P.Shiv Shankar, Party Treasurer Sitaram Kesari and AICC(I) General Secretary in-charge of Maharashtra, G.K. Moopanar—who spent five days in Bombay overseeing the change of guard, three spoke to INDIA TODAY on the circumstances leading to Patil's resignation and Nilangekar's accession. Their main contentions were:

► Patil would brook no opposition within the party; he wanted only his men to be selected for party and government posts and legislative nominations. "This was unacceptable as the high command has to think of all the factions."

► Patil had proved inexplicably stubborn on the question of Rao's appointment. He had earlier agreed to take Rao in the cabinet but now he wouldn't accept her as the PCC(I) chief. "A chief minister is so much more powerful than the PCC (I) chief. Couldn't a shrewd politician like Dada have learned to live with a PCC(I) chief who happened to be not on the same wavelength with him?"

► Patil had shown no inclination to meet the high command half-way. He had made no attempt to talk to Rajiv while the two had travelled together. Finally, Rajiv had to send for Patil and request him, in vain, to stay on.

The observers would not categorically say so but there was little doubt that the appointment of Rao, a Maratha from Vidarbha, who has long been at odds with Patil, was a calculated rebuff to Patil. And the high command knew that her ap-



SHIVAJIRAO PATIL-NILANGEKAR

'I am here for the full term'

IT WAS fortuitous for Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar that he had not vacated "Meghdoot", his ministerial bungalow on Bombay's Malabar Hill, when he ceased being a minister nearly three months ago. It would have been difficult for Nilangekar's staff to cope with the rush to their leader's house after he was somewhat unexpectedly made the chief minister on June 3. In "Meghdoot" Nilangekar had at least an office where entry could be regulated, though the small cubby hole with a modest desk, files overflowing from cupboards on to the floor and a spittoon for the pan-chewing chief minister could hardly be termed as being luxurious.

Four days after being sworn in, Nilangekar had yet to attend to work at his Mantralaya office, but he was busy enough at home meeting top officials in the administration and the police. Breaking off from the rush of callers, the new chief minister spoke to Assistant Editor AJAY KUMAR *in an hour-long interview. Excerpts:*

Q. *You are neither an* MLA *nor an* MLC; *Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde and Mr Sudhakarrao Naik were rated as having better chances than you to become the chief minister. Do you think your being a Maratha made all the difference?*

A. I don't think my being a Maratha made any difference at all. I have been an MLA for the last 23 years and I was one of the three contenders this time. I was chosen because that was the consensus that the AICC(I) observers arrived at after meeting the MLA's. I am not merely the nominee of the high command. And as for not being a member of either house, nor was Dada when he was made the chief minister.

Nilangekar: close to all

HEMANT PITHWA

Q. *Do you know if any* MLA*'s indicated a preference for you?*

A. I am not aware if any, or how many MLA's preferred me but I certainly hope many of them did.

Q. *You are supposed to be Vasantdada's man and this impression has been reinforced by the fact that you more or less retained his entire ministry. Is this correct?*

A. I am close to all, not just to Dada. The decisions on the ministry are mine, not Dada's. I consulted some of the leaders but did not act on anybody's instructions. If the names are the same that is only a coincidence. In any case, even in the old ministry everybody was not a follower of Dada.

Q. *The appointment of Prabha Rao as the* PCC(I) *chief was oneof the reasons for Vasantdada's resignation. Do you foresee any problems with her and did you consult her before you formed your ministry?*

A. I would not like to comment on Dada's reasons for leaving but I foresee

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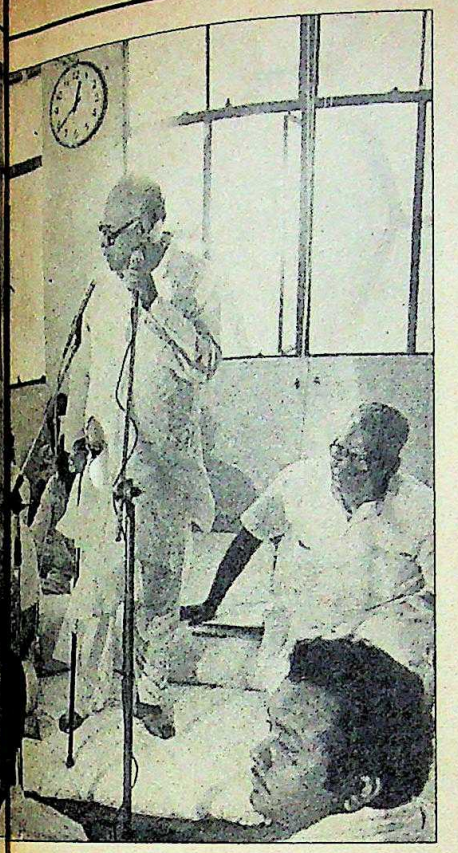

Vasantdada at the CLP(I) meeting to elect his successor: defiant

pointment would trigger a strong reaction from Patil; the latter was still in Delhi when the four party observers caught a flight to Bombay on the morning of May 29. Confirming that serious differences had arisen between Patil and the high command, a senior AICC(I) functionary said Patil had pushed his luck too far. He had managed to pressurise the high command into accepting only his nominees for the assembly elections by raising the bogey of joining hands with Pawar and then had begun to think that he was indispensable. "Even after his statements against the prime minister and the computer boys he never thought that conditions would be created where he would have no option but to quit."

Yet another issue on which Patil had reportedly created unhappiness was his purported role in helping the Shiv Sena win the Bombay municipal polls in April. Murli Deora, president of the Bombay Regional Congress(I) Committee whose resignation was turned down by the high command in another rebuff to Patil, is known to feel that just because he did not accept Patil's list of 171 candidates in toto, Patil created a climate in favour of the Shiv Sena by suggesting that there was a move to make Bombay into a Union territory (which the Shiv Sena successfully made into an emotional anti-Maharashtrians issue) and by implying that there were "anfisocials" in the Congress (I) list.

Patil's, too, men had their own set of complaints against the high command. They grant that Rajiv was primarily responsible for Patil ascending the chair but they argue that of late Patil had begun to get the feeling that the humiliation he had had to suffer under Mrs Gandhi was being repeated. As evidence they cite:

► Four of the five Congress (I) nominees for the governor's quota to the legislative council were known to be anti-Patil men. Of the four, Patil's antipathy to N.K. Tirpude, once deputy chief minister under Patil, is well known.

► The high command cut out the name of Dr W.R. Sherekar from the list of ministers with the result that there was no

no problems with her. And yes, I did consult her before I formed the ministry.

Q. *Wasn't it rather unusual that you did not go to Delhi before you formed your ministry?*

A. The convention till now has been for the chief minister to get the list cleared by Delhi but in my case the high command merely gave me some guidelines. The final list was not cleared by it. This is a healthy development.

Q. *One of the three ministers you dropped is Vilasrao Deshmukh, who is said to be your rival from Latur district. Wouldn't you have shown political magnanimity by retaining him?*

A. In forming my ministry I had to provide representation to all castes, communities and regions. In a democratic set up there can be differences of opinion but that cannot be the basis for decisions like forming a ministry. Vilasrao is a much junior person to me, how can he be my rival?

Q. *You are the fourth Congress (I) chief minister in five years. What makes you think you will not go the way of Antulay, Bhosale and Patil?*

A. I am confident that my government will be stable and the party will stick together because the circumstances have changed and most of the MLA's are new. I don't think you can draw a link with what happened in the last term.

Q. *Do you think Patil's resignation was designed to make it difficult for Sharad Pawar to join the Congress (I) and that you are only a stopgap chief minister till Pawar takes over?*

A. I don't think all this talk about Pawar coming into the Congress (I) had anything to do with Dada's resignation. But I am not a stopgap chief minister. I am here for the full term unless the high command thinks otherwise.

Q. *Family members of earlier chief ministers prospered. Do you see the need for extra vigilance on this count?*

A. I am not aware of what happened with other chief ministers but I am confident nothing of this sort will happen with my family.

Q. *Constant political interference has affected the morale of the state bureaucracy. How do you propose to restore their confidence?*

A. I will ensure there is no undue interference. In our democratic set-up some politicians may try to interfere but the bureaucrats should use their discretion.

Q. *Regions like Marathwada, Vidarbha and Konkan feel neglected. Do you intend to take a personal interest in correcting the imbalances?*

A. That there are regional imbalances cannot be denied. We have decided to wipe out this by the end of the eighth plan. Rs 1,500 crore has been sanctioned for this purpose.

Q. *Some pronouncements by Vasantdada and the threat by Bal Thackeray of restricting entry into Bombay has made non-Maharashtrians worried. What is the problem and what is your solution?*

A. Constitutionally we cannot restrict entry into Bombay, so non-Maharashtrians need have no fear. Yet, it is undeniable that there is a considerable influx and a lot of burden on the existing amenities of the city. The main problem is of finance so we have requested the Centre for funds over and above the plan allocations.

Q. *Bal Thackeray has threatened to launch an agitation over the non-inclusion of a Marathi-speaking minister from Bombay. What is the problem with taking W.R. Sherekar or any other Marathi-speaking MLA from Bombay into the ministry?*

A. Sherekar's name was not considered this time but I only need some time to think before I take some Marathi-speaking MLA. I will definitely take one when I expand my ministry. As for Thackeray, how can I say anything on what he proposes to do.

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Marathi-speaking minister from among the Bombay MLA's. Patil had to suffer great embarrassment because he had included Sherekar in the list he had released. In spite of repeated requests, the high command did not clear him. (But according to one of the observers, he had personally got Sherekar's name cleared from Rajiv but Patil had stalled, saying that he first wanted the MLC's issue to be decided in his favour.)

Patil, say his men, got the feeling that he was going to be asked to leave and the last straw came when he was asked to wait for a day to see the prime minister. "Dada felt that these tomorrows never came," revealed one minister. "He told me around 3 p.m. on May 29 that he had decided to quit but that he would wait for the prime minister to go back from Bombay on June 1 before announcing it because he did not want to create an 'unhealthy atmosphere' before his visit. When we asked why, he said: '*Majha manna cha nirnay ahey* (It's my decision)."

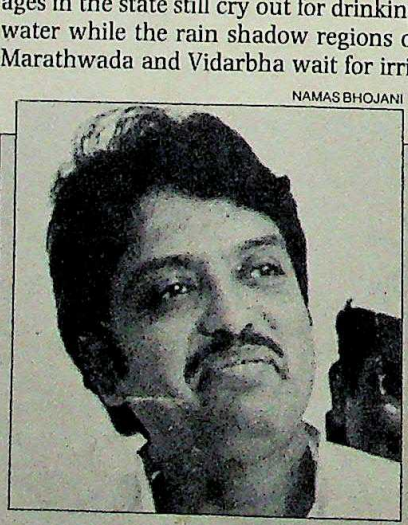
Patil's followers also say that he had been deeply pained by the campaign against him by his wife, Shalinitai, and that he was genuinely concerned that if Pawar was admitted into the Congress(I) his days as the chief minister were numbered. Prakash Patil, whose selection as the Congress(I) candidate from Patil's home constituency of Sangli in preference to Shalinitai is the accepted cause for the intra-family rift (Prakash is Patil's only son from his first wife), feigned ignorance about why his father quit office but did accept that his stepmother's activities had upset his father. Asked if Patil was similarly upset with the high command, Prakash said: "Dada has a deep sense of hurt," but refused to elaborate.

Regardless of the controversies surrounding Patil's exit, both his detractors and his admirers are agreed that Patil has taken his last curtain call. He may still remain the helmsman for Maharashtra's powerful sugar industry, and as the last of the party's chief ministers with a mass following, his blessings would still count in the state. But the man who became chief minister four times after having renounced politics eight years ago (he said then that he was retiring because he had turned 60 but few believed him) is now a fading star. The focus had shifted from the illiterate peasant from Sangli to the 54-year-old former lawyer from Latur who was the new chief minister.

There was some doubt if Nilangekar had ever been Patil's candidate. One of the four observers maintained that Patil had never suggested Nilangekar's candidature because he did not want another Maratha to become the chief minister and erode his pre-eminent position in that powerful community. Patil's first choice was Sudhakarrao Naik, nephew of the late V.P. Naik and minister in Patil's ministry, and the only other candidate he mentioned was Sushil Kumar Shinde, finance minister in the Patil ministry. Naik was unacceptable as he was considered too close to Patil and Shinde was ruled out because he is a Harijan. "It was we," said this observer, "who said why shouldn't we consider a Maratha? Then Nilangekar's name came up but still Dada stalled, saying Nilangekar was neither an MLA nor an MLC. But we said, since when has that mattered in the Congress (I)?" However, virtually everybody else said that Nilangekar was also in Patil's list. Naik said: "We told the Central observers that if any of the three were chosen, we would give him unflinching support."

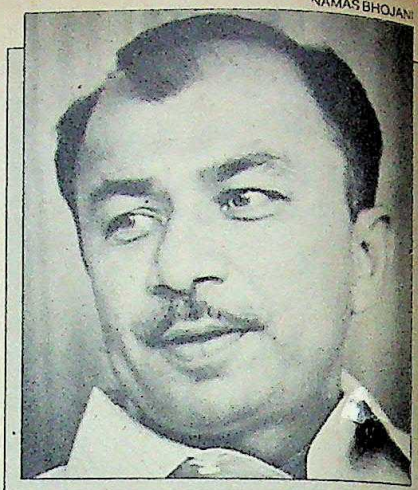
The more important question was whether Nilangekar would be able to manage the affairs of the nation's richest state. Maharashtra has been singularly unfortunate in its leadership since the Congress(I) swept to power in 1980. First Antulay wrecked the system, then Babasaheb Bhosale turned it into a cruel joke and finally Patil just let it atrophy. The upshot is there for all to see: Bombay's problems are unattended and the Shiv Sena's solutions threaten the city's cosmopolitan character; some 20,000 villages in the state still cry out for drinking water while the rain shadow regions of Marathwada and Vidarbha wait for irrigation facilities and disgruntled farmers increasingly look to Shetkari Sangathana's Sharad Joshi as their spokesman.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Vilasrao Deshmukh, Nilangekar's intra-party adversary from Latur district, was dropped from the new ministry.

NAMAS BHOJANI



"I am young, I can wait. I have no regrets about Nilangekar becoming the chief minister."

SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE

Politically, too, Nilangekar's task is daunting. The Congress (I) has a bare 17-member majority in the 288-member House. The Opposition is led by the formidable Sharadchandra Govindrao Pawar, currently in some trouble with his partners in the 104-member Progressive Democratic Front but with Patil out, unquestionably the most charismatic politician in Maharashtra. Tired of the turnover of Congress (I) chief ministers (four since 1980), there is a perceptible yearning among the citizenry to see the young (44) and capable Pawar as the chief minister. But this is unlikely to happen, even if, as is virtually certain, he enters the Congress(I). Pawar himself is reported to be keen that he be kept away from power so that people do not see him as a defector. Besides, the Congress (I) leadership is aware of the tremors his entry will send through party ranks. Yet, it is also undeniable that no Congress(I) leader in Maharashtra is seen as more capable or more popular than Pawar.

Clearly, the challenge before Nilangekar is stupendous and few believe that he will be able to overcome it. Politically, his record is uninspiring. He had been winning continuously from Nilanga since 1962 yet, even in Marathwada's seven districts, his pre-eminence does not extend beyond his home district of Latur, where too he is challenged by Shivraj Patil.

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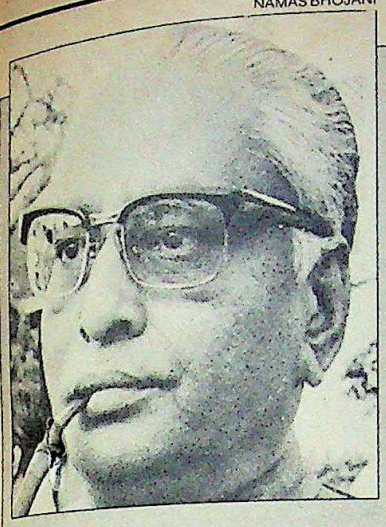

"We told the central observers that if any of the three were chosen, we would give him support."

SUDHAKARRAO NAIK

Worse, he is said to lack political vision, letting himself be ensnared in petty district-level politics. Said Padamsinh Patil, Congress (S) state chief who also hails from Marathwada: "I never thought he was chief minister material."

His image is better as an administrator. Nilangekar first became a minister in 1974 and has been a cabinet minister since 1978, handling important portfolios like irrigation. Bureaucrats say that though not an engineer he has complete mastery over the Irrigation Ministry. Said one official in Bombay's Mantralaya: "He does not try to bulldoze us like Antulay. If he wants a political favour done, he will see it is done within the rules. And he knows which bureaucrats can be bent and who has to be handled with care."

The general feeling, however, is that his record has little to recommend him. Said Govindrao Talwalkar, editor of the *Maharashtra Times*: "Nilangekar is a faceless leader who is acceptable to both Dada and the high command because they feel he will be amenable to their wishes. I do not think he has the guts to come out of the shadow of Dada." Asked if Nilangekar was the most capable man to lead the party, Shinde said "that is a very difficult question to answer."

Others credit him with greater political shrewdness. Prabhakar Kunte, a former minister and a maverick Congress(I) man who openly favours the entry of Pawar, says Nilangekar, of whom he is no great admirer, will soon show that he is nobody's man. Kunte points out that Nilangekar showed political opportunism when he left S.B. Chavan's fold and switched allegiance to V.P. Naik, then the chief minister. Nilangekar has already shown the first signs of moving away from Patil's shadow. Addressing his first press conference in Delhi, he made it clear that he did not share Patil's views on curbing entry into Bombay.

There is some doubt, however, if Nilangekar will endeavour to carry even those sections of the party opposed to him. He would have shown great political magnanimity had he retained his old intra-party adversary from Latur, Vilasrao Deshmukh, 40, in the ministry but he predictably dropped him. Chavan, who had similarly dropped Nilangekar in 1975, and who is known to be Deshmukh's patron at the Centre, even issued a statement assuring support for Nilangekar but that was not good enough.

Congressmen have traditionally been their own worst enemies and talk had already started that the so-called loyalists (elements like Ramrao Adik, Baliram Hiray and Baburao Kale) had started attempts to topple Nilangekar. Their task will be very difficult: the anti-defection bill rules out their leaving the party; the party high command does not set much store by loyalists ("Does being a loyalist mean you can do anything ? Does loyalty have a price?" asked the high command member) and it vows to extend full support to Nilangekar. "Nilangekar is not a stopgap chief minister," asserted the high command member. But Shinde summed up the average Congress(I) man's attitude: "If Nilangekar acts properly, we will continue to support him."

HEMANT PITHWA

There was little doubt that the appointment of Prabha Rao, who has long been at odds with Patil, was a calculated rebuff.

Yet, Shinde is no rebel in the making. As he philosophised: "I have no regrets about Nilangekar becoming the chief minister;I am grateful that the name of a Harijan even figured among the contenders. I am young, I can wait."

For the Congress (I), trouble could come from another quarter: the feeling is growing among the party that the high command is a little too willing to have a Maratha in charge, even though Marathas comprise only 24 per cent of the state's population. Even Shinde is reported to feel that the only reason why Nilangekar pipped him is because he is a Maratha. And as one Bombay MP pointed out: "Marathas used to complain that they get too few tickets but this time they got the maximum number and still we got such a thin majority."

In its handling of Maharashtra, the high command was also seen as incompetent and inconsistent. As Talwalkar argued: "First it got taken in by Dada's threat to join hands with Pawar and gave Dada a free hand for the assembly elections, not realising that its fears of a Dada-Pawar Maratha hegemony were unfounded. Then it tried to ease Dada out but Dada proved smarter. The high command has emerged with little credit." A senior party functionary confirmed that Patil had hinted that he would join hands with Pawar if he wasn't given a free hand for the assembly tickets and the threat had worked. If true, it was a poor reflection on the political acumen of the members of the high command.

Nilangekar's mettle, and that of his political masters, will soon be tested. One issue that could confront them sooner than they might expect is the growing feeling of neglect among Maharashtrians in Bombay. Even Nilangekar has omitted to take a Marathi-speaking minister from Bombay. Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena leader and no longer a paper tiger with the Bombay Municipal Corporation in his control, has threatened to launch an agitation on the issue. Elsewhere, feelings are being whipped up on the reported diversion of Rs 2 crore meant for the Mankhurd-Belapur rail link. Reflecting the feeling among middle class Maharashtrians, Gadkari thundered: "If this is the meaning of Bombay's cosmopolitanism, such cosmopolitanism can go to hell." Nilangekar, whose stature is still inadequate to the tasks ahead, could well have a stormy start.

—AJAY KUMAR in Bombay

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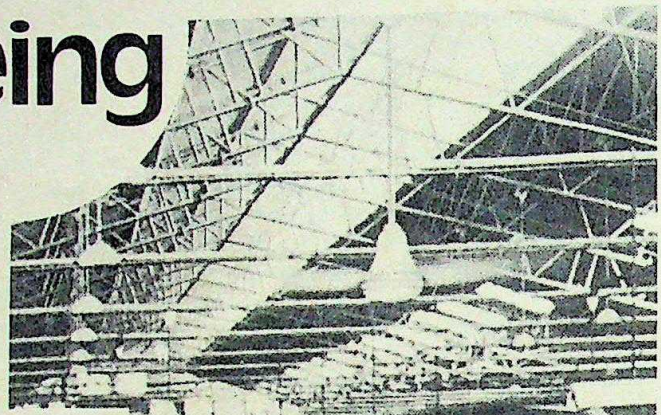
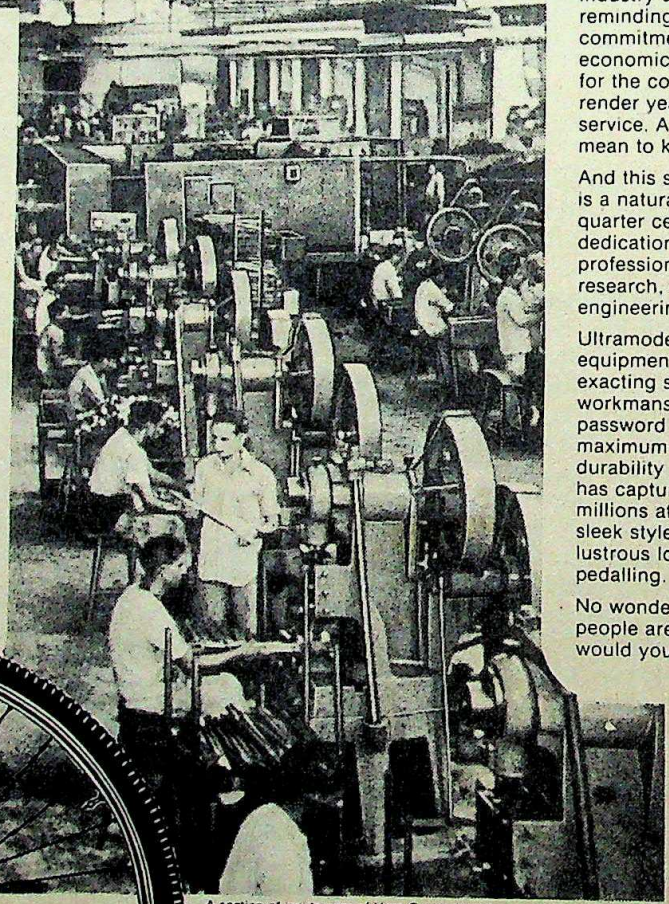
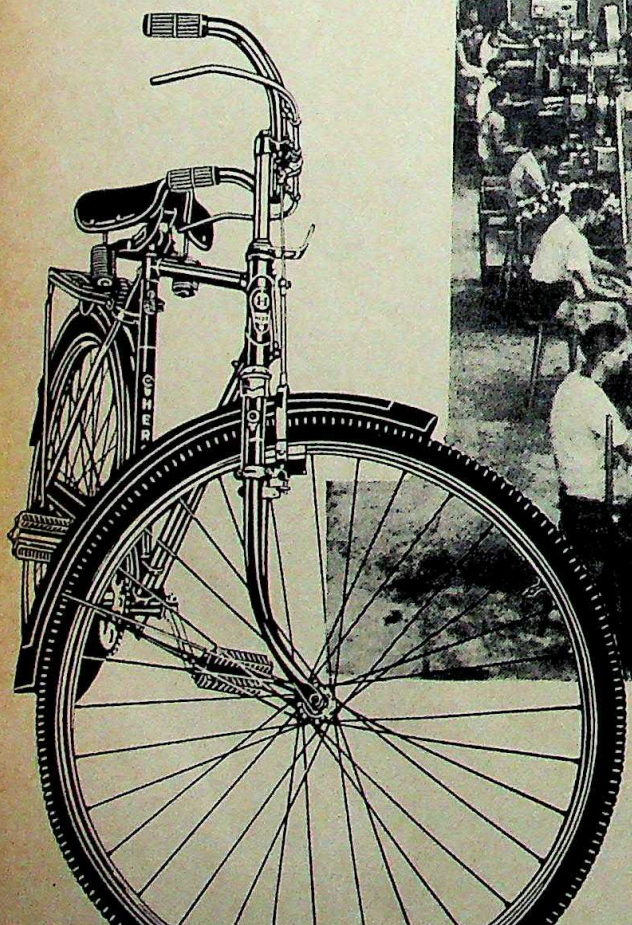
the responsibility of being No.





A section of inside view of Hero Cycles factory



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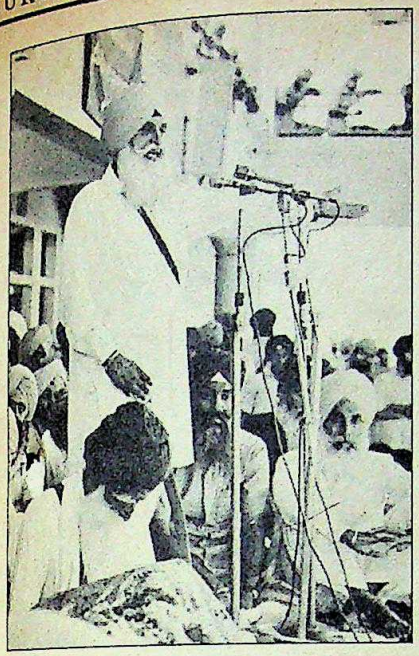

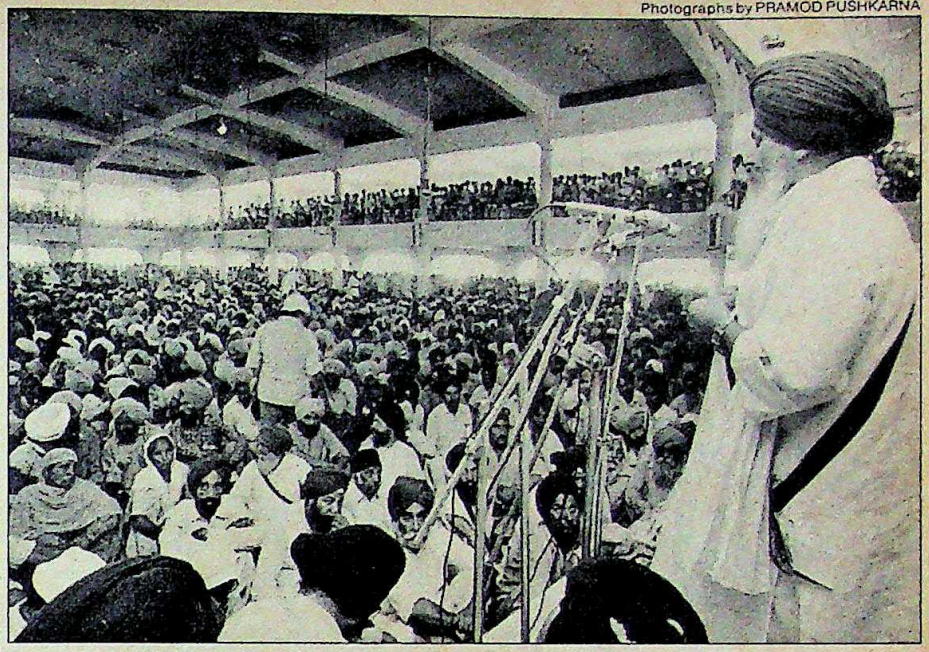

Talwandi (left) and Longowal addressing "ghallughara" meetings in the Golden Temple

PUNJAB

Mixed Developments

EVEN as the farmers of Punjab harvested a record wheat crop of nearly 10 million tonnes and prepared for a record paddy season, the mood elsewhere in the state over the last fortnight was far from being festive. As the authorities readied to meet the Akali Dal call to Sikhs to observe the anniversary of Operation Bluestar as 'ghallughara' (genocide) week, security deployment in the state was reminiscent of the Bluestar days last June. Over 200 companies of the Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Punjab Armed Police, besides the regular police force were requisitioned for patrol duty. The army was on half-an-hour's notice and sensitive villages remained virtually under siege. "We are taking no chances," Governor Arjun Singh said. Over 100 alleged terrorists were nabbed, and the police claimed to have solved at least 12 recent cases of killing.

Although Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal's assurances that the protest observance would be peaceful were vindicated communal violence broke out in the bustling cities of Ludhiana, Khanna and Hoshiarpur (*see box*). Places of worship in many areas were turned into arsenals and shelters for criminals and killers. Police raids unearthed swords, trishuls and acid bombs. Drums of diesel and petrol, ostensibly in readiness to set fire to shops and houses were recovered.

For the panic-stricken people, the situation was further complicated by shrieking headlines in most local newspapers. Despite appeals by the governor, rumours were flashed across front pages: *Hind Samachar* and *Punjab Kesari* headlined a report from Sultanpur Lodhi saying that several girls had become unconscious after drinking water from a school handpump "poisoned" by terrorists. Though the police denied the story within two hours, the newspapers did not bother to make amends.

In the atmosphere of panic and tension, the Akalis were able to assert and control their over-zealous followers. Over a dozen meetings addressed by Longowal and other Akali leaders passed off peacefully, as did the prayer meetings in all gurudwaras. "By being peaceful we have given a lie to the Government propaganda that we indulge in violence. The panic was created by the Government to malign us," Longowal said.

Equally satisfied was Governor Arjun Singh since his strategy—to keep the force on a warlike vigil and initiate moves to mobilise people—was paying off. The Akalis boycotted his state-level amity committee meeting. "The next state- level meeting will surely have the Akalis in it," Singh said. And the Akalis have demanded more representation on it, showing their willingness to participate. Singh told INDIA TODAY that this game plan was to use the 'people for peace' movement to force the Akalis to come to the negotiating table.

Meanwhile the battle for power in the Akali Dal entered a decisive stage. Bhindranwale's father Baba Joginder Singh addressed a 10,000-strong audience at Manji Sahib in the Golden Temple complex, urging them to unite and prepare to defend themselves and their faith. The dominant mood at the six-hour meeting was militant with tributes being paid to assassins Beant Singh and Satwant Singh and slogans raised against Longowal, Tohra and Badal. But lines within the Baba's faction were clearly drawn, with former Badal supporters at loggerheads with the AISSF element.

In contrast, the meeting of the Longowal faction at the same venue three days later adopted a moderate stand. With an attendance nearly three times that at the Baba's meeting, it successfully countered the threat of a group of AISSF activists who were beaten up and ousted. Ruling out any compromise with the Centre, the Akali Dal insisted all its demands should first be met and called for initiative to restore the confidence and dignity of the Sikhs.

Significantly, Longowal is emerging as the more popular leader of the party with Badal's ambivalent stand losing him many followers. Four of his former supporters, Atma Singh, P.S. Majitha,

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Mohinder Singh Sarupwali and Gurbachan Singh, now with Baba Joginder Singh, told INDIA TODAY that they were not prepared to accept Badal's stand that he would renounce politics rather than join the Baba.

Such hopeful signs that a moderate leadership is asserting itself in the Akali Dal and official vigilance has helped the protest week pass off relatively peacefully, however, are not enough. There is still a need for more concrete steps that could embolden the moderates to respond to the Centre's initiative.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

HOSHIARPUR

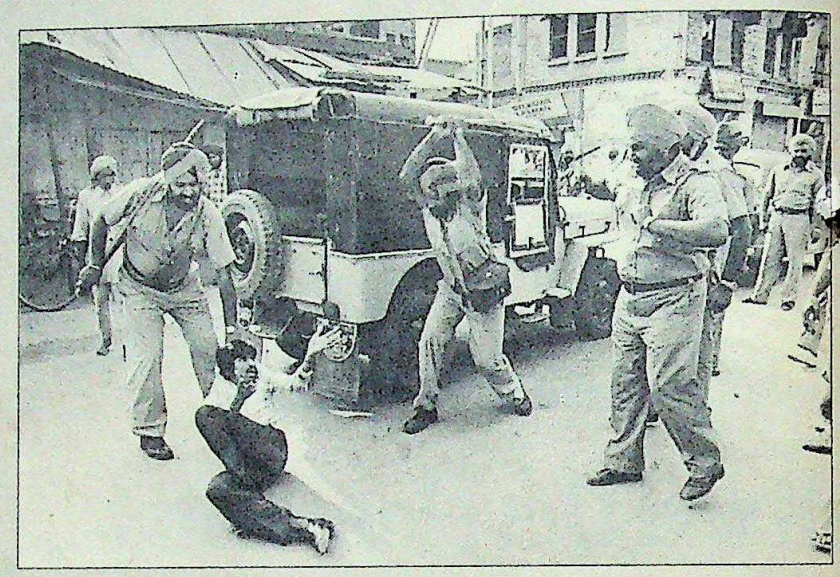
Danger Signs

HOSHIARPUR has never had much to recommend it from among the towns of Punjab. Now the dirty, backward district town has earned the kind of distinction it could well do without. Though the sparks have been flying for two years, the two main communities in the state have refused to let them ignite a large-scale communal confrontation—till Hoshiarpur took the lead, on May 10. The communal clashes which started that day after the popular Lok Dal leader Chaudhri Balbir Singh was shot by extremists, have continued for over a month taking three lives and creating the apprehension that the communal amity which withstood the strain of Operation Bluestar and the November 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the rest of the country, may be on the verge of cracking.

Ironically, Balbir Singh had more Sikh followers than Hindu, but militant Hindus of the Punjab Shiv Sena seized this opportunity to show their muscle. They took charge of the Chaudhri's body before even a post-mortem could be performed or a first information report registered. A Sikh who had come to mourn the popular Chaudhri, was stabbed to death, and about 50 Sikh shops burnt down.

What followed was open strife, and then curfew with intermittent clashes. Sikhs refused to open their shops until the culprits of the first day's violence were arrested. When that happened, the Hindu shopkeepers pulled down their shutters saying they would not resume business unless the arrested persons were released. Sikhs who opened their shops faced the wrath of the Hindu activists and vice versa.

After Punjab Shiv Sena chief Jagdish Chand Tangri went on a hunger strike the authorities bought temporary peace by releasing Sunil Dutt Walia (who had been charged with murder) and all but 52 of the arrested Sena followers. But this failed to appease the Hindu activists, and a little later trouble erupted again, this time between the police and Hindu youth who tried to force open and loot Sikh shops. Policemen chasing the looters into the lanes near Shekhan mohalla were injured in stone throwing. What followed was a brutal demonstration of police reprisal: teargassing, lathi charge and firing. Scores of people were injured but at no point was any magistrate present; nor did Deputy Commissioner S.R. Bangar or Police Superintendent Chandrasekhar think it necessary to leave their offices. Both of them were transferred out a couple of days later, and Tangri was arrested under the National Security Act. A statewide bandh called by the Sena got a good response in towns such as Khanna, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Mukeian, Batala and Ludhiana.



Punjab police personnel beating up a suspect in Hoshiarpur

It had happened elsewhere in the past and this time too the Punjab police and the CRPF took opposing positions on different sides of the communal divide which has now riven the town. The Hindus blamed the Punjab police for unleashing brutal violence against them. "We have no faith in the Punjab police. It plays a communal game," charged advocate S.K. Sarwal, an adviser to the Shiv Sena. "The CRPF is totally communal; it brands every Sikh a terrorist," retorted Kulbir Singh, president of the Sikh Defence Federation. Predictably, the authorities deputed the CRPF to guard Hindu temples and Punjab police to protect the gurudwaras.

This time the CRPF and Punjab police had taken opposing stands, but some weeks ago they had openly clashed in Ferozepore. Roughing up of Punjab Roadways drivers by CRPF personnel have in the past caused flash bus strikes in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Chandigarh. After an outbreak of trouble it is not unusual for CRPF pickets on the highways to check only Sikh passengers in buses and Punjab police jawans to check only Hindus. "Is this secularism," wondered Balbirchand, an Amritsar schoolteacher.

Hoshiarpur is the latest and most serious example of communal trouble in Hindu majority towns in which the extremists have deliberately chosen to strike. Towns like Khanna and Dhariwal quietened down after minor clashes, but the continuing commotion in Hoshiarpur raises fears that with the help of vested interests, zealots of both communities and an inefficient administration, Punjab too can easily forget its legacy of Hindu-Sikh amity.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Hoshiarpur

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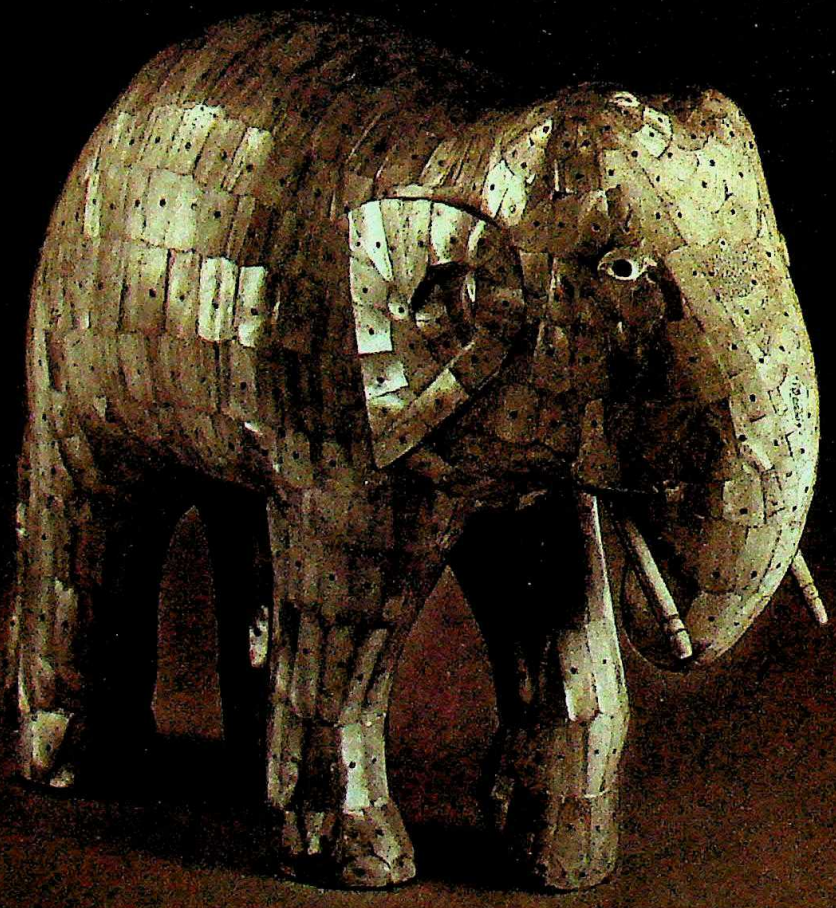

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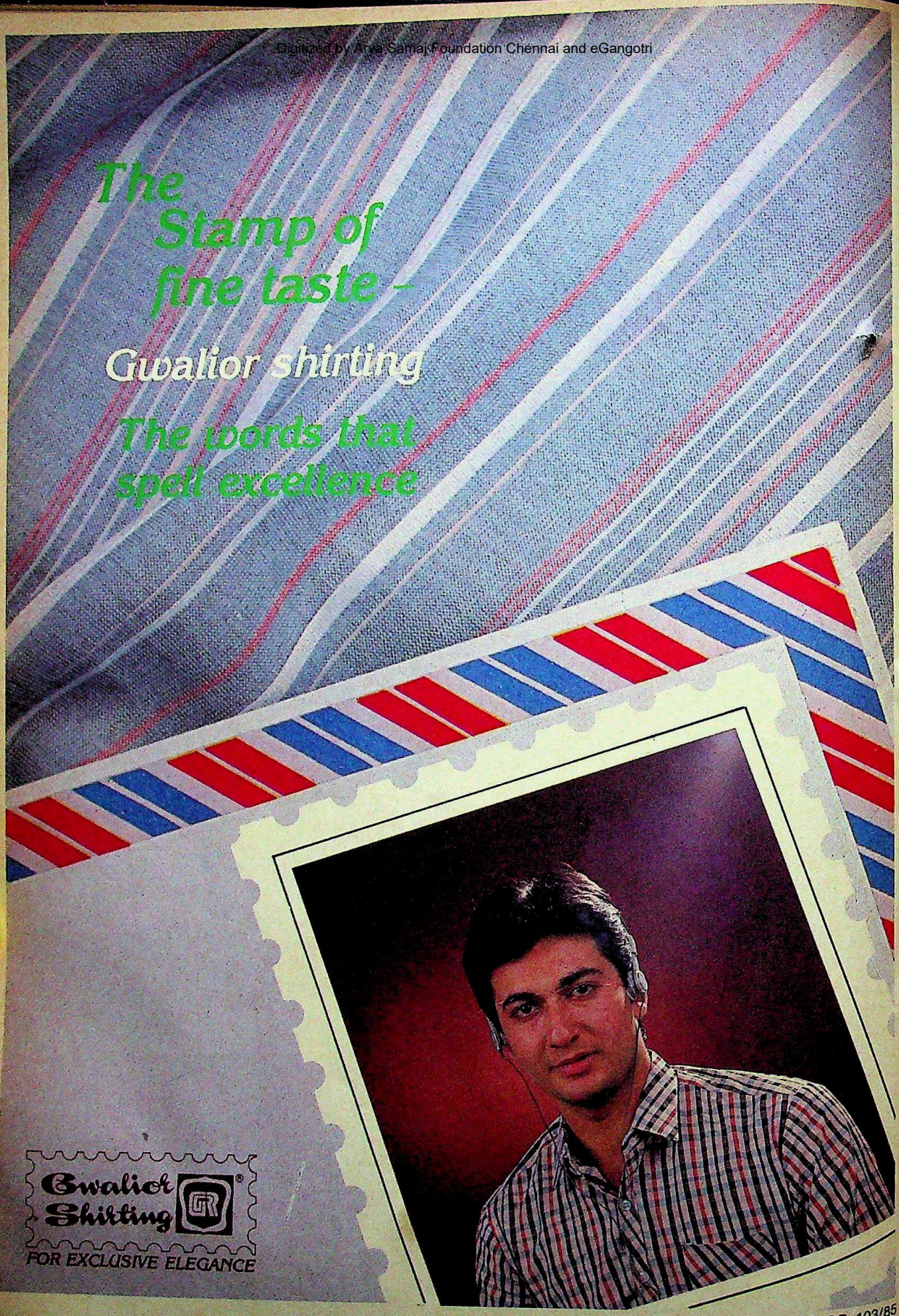

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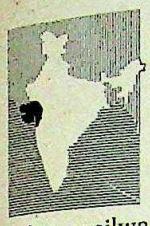
GUJARAT

Rising Toll

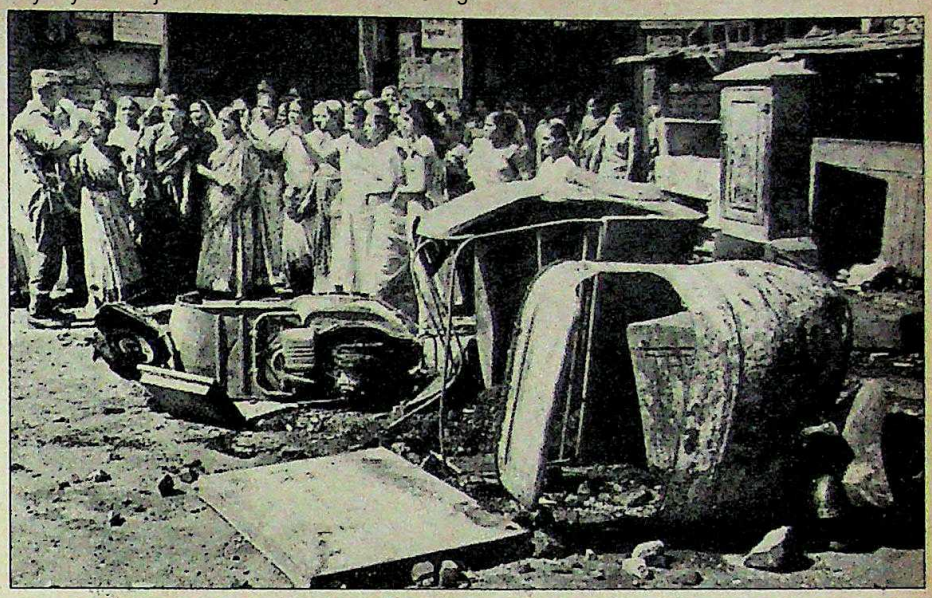


LAST WEEK, the madness started all over again. Lourdes Cardoz, manager of a hotel and Nicolas D'Souza, manager of a cinema theatre, went to the Kalupur railway station in Ahmedabad to buy train tickets. But they were destined never to undertake any journey again. While standing at the station, Cardoz and D'Souza were suddenly surrounded by a group of people and stabbed again and again till they died. It was senseless and terrifying but that is the way most stabbing victims have died in Gujarat's anti-reservation stir that started three-and-a-half months ago and then suddenly escalated again last week.

The anti-reservationists called for a bandh on June 7 and, as if on cue, Ahmedabad went up in flames—rioting, arson and looting became the order of the day leaving over 33 dead and 150 injured in two days. In the curfew-bound area of Daryapur in Ahmedabad, eight members of a family were roasted alive on the afternoon of June 9. A group of armed men locked the doors and set the house on fire. When the fire brigade men and army jawans arrived, they were heavily stoned. One by one the screams coming from within the locked doors stopped. Clearly the anti-reservation stir cloaked a much more malignant hatred of one community for another.

But the business community, which has borne a loss of Rs 300 crore because of numerous bandhs and the curfew, had had enough. So, in an unprecedented move last fortnight, the entire trade downed shutters and closed its establishments for five days in protest against the deteriorating law and order situation. The last time that the trading community called for such a total closure was in 1942 during the Quit India Movement.

All activity ground to a halt. Normal life was completely paralysed. The traders' bandh gave a fillip to the Gujarat bandh by the Navrachana Samiti and the Vali Mandal, the students' and parents' associations, respectively, spearheading the anti-reservation agitation. Women squatted on roads to prevent anyone from going to work, young boys stopped cyclists and punctured the tyres of automobiles. All at once Gujarat's anti-reservation stir turned into a people's movement. Sixty-five per cent of state government employees did not go to work, obeying a call for an indefinite strike by their associations demanding the abolition of the roster system which accelerates promotions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



Burnt vehicles in Ahmedabad: continuing strife

In despair, Home Minister Amarsinh Chaudhari announced double wages for those who reported for work. But few turned up. Professionals like doctors, lawyers and engineers also joined in the protest and closed their establishments. As the situation went out of control, scooterists were ordered on June 10 not to carry pillion riders because of numerous incidents of scooterists throwing bombs at passers-by.

Last week's rioting conclusively proved that the mobs had access to—and were freely using—private guns, something the police had long suspected. But their efforts in the past to unearth the private arms had thrown up only a handful of foreign-made and country-made guns and petrol bombs. Only last fortnight the army discovered —in two tunnels beneath a building in Kalupur—a huge quantity of acid bulbs, raw material for bombs and iron rods filled with explosives.

While the police futilely attempted to maintain peace and the army went on a wild goose chase through the labyrinthine alleys of old Ahmedabad, caste politics raised its ugly head again. For the first time, the influential Kshatriya lobby also moved into the battlefield, this time in support of the reservationists. Last fortnight, at a convention held near Baroda, Kshatriya leaders spoke of the need to stand by Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki, their reason simply being that the anti-reservationists wanted to dislodge a Kshatriya leader.

Even the backward classes are getting more organised: there have been an increasing number of Dalit meetings stressing the need to counter the stir against them. The Dalits have gained support from the Muslims who have also been made a butt of the protest. Pointed out Neerav Patel, a Dalit leader: "This agitation may be dangerous, but it has definitely helped Harijans and others from backward communities to realise that casteism is increasing and they should be united to fight for their rights." To add to the controversy, the Gujarat High Court passed an interim order asking the state Government not to reduce the reservation quota which had been increased to 28 per cent.

The suspension of trading and business activity amply illustrated the people's mood. Warned Umashankar Joshi, a well-known educationist: "The situation is suicidal. Anything that may happen now may be the last straw."

Perhaps Chief Minister Solanki realised the truth of that statement when on June 9 he conceded virtually all the demands of the anti-reservationists. After an emergency cabinet meeting, he nervously announced that the Government would not increase the reservation quota until there was a national consensus on it. It would institute a judicial inquiry into the riots, and would release the students held during the agitation. Said he: "It is now time to stop the agitation. There are no grounds now." But Solanki's appeal, not for the first time, had no takers.

—RAMESH MENON

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WEST BENGAL

The Left in Front

AS CALCUTTA's walls filled up with colourful graffiti proclaiming the names of contestants for the June 30 municipal elections, the ruling Left Front that had so far been watching from the sidelines the internecine struggle rocking the state Congress(I) unit, finally entered the fray last fortnight. Addressing an election rally in east Calcutta, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu triggered off the first salvo by accusing the Congress(I) of having made false promises before the Lok Sabha elections. The message clearly was that the Congress(I) had led Calcutta voters up the garden path the last time, and would do the same again.

The Congress (I), fighting to restore its credibility eroded by its failure to keep its pre-Lok Sabha election promises, and hamstrung by internal cleavages, retaliated by reeling off a string of allegations against the Marxist Government. Congress(I) General Secretary Ajit Panja accused the election authorities of acting "with a mischievous political motive, with an eye to helping the Left Front in the civic polls". Despite the lowering of the age limit of voters to 18 years, Panja said, the total number of voters in the city's 141 wards had mysteriously shown a decline.

Earlier, Panja had also accused the CPI(M) of having masterminded the ransacking of his party's office. Marxist cadres, along with a section of the local police were acting as "agents provocateurs", he charged, adding that persons who could smash portraits of Mrs Indira Gandhi and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could not possibly be Congressmen. The Congress(I)'s attempts to prove that the Marxists were conspiring to discredit their party backfired when the second ransacking of their office, on June 8, was sought to be similarly explained.

The attackers had broken into the office, smashed furniture, tubelights, typewriters and telephones, while shouting slogans against Congress(I) leader Subrata Mukherjee. Briefing newsmen after the incident, party General Secretary Priya Ranjan Das Munshi declared that the attackers could not be Congressmen and that it was necessary to identify the "conspirators" who were trying to demoralise party workers. Without specifically naming any political party, Das Munshi hinted there was an "unholy force at work against the Congress", adding that the local police had come to scene only one-and-a-half hours after the incident.

The following day, however, Chief Minister Basu informed a press conference that the police had investigated the incident on its own since Panja and Das Munshi had refused to lodge any formal complaint. Of the five persons arrested by the police, in this connection, three were found to be "rebel" Congress(I) candidates—Sanjoy Upadhyay, Shankar Gupta and Vijay Kumar Pandey—from the Burrabazar district.

Other reports on the activities of the Congress(I) and its candidates were hardly more assuring: Vinod Prasad Singhania, a party worker and general secretary of the Burrabazar Chattra Parishad (students union) was arrested in connection with the recent bomb explosions in the area. Three live bombs and two bags of explosives were recovered from Singhania's residence.

Earlier, the Sovabazar Citizens Committee had complained against the local Congress(I) candidate, Tarak Banerjee, who was allegedly extorting money from local shopkeepers ever since his nomination. Banerjee and his gang, the committee alleged, regularly collected "subscriptions" from local vendors and forcibly occupied property in the area.

The impression that the state Congres(I) was inextricably linked with the city's underworld had, at any rate, been confirmed by Union Law Minister Asoke Sen's statement that the party leadership must remove anti-social elements from its ranks. Sen had bowed out of the civic poll scene, leaving behind an indelible stigma and a somewhat embarrassed Das Munshi, whose close links with the law minister are fairly common knowledge.

In an effort to demonstrate his solidarity with the state unit of the party, Das Munshi not only issued a statement dismissing the notion of the party list being full of anti-socials, but also averted a showdown between Subrata Mukherjee and two former general secretaries of the south Calcutta district committee—Pankaj Banerjee and Lakshmi Kanta Bose. Pankaj Banerjee, known to be a supporter of Asoke Sen, was dissuaded from holding a protest meeting and Das Munshi let it be known that henceforth he would work jointly with the two young party leaders, Somen Mitra

Ransacked Congress(I) office in Calcutta: demoralising

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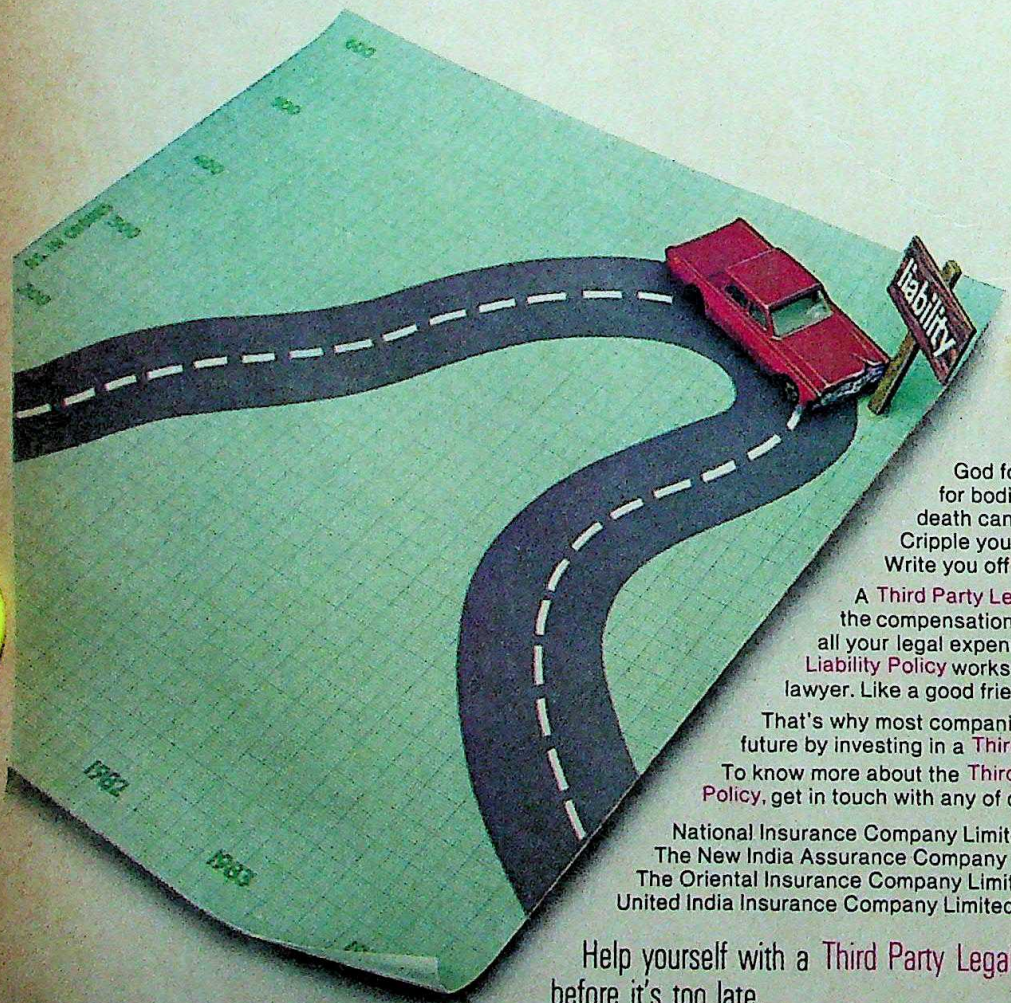

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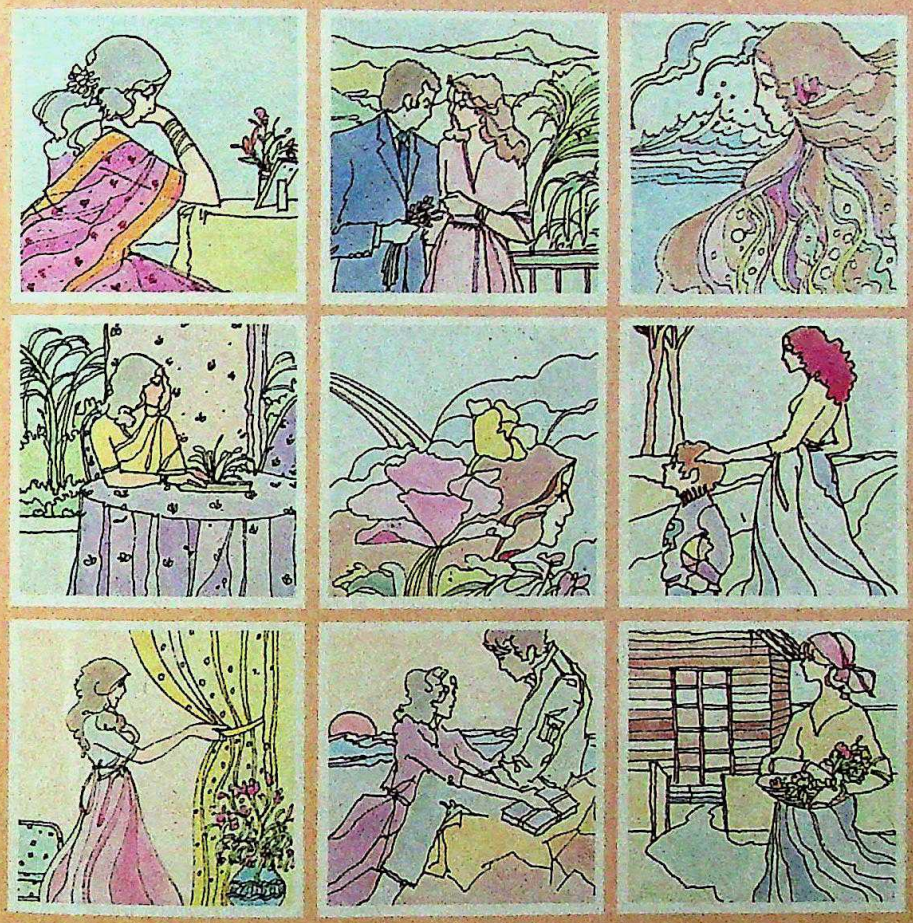

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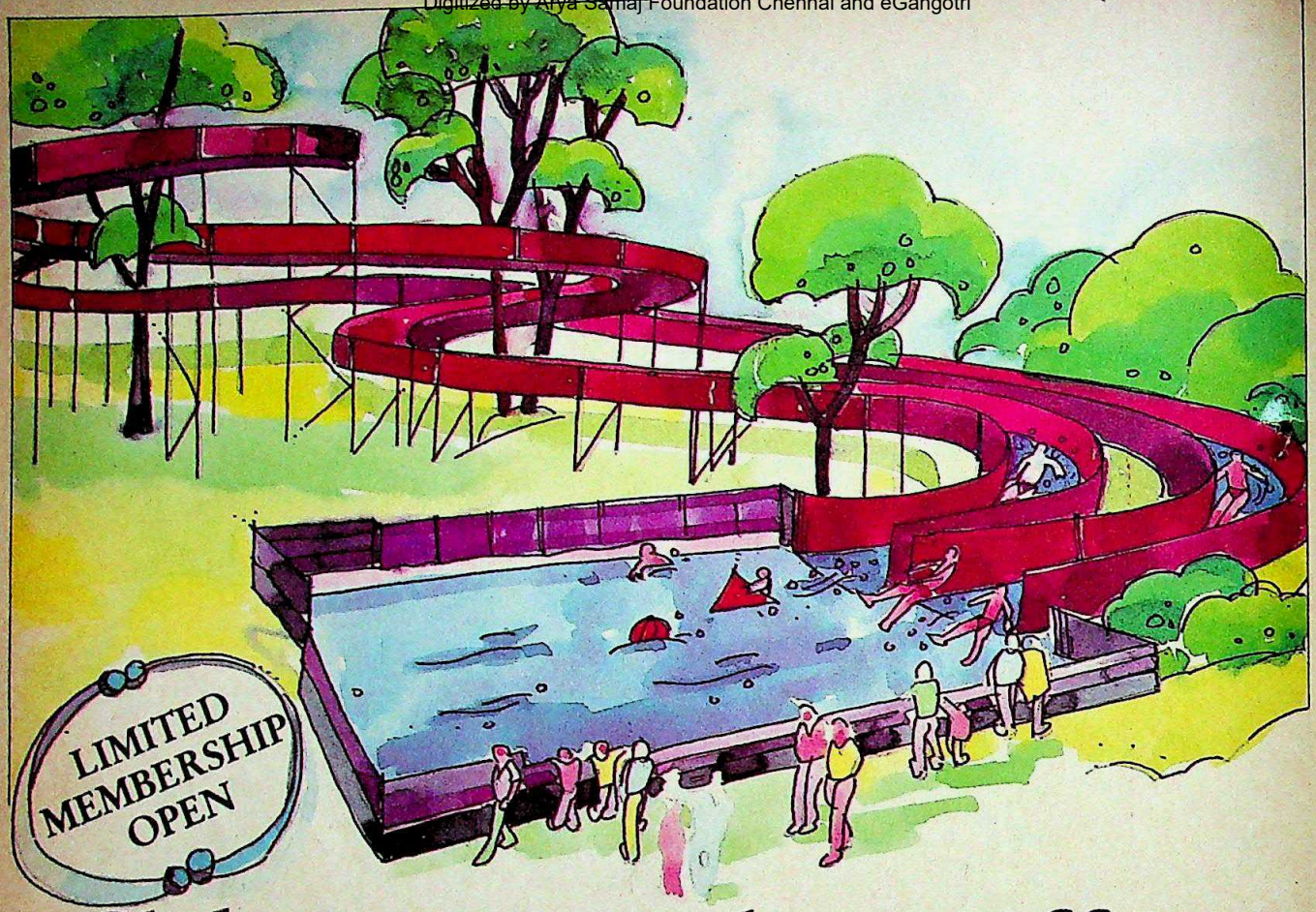

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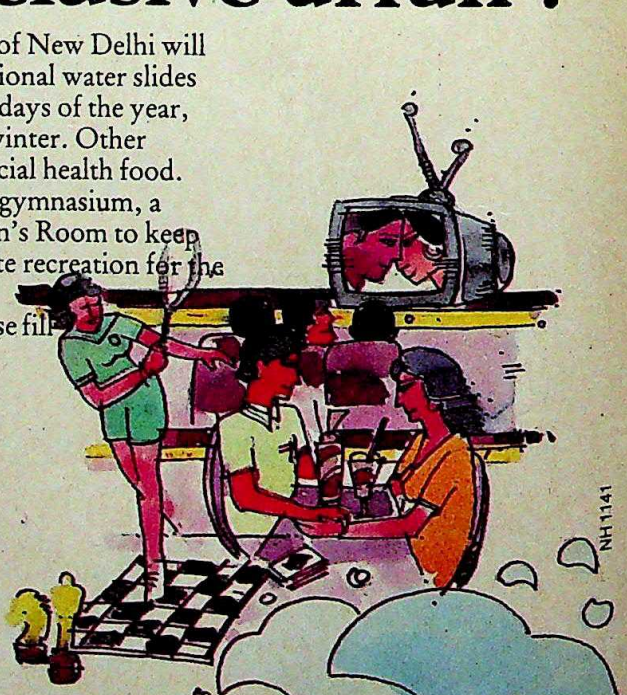

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and Subrata Mukherjee, in securing the party's success in the civic poll.

However, despite the brave attempts by the Congress(I) leaders to put up a facade of unity, the advantage remained with the Left Front. The Marxist line "Calcutta needs development not insults", plastered across walls all over the city, is yet to be countered. Left Front workers and leaders campaigning among the city's sizeable working class population point out that not only has the Congress(I) been unable to keep its promise of reopening sick and closed industrial units, but has done nothing to prevent the Centre from ruining the local railway wagon building industry. The recent announcements on the formation of a new power corporation, the signing of an agreement with R.P. Goenka for the long-awaited Haldia petrochemical unit, and several joint sector tie-ups in the field of electronics have created a picture of the Left Front trying hard to speed up industrial development without help from the Centre.

Rather than confronting these hard issues head-on, most Congress(I) leaders are continuing with their intrigues while publicly claiming that they are working jointly. The PCC(I) President, Pranab Mukherjee, confused party workers even more by holding discussions with Janata Party General Secretary George Fernandes. After the meeting Fernandes let drop a hint that the Congress(I) could break up, but the PCC(I) chief maintained a studied silence even after a number of newspaper reports suggested that the party high command did not know what had transpired at the meeting.

A number of Congress(I) leaders, realising Pranab Mukherjee's inability to control the party and concerned about Das Munshi's ascendence to prominence, have once again made a bid to rope in former West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray. Past efforts to bring back Ray to the Congress(I) fold had failed largely because of the party high command's intransigence. But this time, surprisingly, the proposal to induct Ray for the civic poll campaigning, as a first step towards his political rehabilitation, has been okayed by the high command. Whether Ray's token appearance late in the campaign will make any difference to the party's chances in the poll is uncertain. What is certain, however, is the near-complete failure of the state Congress(I) to present a united challenge to the Marxists.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

UTTAR PRADESH

House of Horror

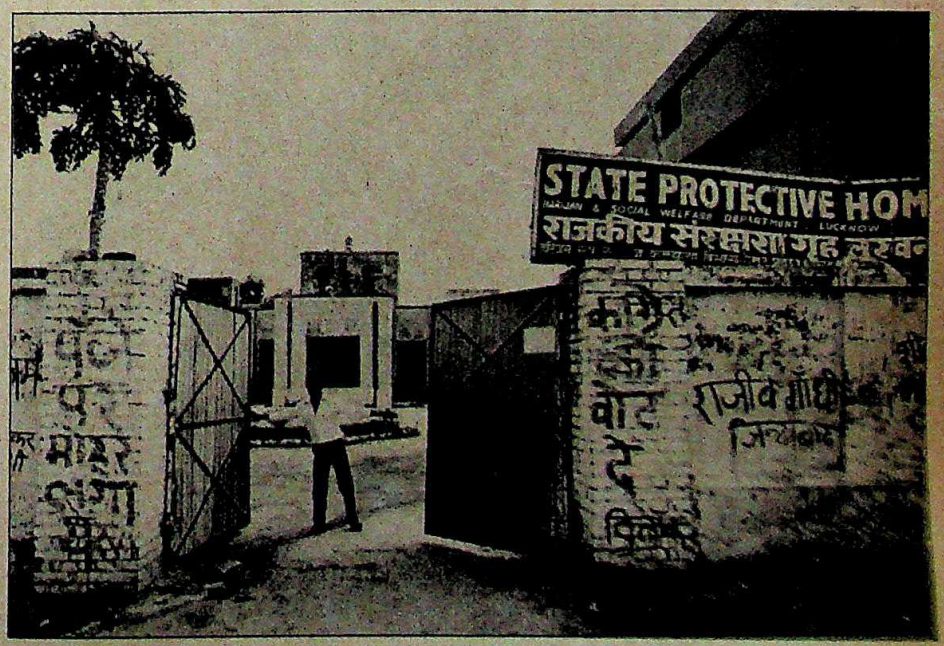
YOG MAYA is a dark, attractive and intelligent woman with a rock-hard veneer that speaks eloquently of her unfortunate past. An orphan brought up in a remand home, she was raped at the age of seven and then thrown into the clutches of a perverted gang that specialised in making blue films. In 1977, she was one of a group of women married off by a prominent social worker. But little changed in her life. If anything, it became worse. The gang blackmailed her into making more films, posing for nude pictures and having sex with an increasing list of clients. Her husband, disgusted at her life-style, started beating her up at the slightest excuse. Pushed to the brink, she fought back last month by going to the police and naming the people in the gang. She then asked for protection and on May 4, at her own written request to a city magistrate, the tall iron gates of Lucknow's Women Protection Home, a government-run institution, opened to admit her as its 51st inmate. Within days of her arrival, the institution was in headline-grabbing turmoil and Yog Maya had suddenly acquired a new and far wider notoriety than ever before.

Photographs by S. PREMI

On May 24, less than three weeks after Maya's arrival, the entire lot of 51 inmates staged a dramatic strike by walking out en masse from the Home and filing a complaint with a city magistrate about their treatment. Till last week, 28 women were still missing. The catalyst for the turbulent events was, of course, Maya. A natural leader and, in her own words, "a born rebel" Maya quickly won the confidence of the other inmates and made them aware of their rights. "She was obviously used to a better life than us which is why she started protesting about the conditions in the Home," says one inmate.

There was obviously much to protest about. The Home actually consists of four small rooms where 51 women were crammed in like sardines. The rooms themselves were stinking, unhygienic cesspools with one dirty latrine. For bathing, a single tap out in the open in full view of the occupants of a building

Maya (left) and a view of the Protection Home: "Hell must be better".



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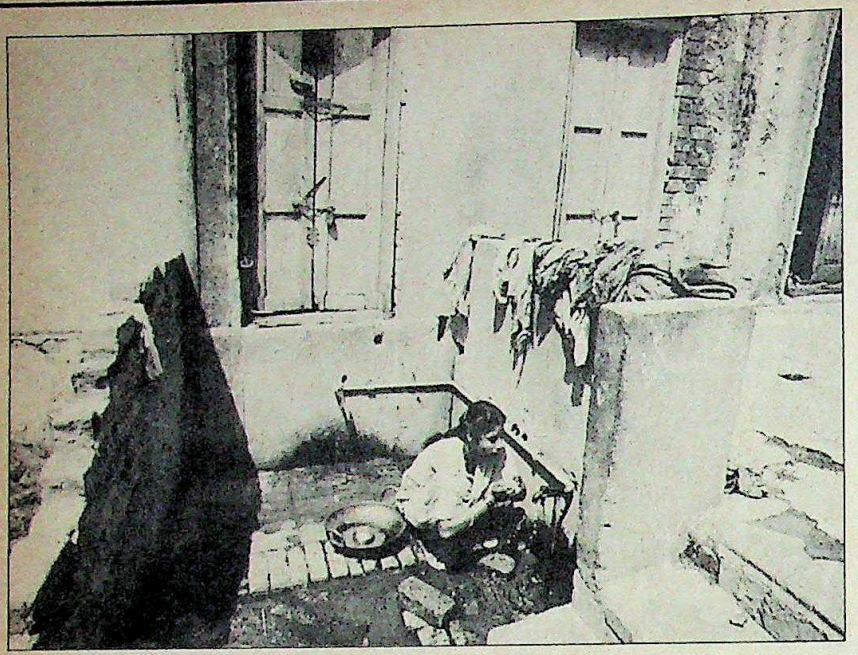


The open bathroom at the Home: inhuman conditions

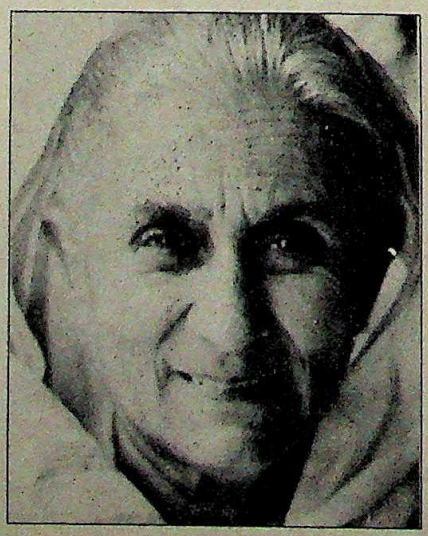
opposite. The inmates were treated like servants, poorly fed and punished frequently if they stepped out of line or complained. Officially, the Home gets a grant of Rs 1.66 lakh from the state Government each year for its running expenses. In fact, the sum spent on each inmate was a niggardly Rs 125 which included food, clothes and toiletries for the month. Many of the inmates are classified as psychological cases but there are no case records and treatment is either cursory or non-existent. Most of the inmates have similar backgrounds. They ran away from home because of unbearable conditions, fell into the clutches of pimps, escaped and then found themselves in the remand home where, they say, conditions were even worse. Says Meera Burman, 20: "Even hell must be better than this home." One indication is the fact that since March 1984, 12 girls have run away from it.

The last straw came when Maya, labelled a trouble-maker by those in charge of the home, was ordered transferred to a Home in Benaras. Already angered by the arbitrary decision, the dam burst when one of the inmates, Hameeda, fell ill with suspected cholera. She was not treated and when she arrived shivering and obviously seriously ill for the daily educational class, the teacher shouted at her and made her stand outside. Maya protested and after a heated exchange with the teacher, declared that she would also stand outside with Hameeda. The other inmates followed suit and marched up to the gates, locked them, and shouting slogans, disappeared towards the Hazratgunj Police Station. There they surrounded a magistrate and told him that they "preferred custody in jail to life in the Home".

They were persuaded to return and in reaction to the storm in the local press, the state's Minister for Social Welfare, Mrs Swaroop Kumari Bakshi, ironically enough the same prominent social worker who had arranged for Maya's ill-fated marriage, visited the Home and declared the situation to be normal. It was anything but. Three days after Bakshi's visit, 39 inmates fled the Home once again. The local administration launched an immediate hunt but a week after only 10 inmates had been found.

Bakshi, however, insists that a majority of the inmates are quite happy and were only instigated to rebellion by trouble-makers like Maya. But Maya,

Swaroop Bakshi: differing note



who has refused to be transferred to Benaras, denies any such role. "I did not call on them to revolt," she says, "the whole thing was quite spontaneous". The Social Welfare Department has now ordered an inquiry into the incidents at the Home but quite clearly nothing much will come of it. The attitude of the officials towards the inmates of the Home borders on callous indifference, nurtured by their knee-jerk belief that they are women of easy virtue, on par with criminals, led astray by the warped ambitions of Maya.

But little or no heed is taken of the fact that the inmates are almost all victims of a cruel fate, homeless and without families and deserve understanding and affection rather than further deprivation and isolation. Maya herself offers the classic example. Says she: "Nobody could have gone through the hardships I did. I don't know who my parents were. I was raped when I was seven and beaten if I resisted. I realised then that I had to fight for everything."

Her marriage could have changed her life. Her husband, Chotey Lal, wanted to move to Hardoi but mysterious pressure was brought to bear on officials in charge of her rehabilitation to ensure that she remained in Lucknow. Says Chotey Lal: "We do not know why some people wanted us to stay on. I was even offerred a restaurant to run. I didn't know what was going on."

Maya was then lured into pornography by the offer of a film career. "One night, after the day's shooting, I was raped by four men. I was forced to pose naked in front of the camera and that was used to blackmail me. I was asked to sleep with more men every day." To escape their clutches, she went to the police with her story but only found herself plunged from one nightmare into another at the remand home. She has now asked to be released and plans to start life afresh. She is determined not to go back to her husband either. "But will anyone allow me to lead a peaceful life?" she asks plaintively. The police dismiss her and her complaints as not worthy of note while the Social Welfare Department views her as an evil that somehow must be got rid of quickly and with the least possible fuss to preserve the name of the Protection Home which, tragically, doesn't have very much of a name to preserve in the first place.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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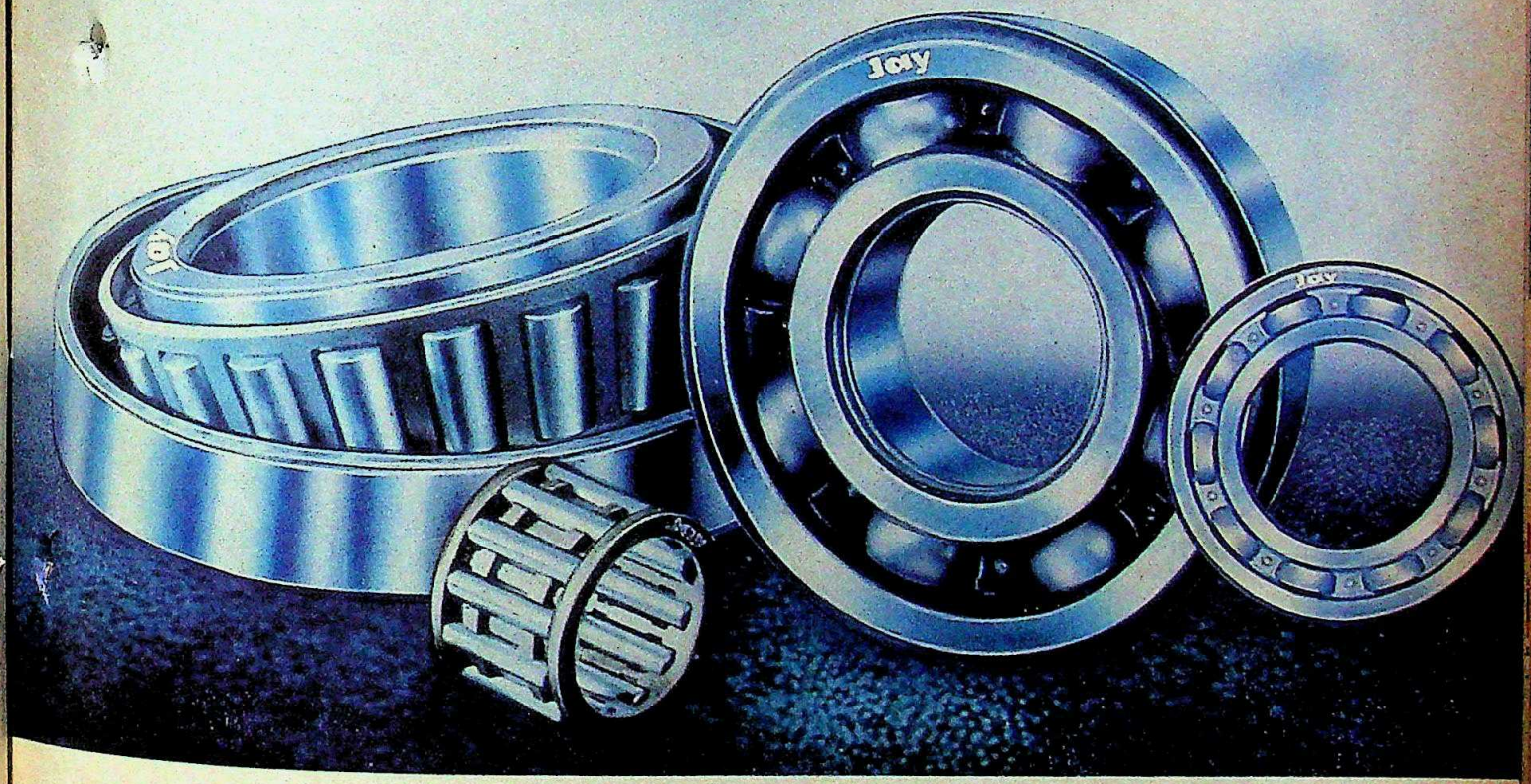
The loudest whisper



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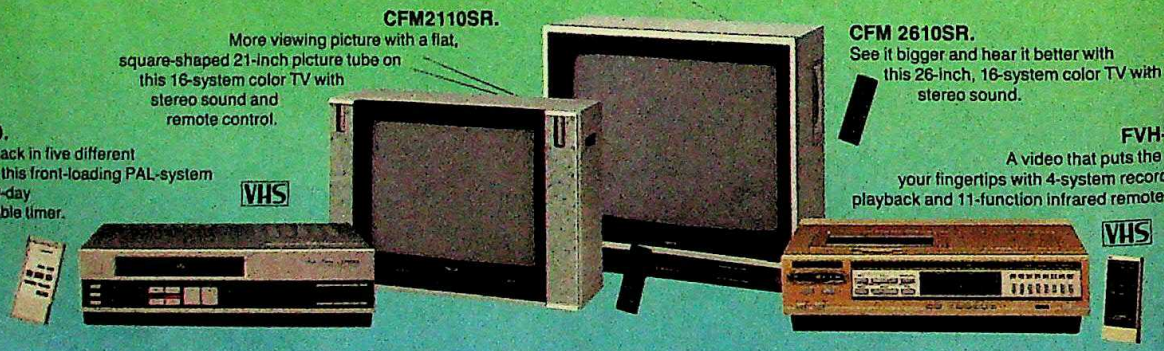

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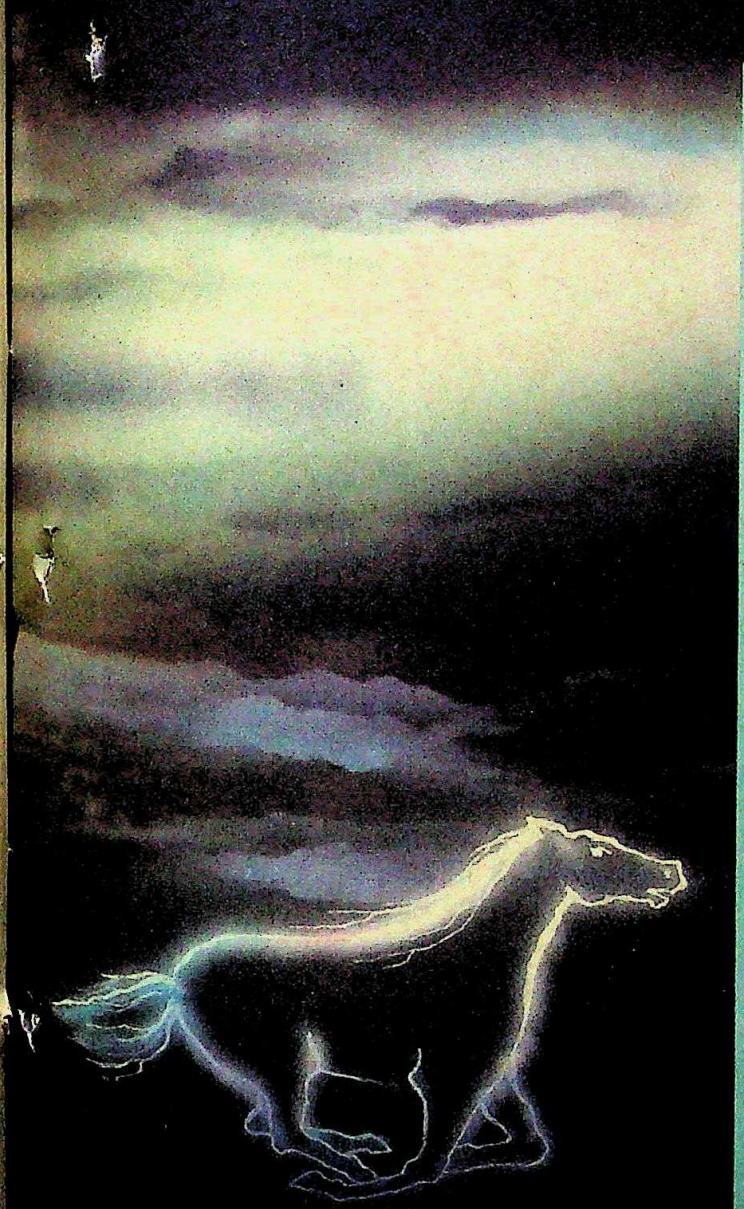
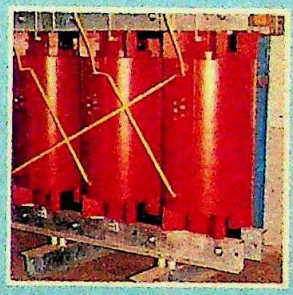
Voltas technology





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CONGRESS(I)

Remote Rule

A SIGNIFICANT change seems to have occurred in the relationship between the prime minister and Congress(I) chief ministers in the various states. Unlike his mother, who encouraged state leaders to meet her frequently, Rajiv Gandhi has consciously discouraged state party unit chiefs and chief ministers from rushing to Delhi on any excuse to "pay their respects to their beloved leader". Barring a few exceptions, in his six months in office Rajiv has not met any chief minister alone more than four times. Though they continue to descend on Delhi almost twice a month, the chief ministers' requests for appointments are rarely conceded due to the "other pressing engagements of the prime minister".

Rajiv was not always so distant. Soon after he assumed office he gave appointments liberally to all the chief ministers and party leaders in order to size them up personally and establish a working rapport with them. At that time he gave them specific directions to concentrate on strengthening state organisations and to streamline lethargic administrations. State leaders were also told they should not depend on the high command for every decision and must decide matters on their own—though major policy decisions should only be taken after consultation with the Central leadership. Said AICC(I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai: "Rajivji insisted on decentralisation of the decision making process."

But the faction-ridden Congress(I) was not geared for such a major change. Soon after the assembly elections, almost all the 17-odd Congress(I) chief ministers and their hangers-on began their usual pilgrimages to Delhi to seek the support of the 'new power centres'. In March alone over a dozen Congress(I) chief ministers visited Delhi at least twice and spent an average of 10 days each in the capital. Many of them could not meet the prime minister, and had to be satisfied with meetings with Arun Nehru, Arun Singh or M.L. Fotedar. Their visits, as one chief minister put it, "were to ensure that no backbiting was being done by our detractors in New Delhi" and that their version of events was also put to the prime minister.

Interestingly, most of the chief ministers who were making regular jaunts to Delhi were those who had assumed office during Rajiv's ascendancy in Congress(I) politics. Shiv Charan Mathur of Rajasthan, for example, spent every fourth day in Delhi before he left office. He was followed closely by Uttar Pradesh's Narain Dutt Tiwari, who spent half of his last six months in office in Delhi. But soon Rajiv became more selective, and many chief ministers found they had longer waits before their requests for a meeting were passed on. Four of them even went through the ignominy of leaving Delhi without a meeting. Vasantrao Patil was one who could not see Rajiv at his convenience; his answer was his recent resignation (*see page 21*).

Another reason for Rajiv's reluctance to meet the chief ministers could be that except for Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh and Madhya Pradesh's Moti Lal Vora, none of the others owe their position to him. Unlike Sanjay, whose manipulations after the 1980 assembly elections brought into prominence men like Gundu Rao and Antulay, Rajiv has been less domineering. Few of his known loyalists have been made chief ministers.

Rajiv was similarly unintrusive during the selection of Vasantrao Patil's successor in Maharashtra. "Rajivji favours consensus and not imposition in state politics," says AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar. Moopanar's view is based on the fact that since Rajiv's induction into politics only 10 Congress(I) chief ministers have been replaced. But all of them were chosen by the state legislature party and not one was known as a Rajiv protegé. Rajiv supported the drafting of Patil into Maharashtra politics after Babasaheb Bhosale's departure because he was a consensus candidate.

But some chief ministers feel Rajiv's remote attitude really reflects his inability to adjust with them politically. They say he is more amenable to his own appointees like Virbhadra Singh and Vora. And some of their supporters accuse the prime minister's aides of favouritism. But the prime minister's office denies there is any discrimination.

Party sources say Rajiv has rejected some requests of a primarily political nature because he does not want to encourage factionalism by giving the impression he encourages any particular group. In the last few months he has been searching for new PCC(I) chiefs who are not only acceptable to the chief ministers but also capable of sorting out petty political problems at their own level. In choosing PCC(I) presidents for Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat he accepted the recommendations of the chief ministers so that there would be a harmonious relationship between the executive and the party. At the same time, he has made it clear that the PCC(I)'s will have an elevated status in relation to the state governments.

But a setback for Rajiv's plan to decentralise party operations ensued when he chose nonentities as presidents of the various PCC(I)'s. Few of them are known for their organisational capabilities. Worse, the selection of relatively weak PCC(I) chiefs has encouraged dissidents to come out in the open because they are not finding any effective state-level politician to redress their grievances. Said a dissident leader of Madhya Pradesh: "There is continuity in at least one respect; no local leader is being allowed to consolidate himself in the state. The high command is doing this by keeping old chief ministers at a distance and appointing rootless politicians as party chiefs." If he is right, Rajiv will have a hard time distancing himself from the petty details of state politics.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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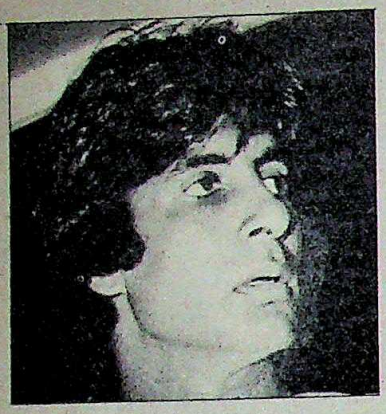
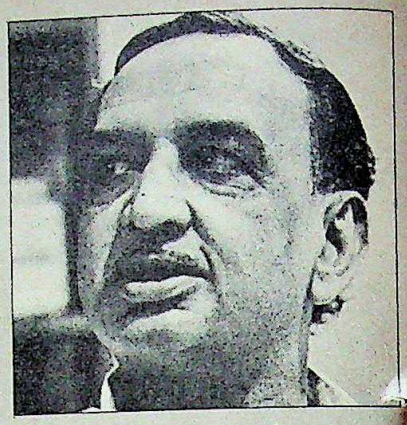


Amitabh Bachchan

Sant Bux Singh was not alone in this campaign...regardless of whether it is a conspiracy or not the attack has left Bachchan in an unenviable position.



Sant Bux Singh

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Playing a Double Role

FOR ONCE last fortnight Amitabh Bachchan, the invincible avenger of Hindi films, was caught off-guard. What started as a catchy headline in a newspaper interview swelled into a full-throated political controversy that questioned not only Bachchan's motivations as a member of Parliament but was proof of the fact that flip dialogue can do more damage in public life than on the screen.

It all began with what looked like a rather benign interview in the Sunday magazine section of *The Times of India* where Bachchan waxed eloquent on his personal relationship with Rajiv Gandhi and described, almost philosophically, how he had been "flown from Bangalore and dumped into the cesspool of politics". The observation was obviously disliked by men who, unlike Bachchan, have made a profession of politics.

The retaliation came belatedly, but when it came it hit Bachchan with telling effect. Sant Bux Singh, elder brother of Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh and former MP, has, over the years, acquired a reputation for outspokenness in Congress(I) circles. And now he launched a broadside at Bachchan, accusing him of name dropping, ignoring Allahabad and spending his time in supervising construction of his house in Delhi. "My point is clear," Sant Bux Singh, a former Hindustan Lever planning manager, told INDIA TODAY : "I objected to his calling my city a dumpheap, of misusing my leader's name and maligning my profession." His two-page rejoinder to Bachchan ended rather harshly, saying, "If Mr Bachchan finds politics a cesspool why doesn't he leave it and make it less stagnant?"

Singh says when his friends showed him the Bachchan interview his initial reaction was to merely write a rejoinder in the letters columns of *The Times of India*. "But they said they will take a week publishing it and since some of my friends had already seen the statement it became public." He says he had not anticipated that this will blow up into such a major controversy. But it could have hardly been otherwise. V.P. Singh is considered the most powerful minister in the Cabinet and is believed to be close to his elder brother. It was thus natural that the motivations for Sant Bux Singh's attack were laid at his brother's door.

The Uttar Pradesh unit of the Youth Congress(I) stoutly came out in Bachchan's defence, accusing V.P.Singh of launching an indirect campaign against him. A newly formed Amitabh fans' association threatened to demonstrate in front of V.P. Singh's house. Even Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, one of the AICC (I) general secretaries, joined Bachchan's defence saying that Sant Bux Singh was attacking him at the behest of his "old friend" Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna. Sant Bux Singh, however, dismisses it all contemptuously, asking, "Why should I talk of the Youth Congress and give them undue importance? And wasn't Rajendri (as Rajendra Kumari Bajpai is popularly known) herself an election agent of Bahuguna's once?"

V.P. Singh came out in Bachchan's support openly and dissociated himself from his brother's diatribe. Yet Sant Bux Singh was not alone in this campaign. He is most certainly backed by an influential section within the Uttar Pradesh Congress (I), particularly those hailing from Allahabad even though he denied any suggestion of a conspiracy arguing, "Why should there be a conspiracy against Bachchan? Does he constitute any political force? What difference does it make to the party whether he stays in politics or goes back to films?"

Regardless of whether it is a conspiracy or not, the attack has left Bachchan in an unenviable position. Film grapevine has, for some time, been trumpeting his return. Prakash Mehra, who made Bachchan a superstar with *Zanzeer* has been loudly proclaiming that the superstar is returning to films and talk of his quitting is "crap".

Bachchan has not denied this though he made a weak attempt last fortnight to defend his record in politics. Making his first public speech, he said in Pune that he had been permitted by the prime minister and H.K.L. Bhagat, the parliamentary affairs minister, to remain absent from Parliament. And as for Allahabad, he promised he would hold premiere shows for all his films and spend the money collected on development projects in his constituency.

If Bachchan indeed has plans to return to films, the new controversy is likely to queer his pitch for now there are demands on him from loyalists within the party to disprove his critics. And his statements in Pune indicated that he was taking up the challenge. But the film industry is still bound to beckon and chances are that the most popular hero of the Indian silver screen will have to contend with playing the role of a split personality in his personal life.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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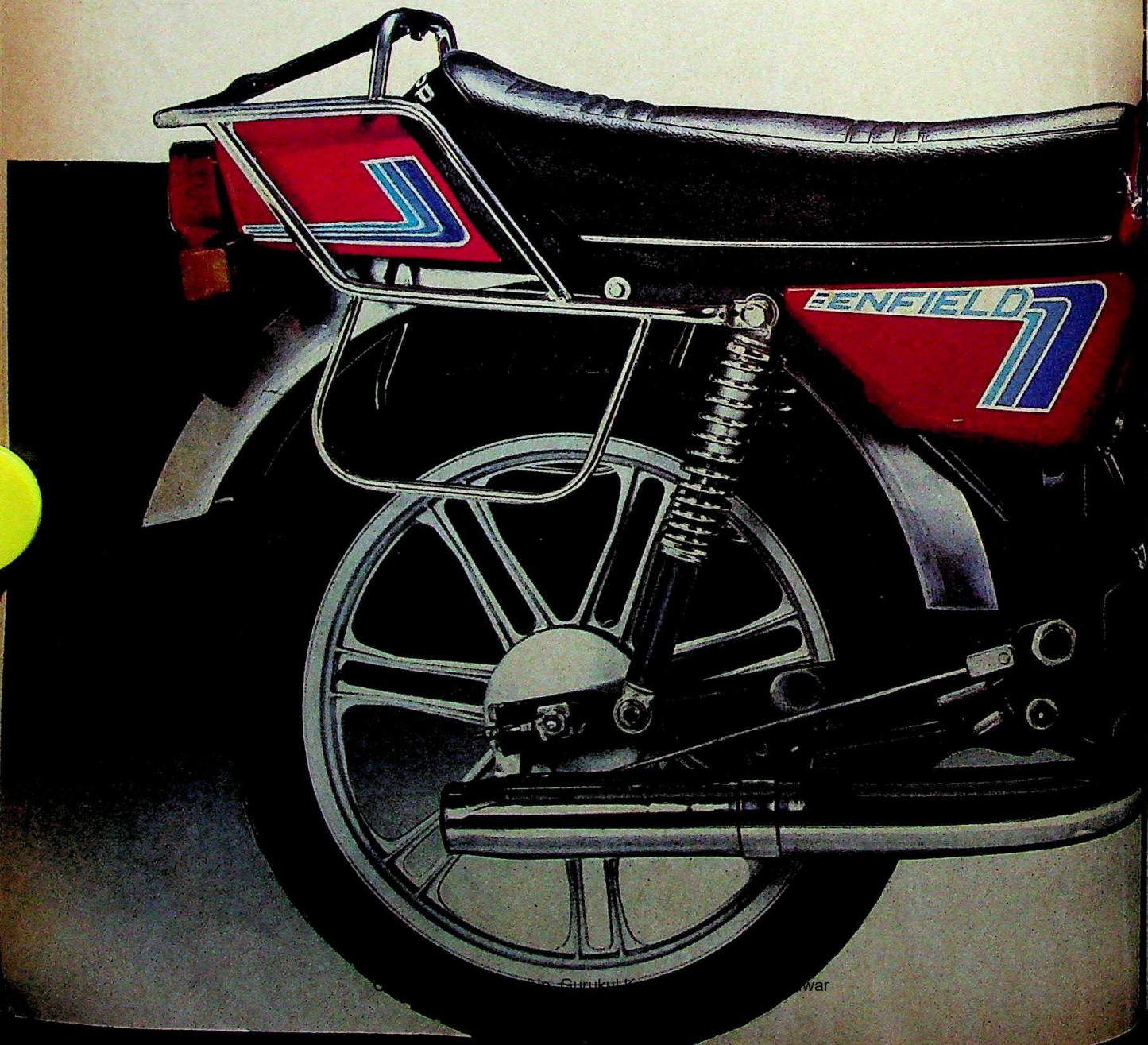

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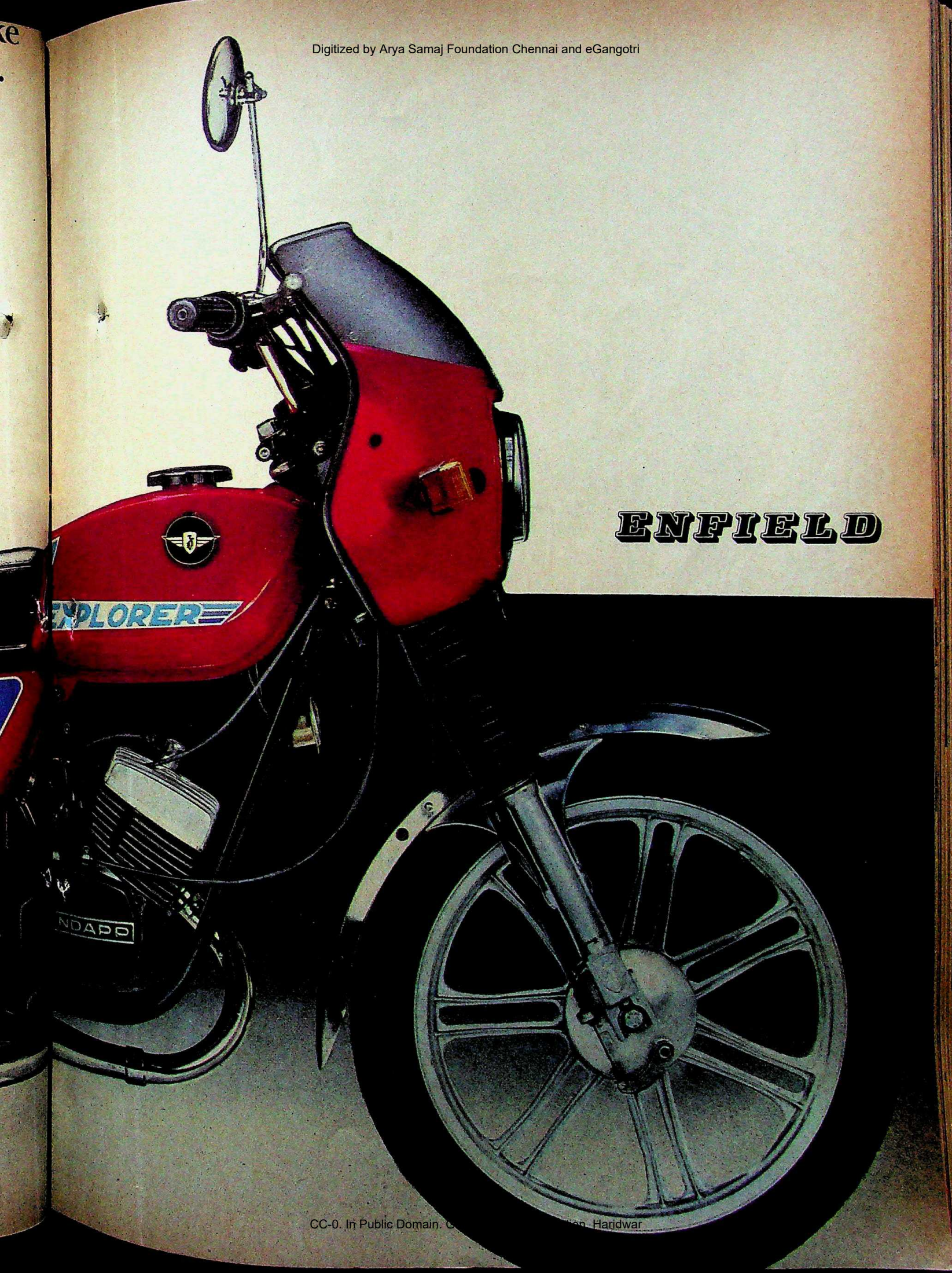

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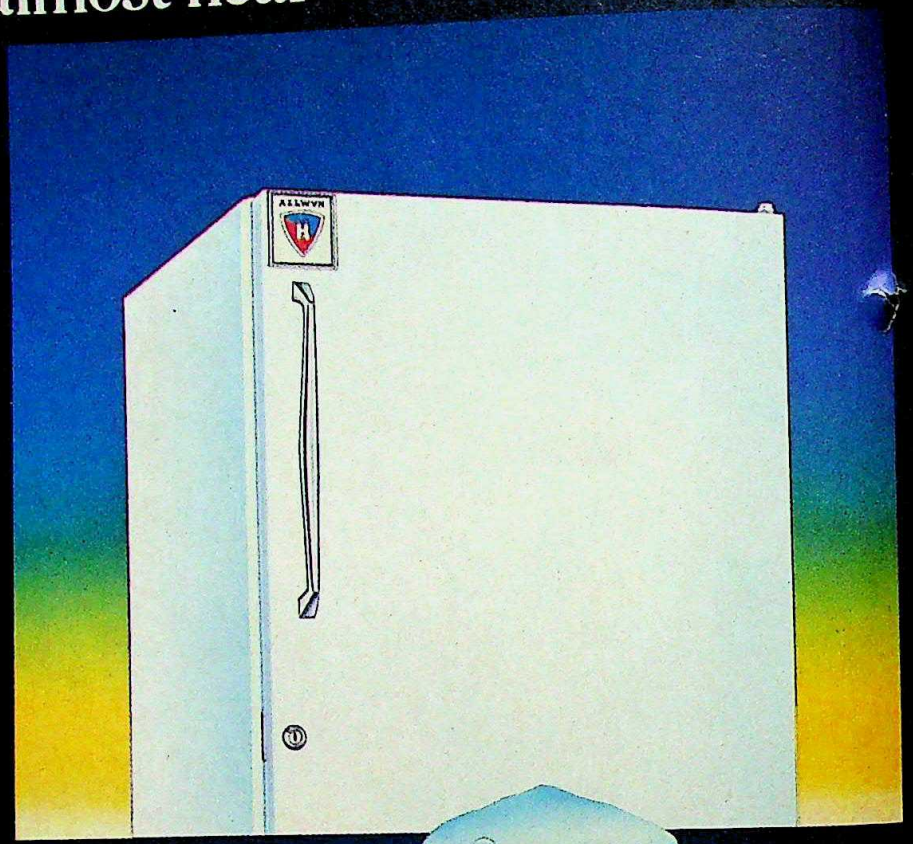

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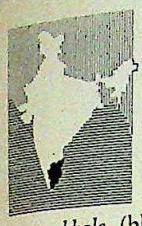
TAMIL NADU

Silent Rule



FOR YEARS Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran opened all his public speeches with a single magic phrase: *En rathathin rathamana udan pirappukkale* (blood of my blood, my fellow human beings). The phrase that moved a million Tamils is missing now, but MGR is still creating magic—ever since he returned to life from the jaws of death, he has been ruling his state without being able to speak. "It is a miracle," confided a top state police officer, "in fact, if anything MGR's illness and the medical treatment he received seem to have made his mind sharper."

For a few tense months, though, following MGR's stroke in October last, it was thought that the beloved chief minister was permanently lost to the state. His mental faculties seemed to have been affected and many said as much. During the campaign for the legislative assembly elections held in December, DMK President M. Karunanidhi openly doubted MGR's mental fitness to rule again and even the chief minister's own political heiress Jayalalitha Jayaram, when she was dethroned as deputy leader of the AIADMK Parliamentary Party, expressed doubts publicly whether MGR was fully aware of all that was happening.

But MGR has stunned everyone. He came back from New York, took oath of office, made a conscious two-stage selection of his cabinet and settled himself firmly in the saddle of power. From there he ruled like never before, without words but with a mind that was functioning sharply and clearly. He reshuffled people in the Government, restored Director-General of Police (intelligence) K. Mohandas to his powerful post. He promoted seven deputy inspector generals of police to the inspector general level, and he constituted a three-member committee to scrutinise the cases of his 80-odd partymen who had been expelled from the party during his convalescence.

A new side of MGR emerged. He began going to his secretariat office in the mornings, something he rarely did before his illness. In the evenings he pondered over his files at home, and to top it all, he even led a team of Tamil Nadu government officials to New Delhi last fortnight to negotiate a difficult increase in the state's seventh plan outlay—and succeeded where the state Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan had failed. Said Dr Prathap C. Reddy, chairman of the private Apollo Hospitals in Madras city: "MGR has got a phenomenal will to live."

So phenomenal, in fact, is that will, the MGR has overcome many handicaps that would have permanently crippled a lesser man. In February, when he came back from New York, he could write only very shakily with his right hand and that too by holding it with his left. Now, a few months later, MGR is writing with a steady hand and more than ever before. Said a government official: "He now makes copious notes on files concerning very simple matters."

MGR at an all-party meeting: speechless admiration

Still, how does a chief minister communicate with his people? If MGR with his voice was amazing, MGR without his voice is more startling still. Said C. Kandappan, DMK organising secretary: "While he is able to speak only few words, he is able to generally communicate his feelings by signalling."

Through his gestures and a few broken words, MGR has even been conducting cabinet meetings. A minister revealed how he did this: "The chief minister would walk in slowly on the dot, bow, and take his seat. Discussions would start on the subjects listed on the agenda. MGR would listen attentively, and occasionally make gestures. He would sometimes whisper into a neighbour's ear, who would convey what the chief minister desired to say."

The public has not been denied its hero either. Every morning, MGR appears outside his residence and grants audience to his fans, admirers as well as people with grievances. He touches his heart and blesses and waves to them to assure them that he will look after their needs. If he does not understand what his people want, he shakes a closed fist in a gesture for clarification Said S.K. Uthaman, a cinema theatre owner, and one of MGR's morning visitors last week: "Decades ago MGR had worked for my uncle who was a film producer, and I haven't met the chief minister for ages. But he spotted me in a jiffy, smiled at me and assured me by waving his hand that he would look into my problem."

Through gestures, the chief minister has not only been able to actively take part in official meetings, but also set to rest any doubts on his mental ability.

He asked his general secretary to dissolve the parliamentary board, initiated a membership drive and modified party rules. So, government and party files continue to move and the wheels of administration seem to be running smoothly despite MGR's serious speech defect. If anything, precisely because he can't speak much, MGR has become quicker and sharper at his job. Said a top government official: "Earlier the chief minister used to vacillate on every important issue. He wouldn't take a decision on any matter till the last minute. But now he is very fast. He listens very carefully when you bring up a file, and gives an order immediately."

For the people of Tamil Nadu it has been a miracle, no less. And for the amazed men of medicine as well. Said a speech therapist treating MGR now: "Normally if a stroke patient loses his speech, whatever part of the speech faculty he recovers has to be regained within six months. After that there will be little hope for any improvement. But in the chief minister's case there is still steady progress even though the six months' deadline elapsed on April 13." M.G. Ramachandran, it seems, is back—and back to stay.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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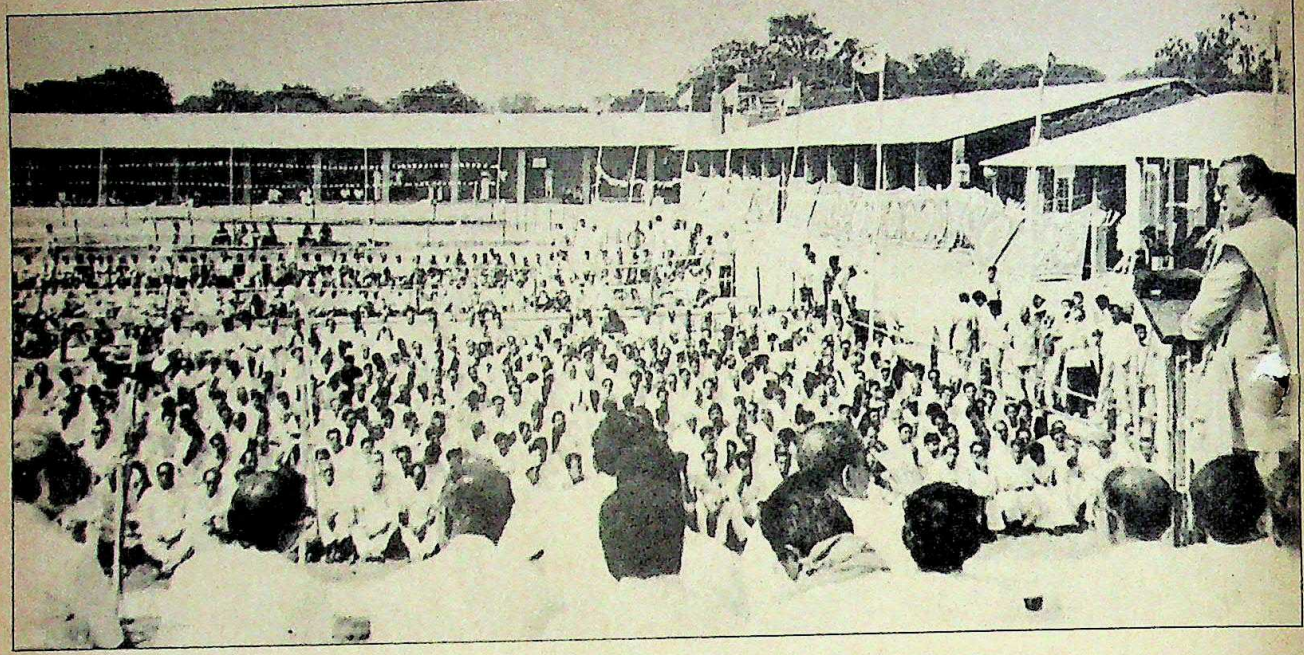

NTR addressing Telugu Desam meeting on his birthday: power crisis

ANDHRA PRADESH

An Erratic Course

IT WAS N.T. Rama Rao's birthday, and gathered at his "Shanti Kuteeram Ashram" home were Telugu Desam MP's, MLA's, zilla parishad chairmen, panchayat samiti presidents and other members of the party's central council. But this was no birthday bash. So close is the identification between NTR and his party that since its inception, major meetings of the Telugu Desam have taken place on his birthday and it came as no surprise this time when he announced that the permanent headquarters of the party would be located in the backyard of Shanti Kuteeram.

On a more serious level the meeting was, ostensibly, to review the policies and programmes of the party and their implementation. But the most important task of the meet was to push through a change in the party constitution authorising NTR to handpick a 26-member executive committee and then choose party office-bearers from among them. NTR denied that his new powers meant centralisation of authority and were contrary to the democratic spirit. "The system of nomination of executive members would ensure adequate representation to all sections in the party, which would not be possible in an election as the new general body will have about 40,000 people," he said.

NTR's stand on the subject is a change from his view in 1983. That year the party's central council had authorised him to name the executive, and when asked to comment about the selection rather than election of that body he had pleaded: "When they ask me to nominate it I cannot say I will not." The change in response to the same issue in two years is a symptom of his attempt to come to grips with the realities of building an effective party machine and run an efficient government.

At the same time that he was centralising power in the party, NTR was moving to decentralise the administration in order to make it more efficient. In a shake-up of the rural power structure last month he created 1,104 revenue mandals in place of the 305 taluks and 1,084 firkas. The change-over was not smooth, with the locations of the mandal headquarters—each reaching out to six or seven villages with populations ranging from 3,500 to 55,000—and the posting of their staff giving rise to controversy. Panchayat Raj Minister K.R. Rao did not turn up for a function in his constituency of Medak as villagers had gathered there to protest the choice of a neighbouring village for the mandal headquarters. In Mahbubnagar the police had to open fire at a crowd of villagers protesting against the choice of a neighbouring village, killing one of them.

Still, revenue mandals are here to stay and, consequently, further changes in the party structure are in the offing. A pyramidical structure with four tiers—comprising village committees, mandal committees, district committees and the state committee—is being planned so that the different tiers of the party are parallel to the new administrative hierarchy. The existing panchayat samitis will be replaced with mandal samitis by the end of the year.

It was during his temporary unseating last year that NTR realised a party structure with active members was essential. Wiser by that experience he had two training camps organised in May to train hardcore activists to help enlist members in the villages and explain to them the programmes and policies of the Telugu Desam. His son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu, has been in charge of picking the activists and training them. "Our interest is to take a fresh crop of people interested in grassroots politics and not those coming from the Congress for one reason or the other."

Ironically, Naidu himself was a Congress(I) minister who lost in the 1983 assembly elections but displayed remarkable opportunism by defecting to

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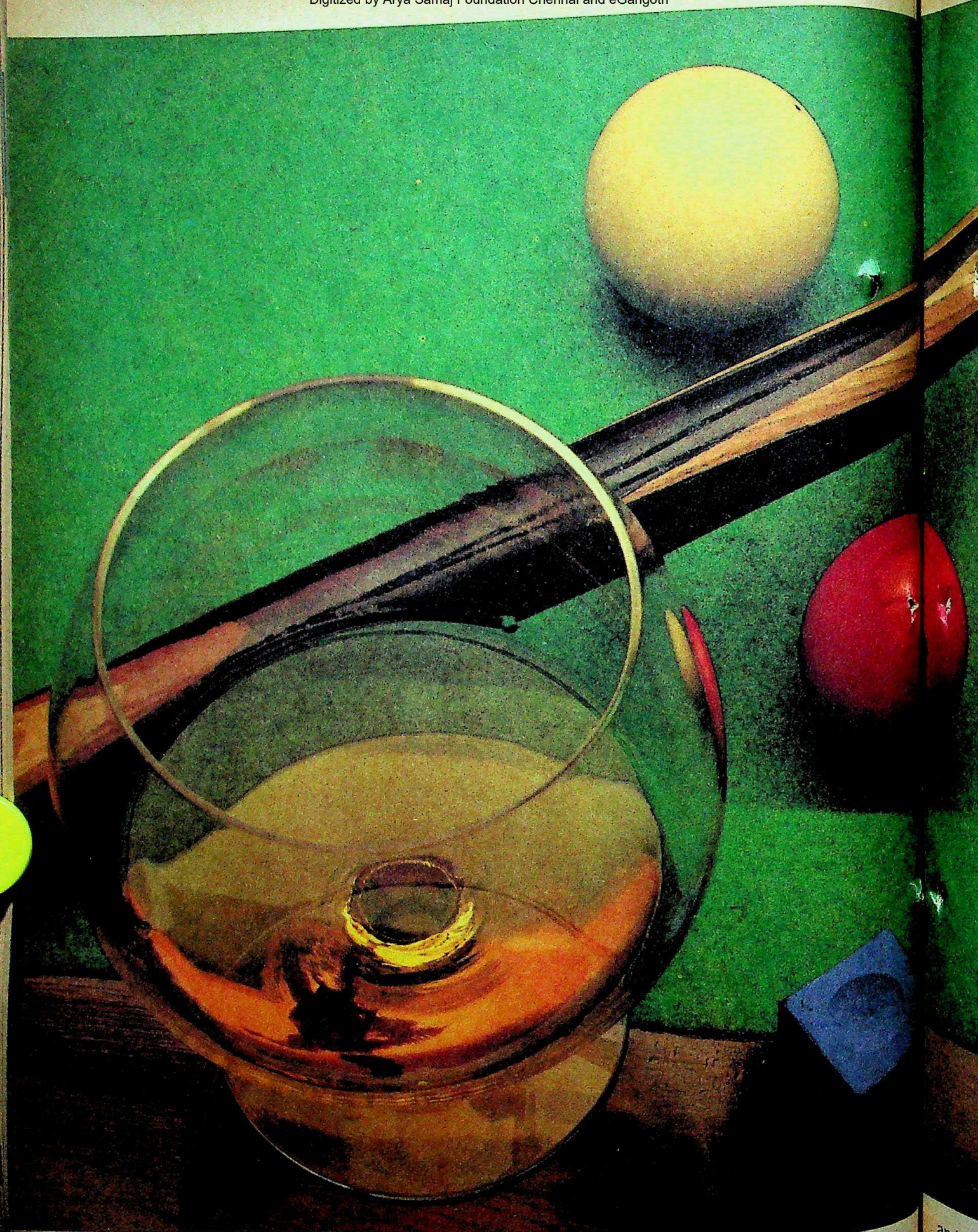

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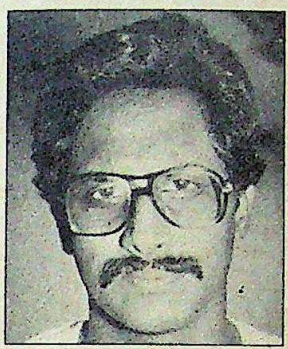
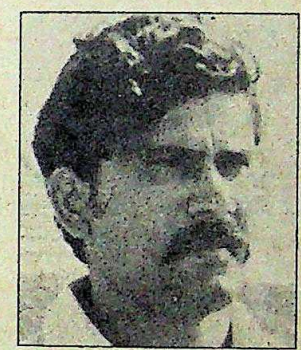
the Telugu Desam a fortnight after the results were announced. NTR stifled the opposition to Naidu in his party at that time and made Naidu's entry easy. Naidu kept a low profile at first, but in August last year, when NTR was removed, he began taking a greater interest in party affairs and rose to be the closest aide of the chief minister. In fact his conspicuous presence at the birthday meeting, with party activists fawning over him, made one delegate remark: "This is the son-in-law's convention, and not a party meeting."





Venkateshwara Rao (top) and Chandrababu Naidu

Naidu denies any interest in office but the family plot thickens when it is noticed that another son-in-law of NTR, D. Venkateshwara Rao, who has been with the party since its inception, has been sidelined. The low profile Venkateshwara Rao was responsible for NTR's itinerary in the formative months of the Telugu Desam. And if Naidu becomes general secretary, as sources say is likely, then some partymen may range behind Venkateshwara Rao and sow the seeds of a rift within the party. NTR has not categorically ruled out Naidu becoming general secretary and the intra-party tussle is likely to grow after the executive is nominated by him in September.

But the man most disenchanted with NTR's style of functioning is Ramoji Rao, the editor of *Eenadu*. The paper's backing helped NTR during the crucial campaign for the 1983 assembly poll and the *Eenadu* group is usually identified as pro-Telugu Desam. Rao is especially critical of NTR's backtracking on several earlier decisions. "We supported NTR to cleanse the political system in Andhra but he is going astray and arrogating powers to himself, the very reason for which we fought against Mrs Gandhi. He inspires confidence in the people but is not willing to delegate responsibility. This is a danger to democracy and my obligation is not to him, but to the people who read us every morning."

He has cause for complaint. After the pull-back on the mid-day meal scheme and on the retirement age limit, NTR decided to restore the Rs 50 a month pension scheme for legislators, which he had scrapped a month after coming to office. Last fortnight he lifted the ban on inter-district sale of paddy, supposedly to ensure remunerative prices for farmers by stimulating purchases by millers and other agencies. Earlier, he had been all for the ban, arguing that millers were exploiting the paddy growers.

As for the bureaucrats, many consider NTR their *bete noire*. NTR soured relations with them for the second time when he suddenly transferred two secretaries to the Government. Most bureaucrats in the state recall the regime of chief minister Vengala Rao as the "golden era of administration in Andhra." And says Vengala Rao, who is now president of the state Congress(I) committee: "NTR needs a ministry for abolitions. Most of the significant decisions made by the Telugu Desam government are the abolition or scrapping of one decision or the other." The most dramatic NTR turnabout has been on the vexatious question of Centre-state relations. The final memorandum he presented to the Sarkaria Commission on June 12 seems considerably watered down, arguing forcefully only that the institution of governor be abolished. As for his much publicised demand that the Centre fund all massive irrigation and power projects, he now asks only that they "be liberally funded by national resources." Significantly, the memorandum is silent about vital issues like appointments of judges and the powers of the legislature.

Also chipping away at NTR's popularity are the new taxes he is planning to impose to help make-up the budgetary deficit of Rs 257 crore, which will be even larger when the annual budget is presented to the Assembly in June. NTR even finds that political parties friendly with him during his ouster are now drifting away. Though sitting pretty with a massive mandate, the increasing criticism seems to show that NTR had better grapple with the problems of government in a more decisive manner.

—AMARNATH MENON

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KERALA

Short Circuiting

THERE is never a dull moment in Kerala politics. The latest crisis was triggered by a supposedly seditious speech delivered by electricity minister Balakrishna Pillai of the Kerala Congress at the Cochin convention of his party. The affair soon developed into open strife between the Congress(I) and the Kerala Congress over Centre-state relations and the state economy and threatened to break up their three-year-old alliance in the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF). But that eventuality was staved off by Pillai's resigning from his portfolio and both the Youth Congress and the Kerala Youth Front of the Kerala Congress calling off their agitations.

Pillai had called for a Punjab-style agitation in Kerala to force the Centre to grant the state justice. Though later he hotly denied having said any such thing, the Congress(I) was enraged. The Youth Congress conducted angry demonstrations against him and demanded his dismissal. G. Karthikeyan, Youth Congress president, said Pillai's statements were "clearly seditious", and egged on by Karunakaran, KPCC(I) President V. Padmarajan said it would be virtually impossible for his party to "go forward with any organisation determined to launch an anti-Centre agitation."

But the tiff soon took on larger dimensions, for the Congress(I) also launched a bitter attack on Kerala Congress strongman and state Finance Minister K.M. Mani. Mani was accused of messing up the state's economy. Said M.M. Jacob, the powerful Congress(I) MP from the state: "This man Mani has played havoc with the state's finances by the way he has formulated his budgets during the last six years. They have only helped certain people who are his party's vote banks." Adds Karthikeyan: "The Central Travancore districts of Kottayam, Idukki and Pathanamthitta are the only districts to benefit from Mani's budgets." Simmering resentment over crucial ministries being held by the Kerala Congress also boiled over. "In the last three years where development work or contact with the masses was concerned it was through finance, revenue, electricity and education, and all these were held by the Kerala Congress," says Youth Congress MLA P. Sudhakaran. "Ideologically we drifted apart months back but the patchwork coalition will survive for some time," he adds.

Mani was quick to refute the charges. "The Congress(I) is showing arrogance by characterising our attempt to get our rights from the Centre as anti-Centre." He reeled out statistics to show that Kerala's seventh plan outlay was only 20 per cent higher than for the sixth plan, while the increase in other southern states ruled by the Opposition was more than 55 per cent. He was firm in his belief that the Finance Commission had done harm to the state. Indeed, Kerala had a financial surplus of Rs 65 crore in the 1980-81 financial year, which has now turned into a deficit of Rs 300 crore. But whether that is Mani's or the Centre's fault is yet to be proved.

After the series of skirmishes it was widely accepted that the Congress(I) had emerged with more public sympathy than the Kerala Congress. Admitted an MLA close to Mani: "Our image has been tarnished." It was now that Karunakaran played his hand. He is said to have instigated K.C. Chandy, Congress(I) activist and son of Madhya Pradesh Governor K.M. Chandy, an old antagonist of Mani, to file a "quo warranto" writ petition against Pillai for having made a seditious speech. The matter came to a head the very next day. Admitting the writ petition, Justice Radhakrishna Menon

BALAKRISHNA PILLAI

'I will continue to fight'

HE IS controversial and brash; he is rich; he is the sole Hindu Nair leader in the predominantly Christian Kerala Congress; he has the maximum number of cases filed against him; to the CPI(M) "he is a demon" but his wife says he is a "thoroughly misunderstood person"; though a minister he even acted in a film and is reputed to have the best collection of video films in Trivandrum. He is Balakrishna Pillai, who was holding the electricity portfolio before his resignation last fortnight.

Born into a prosperous land-owning family in Kottarakara, 75 km from Trivandrum, ("My father was the richest man in Quilon district and I am his only son," he had said once), he started off as a communist student leader, switched to the Congress and in 1965 founded the Kerala Congress with mentor P.T. Chacko.

In 1959, when barely 25, he won the assembly seat from Kottarakara, becoming the youngest ever MLA in the Kerala Assembly. Says wife Valsala: "People in Kottarakara are simply crazy about their beloved Balan (his pet name)." Others disagree.

As electricity minister for five years, he had broken the back of the powerful CPI and CPI(M) unions in the board. When he resigned, the communist unions celebrated with sweets. Says M.O. Habib, the powerful union leader: "That man was running the board as his personal fiefdom."

When the Silent Valley project was scrapped, he had said that "thousands of young unemployed men have been sacrificed for the sake of a few monkeys". When poetess and environmentalist Sugathakumari had criticised ministers for killing people by speeding on the state's narrow roads Pillai had retorted that somebody should send Kumari abroad to places where drivers would be fined for going slower than 150 km per hour. Says Valsala: "My husband, unlike other politicians, talks freely." Pillai spoke to Trivandrum Correspondent SREEDHAR PILLAI about his controversial Cochin speech which led to his resignation. Excerpts:

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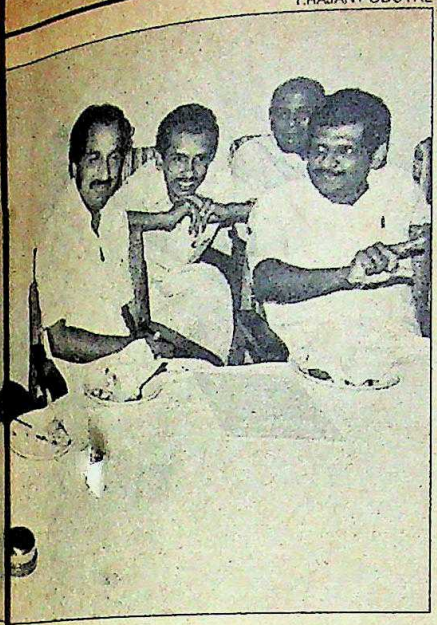
T.RAJAN PODUYAL



Karunakaran (left) at the UDF liaison meeting: still confident

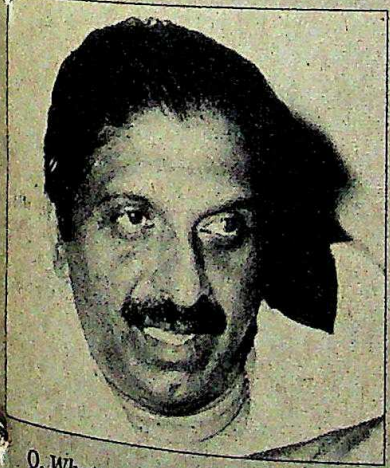
took legal circles in the state by storm when he remarked that Pillai should have stepped down the moment the petition was admitted. There is no precedent for a judge making such remarks at that stage. Legal circles pointed out that it was extraordinary for the court to make such remarks before even getting the reply of the respondent to the notice. But this gave Pillai a chance to resign without being eased out. However, the Kerala Congress' troubles were not over. Another petition was filed in the court seeking the removal of not only Pillai but all the other three Kerala Congress members from the Assembly on grounds of sedition.

At the end of it all, there was no doubt that the Congress(I) had come off better after the skirmish. Said Sudhakaran: "The resignation of Pillai has made heroes of Youth Congress men all over the state." Even opposition MLA's congratulated the Congress(I) for humbling the Kerala Congress. As E.M.S. Namboodiripad said: "We haven't forgotten the defection of Mani and the Kerala Congress which brought down the Nayanar ministry."

The options for the Kerala Congress were not so promising. But already there are moves to mend its fences with the opposition Left Democratic Front. Mani, who wants the Kerala Congress to become a regional party like the Telugu Desam, is trying to bring all communal parties in the state under one umbrella and float a third front. And Pillai has already begun moves to woo the powerful Nairs by accusing Karunakaran of being responsible for the Nair-dominated National Democratic Party being without a seat in the Assembly due to the resignation of health minister Ramachandran Nair (INDIA TODAY, June 15).

But the biggest hurdle stopping Mani and the Kerala Congress from breaking away from the UDF is the church. The Pope is almost certain to visit Mani's constituency of Palai, a Catholic citadel, when he visits Kerala in 1986. The church is keen that at that time the Kerala Congress should not be allied with the atheist CPI(M) and its supporters. Says Sudhakaran: "Mani would very much like to be in the helicopter that takes the Pope to Palai for a religious function."

Karunakaran remains smug about the prospects for his coalition. The liaison committee of the UDF met in Trivandrum and a temporary truce was thrashed out. But the Kerala Congress, though now licking its wounds, is bound to be more assertive in the future. It has made it clear that it will continue to voice its concern over what it perceives as neglect of the state by the Centre. At present, one of the periodic truces that mark politics in Kerala is on. But as for the the future, it is anybody's guess. —SREEDHAR PILLAI



Q. *What made you say that Kerala could certainly think of a "Punjab model agitation" against the Centre?*

A. I have already denied the report and have said that I have made no such statement. The press has misquoted me.

Q. *But the pressmen covering your party's convention have reiterated their stand and Congress(I) people claim they have tapes of your speech and the chief minister was not happy with your clarifications?*

A. The report was a misinterpretation. I oppose the agitation in Punjab. I detest it and both the chief minister and the governor are satisfied with my explanation. Regarding the tapes, let the Congress(I) make it public.

Q. *Don't you agree that your political career is finished and the Congress(I) has painted you as an anti-national?*

A. I will continue to do political work until my death and my trade union activities give me more pleasure than being a minister. As for the Congress(I) campaign against me, time will prove my innocence.

Q. *A Congress(I) man filed a writ petition against you and there is an anti-Pillai wave unleashed by the Youth Congress(I).*

A. There is a well orchestrated campaign within the ruling front to see me out of politics, because I am not prepared to play ball with them in the manner they want me to. I will continue to fight against injustice heaped upon Kerala from various quarters.

Q. *There is a move by certain people inside the Kerala Congress to ditch you and drive you out of the party.*

A. It is totally baseless, my party stood with me through the crisis and we have come out with our honour intact.

Q. *But the Congress(I) leaders are gloating over the fact that they have humbled you and your party who have been spearheading the movement against the Centre.*

A. The Congress(I) is trying to suppress our voice asking for the state's legitimate rights. This trend if unchecked would force millions of young men and women of the state to remain unemployed. The attempt to silence our expression of these sentiments and to brand us as traitors has become a dangerous fashion with them. The Kerala Congress will definitely fight against these forces at the right time. All I said at Cochin was that the proposed railway coach factory was taken away from Kerala to Punjab. Is it anti-national to speak for Kerala's rights?

Q. *What about your future relationship with the Congress(I)?*

A. My party will decide about it. But for the present I have to fight my case in court. Let me tell you that the people of Kerala are behind me. For the time being I will stay on in Kottarakara, at least till I win my case.

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NAGALAND

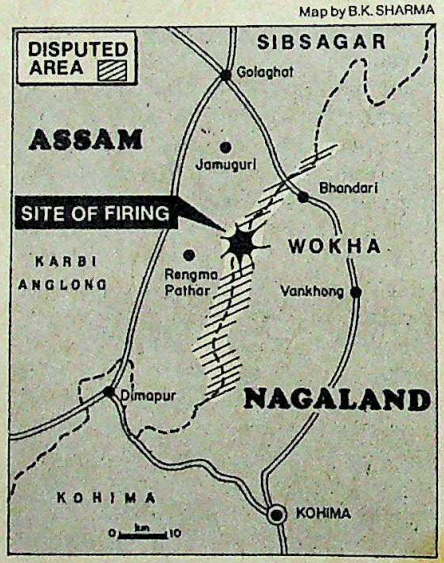
Fighting for Control

A STRANGE battlefield exists 308 km south-east of Guwahati. It stretches over 400 km and has all but one of the elements that make for war between two neighbouring countries. There are rocket launchers, three-inch mortars and medium machine-guns, sandbagged machine gun nests and bunkers, prisoners of war, a no man's land and even neutral forces to keep the trigger-happy troops of warring forces away from each other. The sole missing element in this scenario is an international border.

What happened around Merapani, a small village in Doyang reserve forest along the disputed border tracts between Assam and Nagaland was fratricide at its worst. In a series of clashes that began on the evening of June 4, just when the respective commissioners of the two states were discussing steps to defuse tension along the border, the entire Merapani Bazar was reduced to debris, the Assam police station destroyed, over 27,000 villagers rendered destitute in the conglomeration of settlements around Merapani and—even on conservative estimates—at least 40 people, 30 of them policemen were left dead and over a hundred wounded. And late last fortnight despite the presence of the Assam Rifles, a neutral force under Union Home Ministry control and two "summit" meetings between the chief ministers of the two states, sporadic incidents of arson and assault on civilians continued and brought senior Central officials including Minister of State for Home Affairs, Ram Dulari Sinha, rushing to the region. But after sitting through series of mediation sessions all Mrs Sinha could say, with a bit of optimism, was, "they have both assured me that this will not happen again. Whatever happened was very unfortunate and a result of provocation from both sides." The two state governments, however, were squarely laying the blame on each other's door.

Nagaland authorities claim the tension began to build when the Assam Forest Department decided to construct a checkpost a little ahead of the Merapani police station close to the foothills in Wokha district inhabited by Lotha Nagas. "This was a violation of the 1972 agreement between Assam and Nagaland on maintaining status in disputed areas and rendered thousands of Naga people homeless, provoking them," says Wodemo Bhandari, an official of Wokha district. The Assamese on the other hand claim that the attack from the Nagaland side was totally unprovoked and merely a culmination of provocations that began over a month ago with frequent assaults on civilians. It was in view of these tensions that the commissioners accompanied by senior police and civil officials from the two states met at Dimapur

Map by B.K. SHARMA



in the evening promising to maintain peace on their respective sides and to resume negotiations at a flag meeting near Merapani the following morning. But within minutes of the meeting the Assam Armed Police units at Merapani came under deadly fire.

Survivors of the raid say that the Naga Armed Police units perched on the hills and poured fire downwards with deadly accuracy. Medium machine-guns and three-inch mortars as well as rocket launchers were used to blast the few tunells in which the demoralised Assam police jawans had taken refuge.

The fusillade continued all night and yet on the morning of June 5, P.V. Sumant, deputy inspector general of police (DIG) Jorhat range, decided to go for the flag meeting at the appointed hour. He had to retreat in a bit of a hurry as his jeep, the white flag notwithstanding, came under heavy fire. After that the Nagaland police pulled out all stops, launching a frontal assault on Assam police positions, slaughtering anything, man or beast, that came in their way. So complete was the destruction that five days later, Ram Dulari Sinha returned from a visit to the place almost in tears, loudly complaining of being sick of the stench rising from putrefying bodies of cattle. The entire Merapani Bazar, police station and the house of residents who fled in panic, were ransacked as hundreds of Naga civilians descended on the area following the Nagaland police victory.

The Nagaland Government's version on the other hand is that fighting broke out when the deputy commissioner of Wokha riding a jeep with a white flag was attacked. The Nagas also blame the Assam police for the large number of casualties suffered by them. Said T. Ngullie, Nagaland finance minister and himself a Lotha Naga: "These Assam policemen commit suicide. They had been eating up parts of Naga territory and coming closer to the foothills which is so wrong strategically because even if the Naga police throws a stone down it will hit the Assamese." He, however, hastens to add that what happened was a case of "brother-killing-brother" and thus unfortunate. Added Chief Minister S. Chubatoshi Jamir: "Whatever happened was wrong but provocation came from the Assamese side."

But while it is impossible to fix blame in such situations there in no doubting the much greater belligerence on the Nagaland side. Just a few hours before

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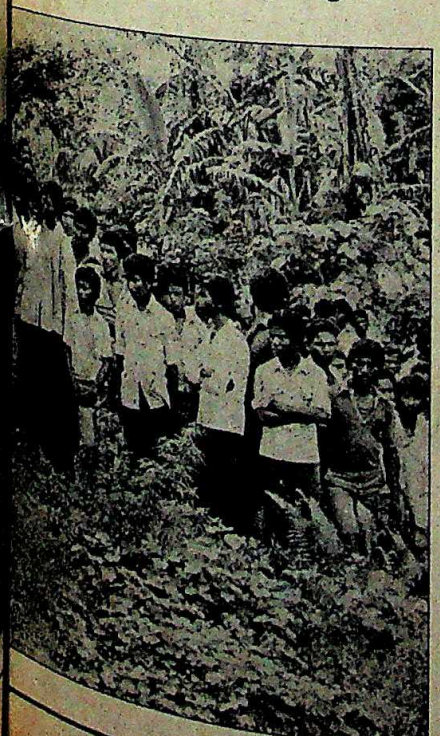
Ram Dulari Sinha's visit an Assam Government ambulance in search for the dead and wounded was attacked and burnt and a wooden bridge on the road leading to Merapani blown up. Assam Rifles officers unnerved by the crisis were advising senior Assam police officers to come to the area only in civvies.

Continuing tension and incidents were only adding to the embarrassment of the Centre where, in the prime minister's absence, there had been initial hesitation in dealing with the situation firmly. But Mrs Sinha, in separate meetings, conveyed the same emphatic message to the two chief ministers, that no matter what happened the Centre could hardly afford to spare its paramilitary forces for policing an inter-state border at a point of time when Punjab and Gujarat required the utmost attention and deployment of all available troops. But officials were sceptical of the possibility of lasting peace. Said one: "There can be no peace in this area until the border problem is decisively solved and the Nagaland Government convinced that it has to behave like any other state in India and not a sovereign entity. They are not even offering to take action against police officers who organised the raid." Officials also said that clashes raised other vital points. The state armed police forces are not issued three-inch mortars, medium machine-guns and rocket launchers yet these were used freely in the attack.

Policemen and Assam Rifles troops keeping at bay fleeing villagers



SHEKHAR GUPTA

It is suspected that these were brought in with the complicity of some of the men in the Border Security Force battalions largely dominated by ex-underground Naga elements.

IN FACT sources do not even rule out the direct involvement of the Naga underground and trace the origins of the incident back to the capture of five Naga student leaders in a Jorhat hotel on April 5. They were seen carrying two shot-guns, secessionist literature, a letter from an organisation called International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs in Copenhagen offering support to the Naga separatist demands and a map showing the major Assam police outposts in the disputed Assam-Nagaland border area. Most vitally, the group was riding a jeep number NLP 1549 belonging to a DIG of Nagaland police. The Assam Government had reported the incident to the Centre along with a complaint that some Naga police officials were threatening to take revenge in case the students and the jeep were not released immediately.

But this could at best be an immediate provocation for a long-standing dispute which has claimed many lives in the last decade. On January 5, 1979, three days after the then Assam chief minister Golap Borbora and Nagaland chief minister Vizol signed a peace accord, Naga villagers aided by police descended on the Chungajan Tinali (tri junction) area and slaughtered 57 Assamese villagers. Since then tension has prevailed along the disputed region consisting of the seven reserve forests of Diphu, south Nambor, Rengma, Doyang, Kakadanga, Dessci and Abhaypur and in spite of the presence of CRPF and Assam Rifles in the more sensitive areas incidents have taken place off and on. Following the Chungajan Tinali massacre the Centre has set up a commission headed by K.V.K. Sundaram which upheld Assam's claims over all but 300 of the over 40,000 sq km of the reserve forest area. "Let them implement the commission's report or set up a new commission," says Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia, arguing "we Assamese did not object to the carving out of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram from our state. What problems can we have with giving a little territory to one of these states if it was not ours. But someone has to tell me which is my territory and which is not." Mrs Sinha indicated that both sides were agreeable to the setting up of yet another commission but her pitch was queered by the categorical statement from Nagaland officials that nothing short of total control over the forest reserves will be acceptable to them. "This land always belonged to the Nagas in history. The Sundaram Commission was no commission and there can be no solution unless all our lands are given to us," said Ngullie shortly before he left for Delhi on urgent summons from the party high command.

While the Congress(I) high command is desperately trying to restrain its men in Nagaland, Central officials say a long-term accord is unlikely since the problem which was initially of strong political significance in both states also has an economic dimension. With the destruction of forests in the region a number of plywood factories along the foothills are starved for supplies and unscrupulous loggers frequently poach into the forest reserves with the connivance of Naga officials. Naga occupation of the region will make things that much easier. The Nagas say the boot is on the other leg and that the Assam officials have plundered the forest wealth by settling over 8,000 tribals and former tea-garden labourers in the forest reserves to show physical occupation of the area. This has been further complicated by the discovery of oil in the area. Nagaland claims special rights over its mineral wealth by virtue of its special status under Article 371 of the Constitution and proposes to set up its own agency for oil prospecting in the region. The state Assembly has also unanimously passed a resolution asking the ONGC to keep its hands off the area. The ONGC has stopped the work for the time being.

In both states this has become an emotional issue. The Assamese harbour a long-standing sense of hurt at the pampering of neighbouring hill states at their expense and the Nagas think oil and timber in the reserve forest area will revolutionise their state's incipient economy. Assam students protested by organising a day's bandh.

Late last week indications were that the Centre was awaiting the return of the prime minister before taking decisive action on the situation which has got both the governments and the Congress(I) in a state of extreme embarrassment. Both the warring states are run by the Congress(I) and Saikia even happens to be the chairman of the north-eastern region Congress(I) coordination committee. "It is really a fight within the family," confessed an Assam Congress(I) leader as a feeling of embarrassment is shared by partymen on both sides of the disputed fence. Yet no one says what will ensure that guns will not boom in the foothills again.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Merapani

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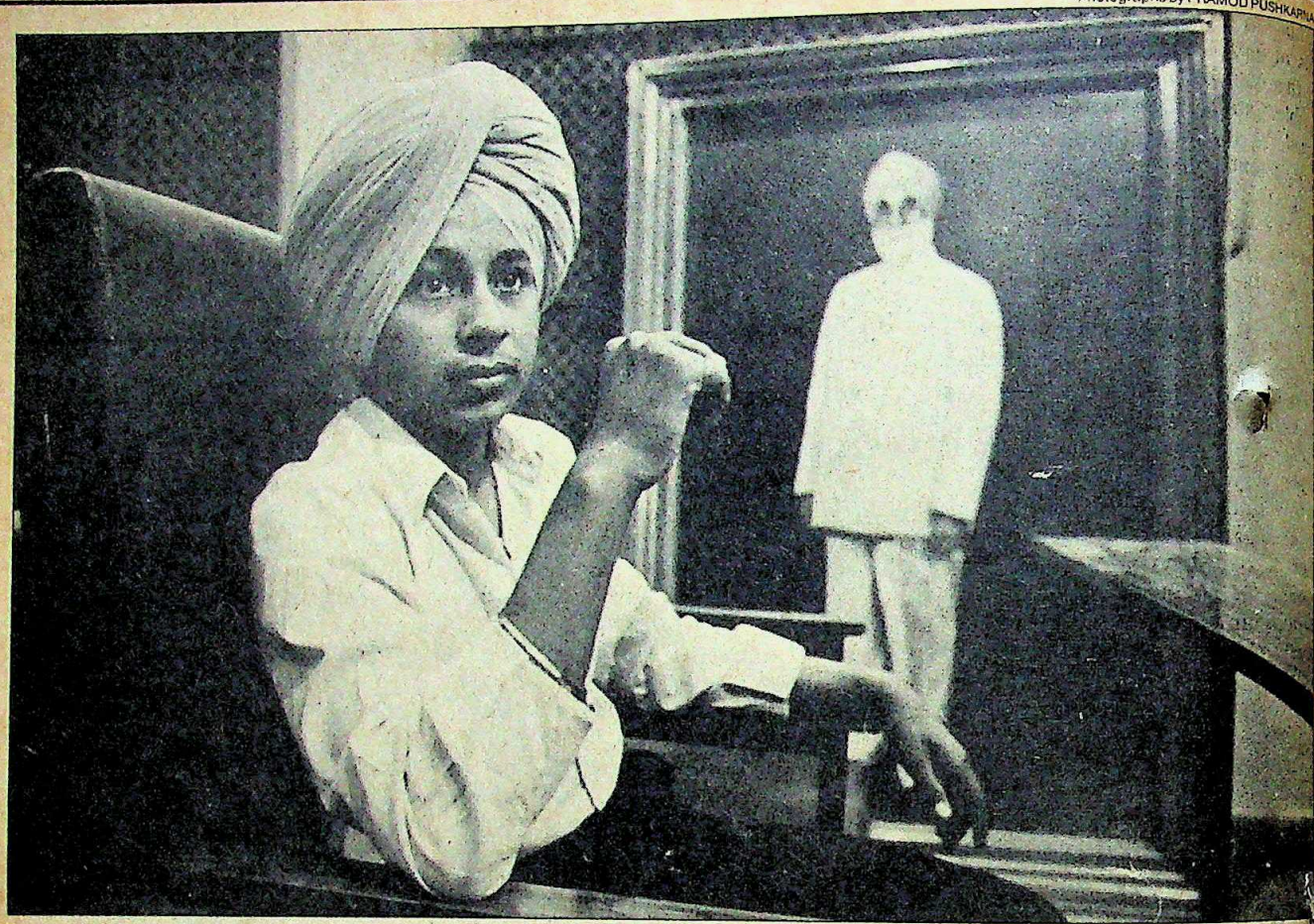
Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Gurbhej Singh: terrorist ambitions

SIKH YOUTH

Wounded Psyche

ACROSS the length and breadth of Punjab, whether village or town, the overriding atmosphere is of sullen anger, an intense feeling of having been wronged; of being up against the wall. Such feelings are alien to the Sikh psyche and in many cases, among the more hot-headed youth, the sense of frustration finds an outlet in terrorist action. So deep are the wounds and widespread the sense of alienation, that, tragically, the security agencies find it virtually impossible to differentiate between the hard core terrorists and those who only pay lip service to it. To gauge the mood of the Sikh youth in Punjab and better identify their feelings and the reasons for them, Special Correspondent RAMINDER SINGH *recently toured the troubled state extensively and talked to a wide cross-section of the youth in the villages as well as the cities. His report.*

TRAVELLING through Punjab is no easy task these days. Approaching the troubled districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur the barricades increase as do the numerous security checks. Passengers are asked to get down from buses to be searched; tongas, scooters, motorcycles are routinely stopped. Rarely is a terrorist arrested or arms discovered at these highway checkposts. In over a month, a BSF manned checkpost between Jalandhar and Amritsar had recovered only one pistol from a car, but the searches continue. The harassed citizen deeply resents this frequent invasion of his privacy, and is generally unwilling to help the security forces when the need to apprehend a real terrorist arises. More than anything else the hamhanded police action serves only to needle an already alienated population causing it to believe that Punjab is under occupation.

Being armed and riding motorcycles appeals to the macho instincts of the youth, and Bhindranwale realised this. Wearing a kesari turban is a macho invitation to danger.

Car searches along the highways are the least hurtful of police actions. Most checks are perfunctory. "*Kahan say aa rahay ho, kahan jaana hai*" the jawans ask as if terroristic intent can be gauged from the replies. Larger sections of the population have been turned against the Central Government, which is perceived as the directing authority, by the midnight knock, the late night searches and arrests, often on the flimsiest of evidence or no evidence at all, of young Sikhs suspected to be terrorists. Even former foreign minister Swaran Singh, a perceptive observer of the Punjab scene, says that "70 per cent or more of the arrested youth in Punjab are absolutely innocent. Still they are made to go through the police grinder". And he is not a man given to hyperbole. "If this process, which has created the present mood among the boys is reversed, the accruals to the

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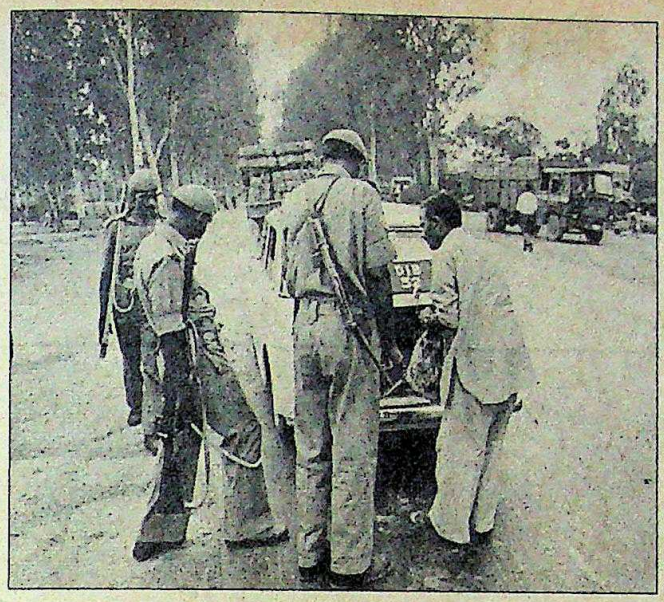
numbers of terrorists will stop." This observation is echoed by youth and elders alike across the troubled state; it is the police *tashaddud* (tyranny) which is creating extremists. "Nobody is going around recruiting terrorists," says Swaran Singh, adding that any violent incident is swiftly followed by the police rounding up suspects indiscriminately. The Delhi bombings last month triggered off a virtual competition among the police of neighbouring states and they succeeded in rounding up nearly 1,000 persons. But long after those actually responsible for the killings in Delhi and elsewhere were arrested, those picked up in Punjab remain in jail. As one young man arrested on the Pakistan border said: "Once an innocent person suffers at the hands of the police, the germ of terrorism is born in his mind even if it wasn't there before."



Car search on Jalandhar-Amritsar highway

Take the case of a young student of Jalandhar's Lyallpur Khalsa College which is narrated by Principal Harnarinder Singh. The student was released by the police just before the college examinations started in May. He pleaded with the principal that he may not be able to take the examination because of the injuries he had suffered in detention at the hands of the police. The boy took off his shirt to display a chest criss-crossed with deep, inflamed cuts. He said the police had used blades to lacerate his chest and then rubbed salt into the wounds. This young man was willing to listen to reason, but others are turned into ripe candidates for the ranks of the terrorists.

Some youth seek revenge after being persecuted or tortured by the police, others react after seeing their parents and elders humiliated in front of the entire village. "They pull the beards of our elders and knock off their turbans," complained a young 18-year-old student of Amritsar's Ajnoha village, who put on a kesari turban and travelled to the Golden Temple to *amrit chhako* (take a vow to observe the most fundamental aspects of the religion). "We want that no one should show any disrespect to our faith," he said, adding that such incidents had charged the atmosphere in the countryside with tension and almost all youth supported the demand for Khalistan. Had he thought about what Khalistan meant, its territorial boundaries, its viability? "That's for our leaders to think about," he shot back. Before Operation Bluestar his father, a retired army man, was a *kattar*

Malkiat Singh and son: genuine complaint

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congressi, but no more.

Most Sikhs see Operation Bluestar as the starting point of the process of alienation. All that went before is forgotten and subsequent happenings, particularly in the wake of Mrs Gandhi's assassination, created the apprehension that their future in the country was insecure. "The action against the Golden Temple has created a mental block. Time does not move after that," says Dr Attar Singh, professor of Punjabi Studies at Punjab University, Chandigarh.

There is young Gurbhej Singh Gill, at 16, a minor celebrity in Amritsar. A class 10 student, he is one of the youngest self-proclaimed terrorists in a city which has produced many, specially since last June. Gurbhej came to the notice of the authorities recently, when he was caught attempting to cross over to Pakistan near the Dera Baba Nanak border along with a 13-year-old schoolmate, Inderpal Singh. Gurbhej's case is important because he is not the standard village boy. Son of a retired havildar major he spent most of his childhood in the nationalistic environment of army cantonments and Central schools. In the Central School in Amritsar too, Gurbhej used to join his schoolmates in lustily singing *Saray jahan say achchha Hindustan hamara*. But his feelings changed after Operation Bluestar. From his house in Gumtala village on the outskirts of Amritsar, he could see and hear the blasts as the army attacked the terrorists holed up in the Golden Temple. "Army action *ton baad dil bahut kharaab hoya tay asi sochiya kay government day khilaaf larna pavega.*" (I felt very bad after the army action and I thought that we would have to fight against the Government.)

The first step was to substitute Khalistan for Hindustan in *Saray jahan say achchha*. Then came the kesari coloured turban. Gurbhej said that after Operation Bluestar Hindu boys in the school used to taunt him saying *mar gaya tumhara Bhindranwale*. He resented this even though he was no follower of the slain man having seen him just once and that too from a distance at a religious congregation. If Sikh boys did anything mischievous in school the Hindu boys would say *yeh darbar sahib nahin hai*, and this invariably led to fisticuffs.

But what pushed him over the brink was the killing of innocent Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere after Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the resolve was born to go across to Pakistan for military training. He had no fear of being arrested in Pakistan. "I never thought negatively that I would be shot or arrested. *Ik vaari aadmi iraada pakka karlay tay koi vi mushkil nahin rok sakdi. Jo karna so kar dayna hai.*" (Once a person makes up his mind then nothing can stop him. What has to be done must be done.)

The authorities thank their luck for having foiled Gurbhej, whose dimpled, innocent face hides a razor sharp brain and a scary determination. They admit that the strongly motivated Gurbhej has the makings of a leader and it was just as well his clandestine Pakistan trip was aborted. Moreover they can now analyse what makes an innocent schoolboy cross the line into terrorism's dark and dangerous world.

"The Sikhs want to know what the preponderant majority wants of us. Does it want to keep the Sikhs with them? This is the vital point."

—SWARAN SINGH

Like Gurbhej there are many young students in schools and colleges in Punjab: young, angry and frighteningly single-minded, who voice similar sentiments. Like the two 16-year-old prep students from Sansarpur village on the outskirts of Jalandhar Cantonment. Why were they wearing kesari turbans? Pat came the reply "Because we want Khalistan". Behind that radical slogan, there lies a complex sense of injury, a desire for a place where, they say, their religion will be "safe", where they will experience "full respect for our places of worship and the right to live as first-class citizens. If they consider us equals and treat us as equals maybe we won't ask for Khalistan," one of the boys replies. For most of them Khalistan is just a knee-jerk demand, raised because they know it annoys the authorities. In their minds Khalistan is not yet a firm ideological concept, but the seeds have been sown by the attack on extremists in the Golden Temple and the wholesale burning of gurudwaras and killing of Sikhs in Delhi last November. This created a psychosis that Sikhs and Sikhism may not be allowed to survive in India. Asks Swaran Singh: "The Sikhs want to know what the preponderant majority wants of us. Does it want to keep the Sikhs with them? This is the vital point." Since this question is echoed all over Punjab, the most important task before the Government is to do something to demonstrate to the Sikhs that they and their religion are secure in India. Chandigarh and the river waters are only the political demands of the Akalis. The main issues for the Sikhs in and outside Punjab are self-respect and the security of their religion.

A professor of the Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar said whenever he told students that Khalistan would mean severe problems, the students replied "Are we happy here?" Being armed, and riding motorcycles appealed to the macho instincts of the youth, and Bhindranwale realised this. Wearing a kesari turban is a macho invitation to danger, because security forces have in the past taken away youth who wore kesari. When this happened students of the Amritsar Khalsa College wrote to the deputy commissioner asking why the authorities objected to kesari, a colour in the national flag.

The more elderly and mature among the Sikhs in Punjab also seem to understand and sympathise with the problems of the youth. When a call is given in the name of religion a large number of Sikhs psyche themselves into responding with an almost fanatical fervour, or *dharmik junoon* as post-graduate student Paramjit Kaur of Guru Nanak Dev University calls it. "So far the Sikh has proudly been laying down his life for the nation. Now he talks of laying down his life against the nation in defence of his religion. "The Government has thus

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25th

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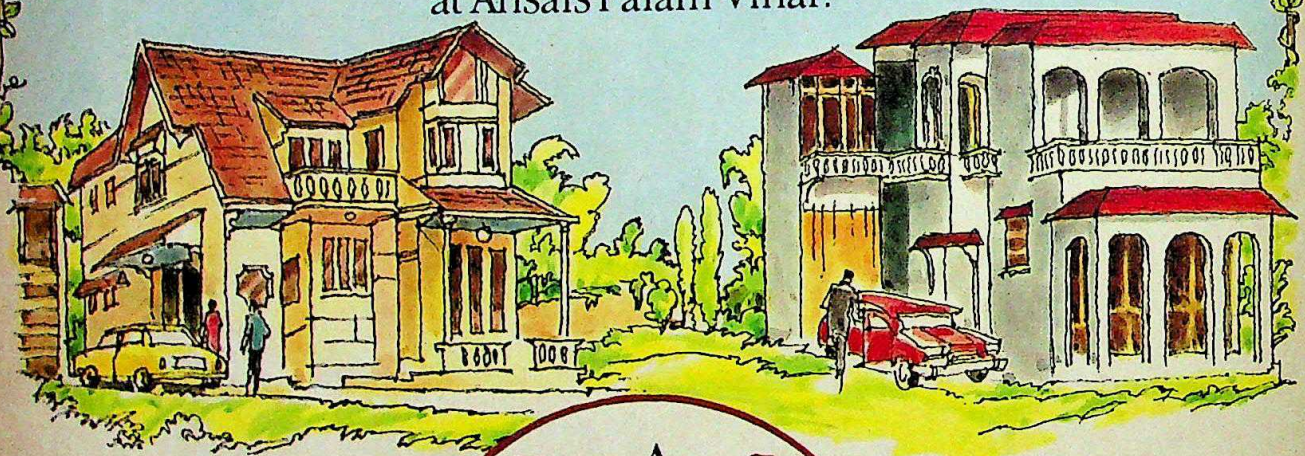

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turned a tremendous asset into a liability," rues Chandigarh human rights lawyer K.T.S. Tulsi.

The Sikh collective consciousness derives from his religion, argues Dr Attar Singh. Mrs Gandhi's assassins Beant Singh and Satwant Singh were only peripheral Sikhs, yet they felt driven to avenge the events in the Golden Temple. Dr Singh explains: "Beant, a Harijan, was a CPI(M) student activist in his college days in Chandigarh and married a Christian nurse, Bimla, now being called Bimal Khalsa. Satwant, on the other hand, is the son of a Radha Soami father and was clean-shaven when he shot Mrs Gandhi. He grew a beard only in jail. If these people felt so bad about the army action in the Golden Temple, how would traditional Sikhs have felt?" The Sikh gurudwaras and shrines are a part of the daily life experience in Punjab. Historic gurudwaras, built to commemorate some event or deed in the life of the gurus, dot the countryside. The centrepiece of this religious consciousness is the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar. "*Amritsar Sikhaan da dil hai,*" explained a young farmer visiting the Golden Temple for the first time since June 1984.

At times like this young Sikhs recall the martial exploits of Guru Gobind Singh who for them remains the guru most worth emulating. Adorning the main hall in the gurudwara at Chamkaur Sahib, built on the spot where two of the guru's sons died in battle, are large paintings depicting the young warriors riding into battle. Young Sikhs come and sit rapt before these paintings, as did a newly married youth and his bride last fortnight. He turned out to be an employee in the deputy commissioner's office, but even this had not helped him escape humiliation and harassment at the hands of the CRPF. "*Koi sunwayee nahin hai,*" he muttered (there is no redress). One hears this refrain all over the state and all the time.

Exactly the same words are repeated by a Malkiat Singh, a poor Mazhabi tea shop owner at the Ajitwal village mandi near Jagraon. He has reason to complain; after the Delhi bomb blasts the police took away his 14-year-old son Chamkaur Singh from the shop. The boy was released four days later after Malkiat stood bail for Rs 50,000. Argued Malkiat: "If we were involved in any nefarious activities we would not be cleaning dirty utensils at this tea-shop." The police never caught the real troublemakers but only rounded up poor people and Mazhabis to swell the arrest figures. Malkiat alleged that the police frequently took money to arrest the rivals of rich people who have scores to settle. The biggest extremists are the police he says. But despite this, the feeling of nationalism is not dead. Almost every wheat laden tractor trolley trundling into the Jagraon Mandi carries the painted legend—'Jai Jawan jai Kisan'. And farmer Buta Singh of far-away Jhander village near Tarn Taran complains that the Government is sowing the seeds of dissension by giving Punjab farmers a Rs 5 bonus on the wheat price but not to those in Haryana. "Are they not farmers too?" he asks.

"This is the crisis. The number of Khalistanis is microscopic, and most youth want only respect and jobs."

—GURBAX SINGH SHERGILL

What bothers Buta Singh is the question of a livelihood for his five sons who have to eke out a living from only four acres of land. This lack of jobs for rural youth, said Principal Gurbax Singh Shergill of the Amritsar Khalsa College, increases tensions in the countryside. Both yield and income from agriculture have peaked but the cost of agricultural inputs keeps rising. As a result "70 to 80 per cent of all landowners are in debt and cannot pay back their loans." Shergill said only 10 out of 100 graduates from the college could secure jobs. "This is the crisis. The number of Khalistanis is microscopic, and most Sikh youth want only respect and jobs."

To a large extent, Shergill's students agree. Many of them want a speedy solution of the Punjab tangle so that the Government can lift the ban on creation of new jobs. One such youth is agriculture student Gurbhajan Singh Aulakh, 22, from Nurpur Bedi in Ropar district. Concurs his classmate Tejpal Singh: "Extremism is born out of frustration and unemployment. If the Punjab problem is solved there would be no need for Khalistan." Arvinder Singh, 21, of Ropar's Mundian village is more forthright. If all innocent persons in jail were not released, the army deserters not treated leniently, and full protection not assured to Sikhs outside Punjab, then Khalistan would indeed become a reality. "First a person asks, then he takes," warned Arvinder Singh.

Paramjit Kaur does not believe in Khalistan, but she voices the feelings of her friends when she says "*Assi agar Congress diyan juttiyan hi khaniyan nen tay Khalistan beyshak ban jaavey.*" (If humiliation at the hands of the Congress is the only alternative, then let Khalistan come).

The genuine Khalistanis probably number only a few thousand, and they will never be satisfied. For the rest Khalistan is only an emotion, a symptom rather than the disease. It is not yet an unstoppable juggernaut, but "you cannot counter Khalistan by making arrests and beating up people. It is an emotional problem born out of frustration and when that frustration is removed, Khalistan will be reversed," says Swaran Singh. The first step needed is to bring the Punjab problem back onto the political plane as something which can be solved by negotiations between the Akalis and the Central Government. Operation Bluestar and the later developments had turned it into a dispute between the Sikh community and the Congress(I) party. If this is done there is hope that the drift can be halted. But if no remedial action is taken this hope too can turn into frustration, just as the rancour in the Punjab countryside today is partly the product of too many of yesterday's hopes gone sour.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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BANGLADESH

The Winds of Destruction

BANGLADESH, last fortnight, was slowly and painfully recovering from the devastating effects of the killer cyclone that raged through the numerous islands dotting the mouth of the Meghna estuary in the southern part of the country, resulting in one of the worst natural disasters in recent memory. Calcutta Correspondent INDRANIL BANERJIE *and Chief Photographer* BHAWAN SINGH *flew down to Chittagong to cover the tragedy but encountered some unforeseen problems of their own. They were detained for over 12 hours by local authorities at Sandwip, barely 12 miles from Uri Char which bore the brunt of the devastation, on the day that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi arrived along with Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene. No reasons were given. In Dhaka, the authorities also proved singularly uncooperative in giving out even standard official information about the tragedy or granting appointments. But civil officials and local inhabitants, in sharp contrast, were extremely cooperative in helping to piece together the build-up to the tragedy, its aftermath, and the abject failure of the martial law administration to either take effective pre-emptive steps to save many of the lives that were lost or to bring speedy relief to the victims in the wake of the cyclone. Banerjie's report:*

RAMAZAAN, the month of ritual fasting for Muslims, began this year on May 22. In retrospect, it could not have been a more inauspicious day for it was on May 22 that meteorological monitors first spotted a cyclone of increasing intensity headed for the Bay of Bengal. But 48 hours later, the cyclone suddenly swerved towards Bangladesh and at 3 a.m. on May 24, it hit the southern coast with devastating fury at a speed exceeding 130 kmph creating tidal waves more than 12 feet high that washed away entire villages before the inhabitants had a chance to react.

Recalls Avlaitum, 35, an inhabitant of Uri Char: "We were inside our hut praying to Allah that the cyclone would pass us by when we saw a wall of water and the next moment we didn't know where we were." Only Avlaitum and his wife Jusnara survived. Five other members of the family were never seen again. A few lucky

A body of a victim of the cyclone at Uri Char

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ones survived because the currents somehow washed them back to shore. But a week later, bloated bodies were still being washed ashore. Over 1,300 bodies were officially recovered from Noakhali district, as far as 20 miles away from where they originally lived.

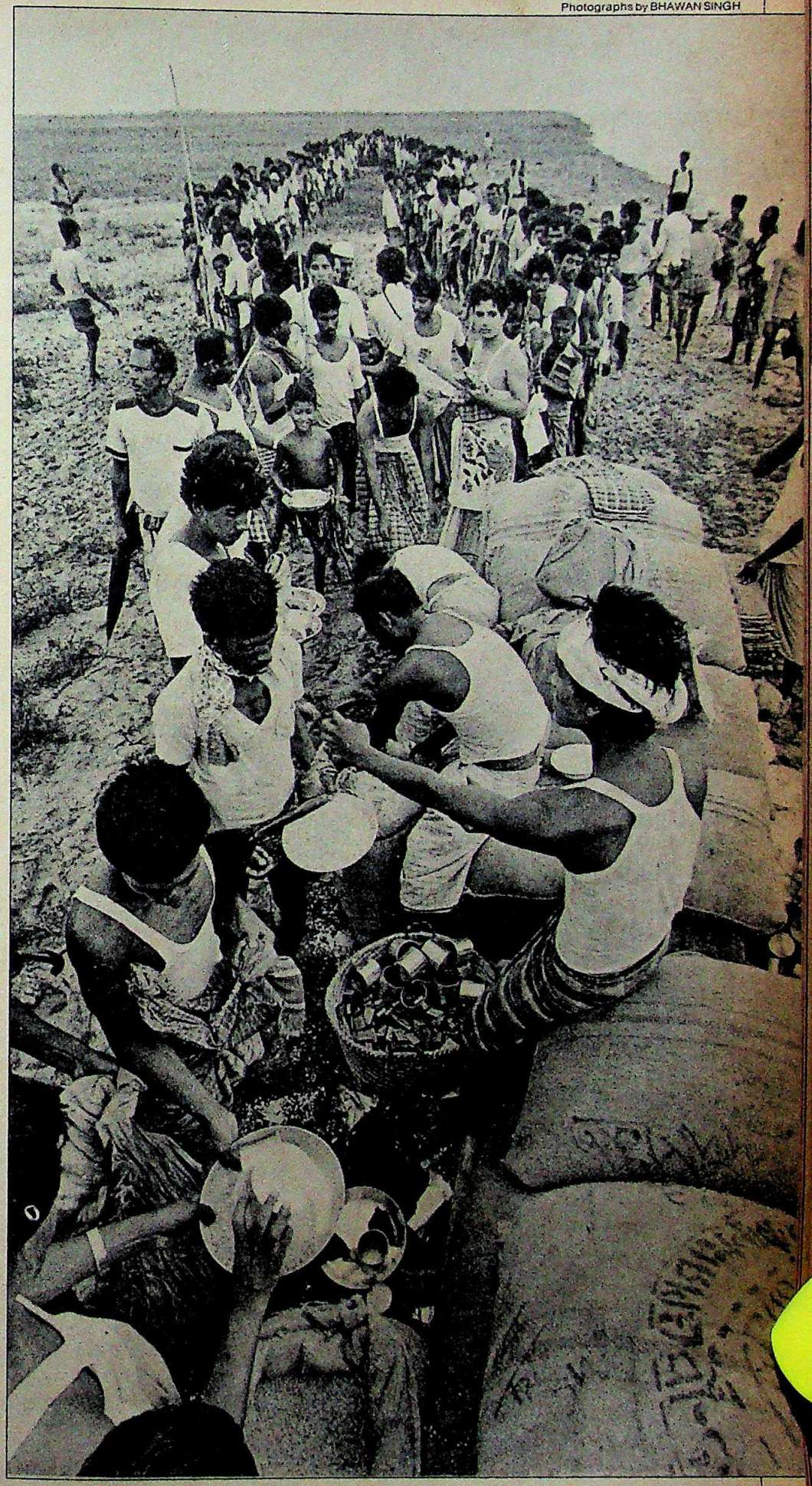
The extent of the devastation became clear only when Bangladesh naval ships hesitatingly ventured out from their haven at Chittagong port more than 24 hours after the cyclone hit. Ten days after the disaster, the administration announced that 2,086 corpses had been recovered and another 4,855 people were missing, believed dead. The unofficial death toll, however, ranged between 10,000 to 50,000. At Uri Char alone, of the approximate 12,000 population, relief workers estimate that only 3,500 survived. The total damage was, in any event, of a frightening magnitude. Over 1,900 square miles of area spread over six of the country's 21 districts had been ravaged. Over a lakh houses were destroyed, 1,32,860 acres of crops destroyed along with an estimated 1.05 lakh head of livestock. The total number of people affected by the devastating cyclone was around 1.2 million.

But as in all natural disasters, survival can be as destructive as death. Hundreds of people jammed into the relief camps, many of them children, have lost entire families or their sole means of livelihood. Yet, an alarming majority of the former inhabitants of Uri Char are determined to return to the island and restart their precarious existence where death and devastation lurk round every corner. Says Mohamed Zakir Hussein: "We have nowhere else to go. Only in char lands can we till a patch of earth, keep goats and somehow survive." For many, living on the edge of survival, the constant battle with nature ensures that nightmares are a permanent feature.

But, as Abdur Rahim, executive editor of the *Bangladesh Observer*, the largest circulated English daily in Dhaka, says: "Ultimately, the people inhabiting the char islands can never win." The char islands are essentially temporary islands formed by silt deposited by the outflow from the estuaries. During the monsoons, most inhabitants move to the bigger islands like Sandwip and return when the waters recede. "These are places where only the most desperate people, the wretched of the earth, dare to live," says Rahim.

That, tragically, is the core of the pro-

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



Relief operations on one of the affected islands

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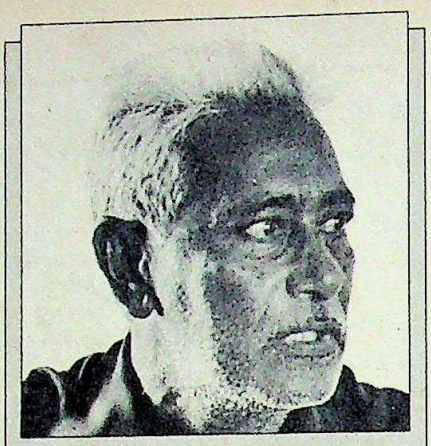
"The Government's relief operations are confined to what is shown on television as Ershad moves around with foreign leaders and teams of reporters."

—SHEIKH HASINA,
opposition leader



"The navy gives relief to any gathering of people instead of going to the affected areas and giving it to individual families."

—RAFIQUALLAH CHOWDHURY,
chairman, Sandwip Upazilla

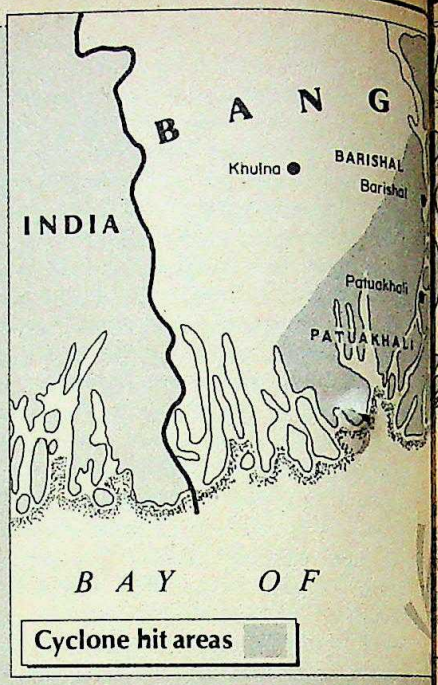
blem. Till the disaster, Uri Char did not even exist officially. It was declared part of the Sandwip Upazilla only after the country's martial law ruler Lt-General H.M. Ershad flew to Sandwip with newsmen on May 26. Addressing a public meeting, Ershad declared that the char would have a proper administration and also promised that the long-awaited cross dam between Uri Char and Sandwip would be started next year. Chars are also the favourite targets of roving bands of pirates. Two days before the disaster, pirates raided Uri Char and took away the only radio on the island thus depriving the inhabitants of the special weather bulletins warning of the impending danger. The cyclone took away whatever little remained.

But even as the world reacted by pouring in relief supplies and financial aid, the Bangladesh administration came under increasing fire for the discriminatory manner in which the relief was being distributed. At Sandwip, which is relatively well connected to the mainland, relief operations were confined to the more accessible areas around the main town. A team of doctors who toured some of the worst affected coastal areas, found disease in the form of diarrhoea rampant and the people starved of saline and drinking water. "Several people have already died of diarrhoea and many more are on the verge of dying," said Ghulam Kibria, a forest official deputed for relief work. Elsewhere, there were innumerable stories of relief material being misappropriated by local officials.

The biggest problem, according to the newly-elected chairman of Sandwip Upazilla, Rafiquallah Chowdhury, was the navy's handling of the relief operations. "The navy gives relief to any gathering of people instead of going to the affected areas and giving it to individual families. People bringing relief are not being helped. This is not a good thing." In frustration, he blurts out: "I am the elected chairman and yet I have to sit back in my chair not being able to do a thing."

Currently, political and voluntary organisations bringing relief are being forced to depend on the painfully slow steamer services and local trawlers to reach the affected areas while the navy frigates and patrol boats sit snugly in their berths with hardly a shipload of material being dispatched each day. Admits Sub-Lt M. Rahman: "We cannot always send a ship each day." Even the air force helicopters based at Chittagong are being used almost exclusively for ferrying officials and only the occasional load of medicines and drinking water.

Though Commodore M.M. Islam, the martial law administrator of the Chittagong zone, reels of an impressive list of items distributed by the navy, even after the visit of Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lanka's J.R. Jayewardene, only a few forlorn corrugated iron huts are visible at Uri Char.



CYCLONES

Death Wave

COASTAL Bangladesh has since antiquity been devastated by killer cyclones, recurring every decade and in their passing churning a wake of death and destitution. "It's a curious coincidence of topography and social conditions that make cyclone tragedies inevitable in this part of the world," says Dr H. Zahman of the meteorological station at Dhaka.

Strangely, it is not the cyclones brewed in the Bay of Bengal that are in themselves responsible for the destruction. "Cyclones formed in the bay, for instance, never exceed a speed of 150 miles per hour, whereas typhoons and hurricanes in the Pacific and Atlantic travel faster than 200 mph," explains Dr Zahman, "and yet cyclones hitting coastal Bangladesh prove to be far more destructive than either typhoons or hurricanes." What is more, cyclones hitting coastal Orissa or Andhra generally create less havoc than similar ones appearing over the Chittagong, Noakhali, Barishal and Patuakhali districts of Bangladesh.

The problem is the abrupt elevation in the underwater continental shelf in coastal Bangladesh and the funnel shaped mouth of the Meghna Estuary. "When the cyclone moves over the sea it pushes ahead a wall of water called a surge or sea level rise," says Zahman, "and this surge gets abruptly amplified

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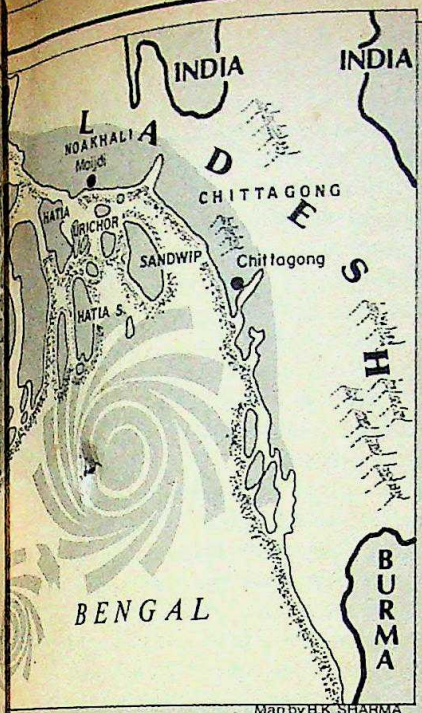


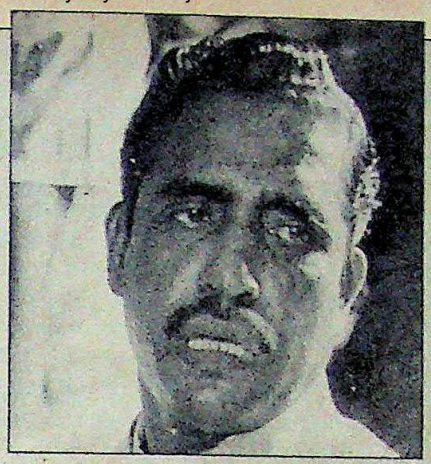
Map by B.K. SHARMA

to a wall of water 10 to 15 feet high."

Even this surge would not have been so destructive had the "tidal range" that is, the difference in the height of sea level between low and high tide, not been extremely high in the coastal region towards Chittagong. Thus, a similar surge hitting the mouth of the Hooghly or Orissa would not rise as much as it would during high tide in coastal Bangladesh. Not surprisingly, every major cyclone disaster in the area has been caused by a surge sweeping in during high tide in the dead of night.

The pre-monsoon cyclones occurring in the months of April and May are generally less powerful than the post-monsoon (October-December) ones, but catch the islanders in the chars (mud islands) unawares. This time too, the inhabitants of smaller chars like Lakshmi, Urir, Uttar, Kukri Mukri, who generally shift temporarily to safer grounds during the monsoons, were hit when they least expected it. A similar tragedy occurred 20 years ago on May 11 when about 20,000 people died.

Most really colossal cyclone tragedies have, however, occurred in the post-monsoon period, beginning from the historic disaster of 1876 which is said to have killed several lakh people. The next big killer occurred on November 12 1970 wiping out about 2 lakh people. In between there have been scores of less publicised disasters, killing 4,000 to 1,000 people each time. But for the people populating the *chars*, the cyclones are something to be lived with.



"We are a poor country, but the Government had never had any real concern for the rural poor."

—ABDUR RAZAK,
general secretary, Bakshal

"Why should people continue to die like dogs while crores of takas being pumped into the country from abroad go into the constuction of Dhaka?

—WADUD BHUNIYA,
resident, Hatiya Island

Charged opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the country's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, after touring the cyclone-affected areas: "The Government's relief operations are confined to what is shown on television as Ershad moves around with foreign leaders and teams of reporters." Hasina claims that according to reports from her workers, the lesser known chars have hardly received any relief at all. Her claims are echoed by Khaleda Zia, widow of assassinated President Zia-ur Rehman.

Such charges could have been dismissed as political polemic were they not so widespread. Among the common people, including large sections of the middle class, the aftermath of the cyclone disaster appears to have brought the festering resentment against the martial law regime boiling to the surface. Political parties claim that they are being prevented from distributing supplies and banners of the Awami League at relief camps have been torn down by martial law officials. At Uri Char, there is considerable anger directed not at Ershad personally but at his military with their arbitrary powers and their superior arrogance. The military dictatorship is being held responsible for callously allowing many of the 270-odd cyclone shelters built during Mujibur Rahman's rule to fall into disuse and the argument that the Government simply does not have the money to maintain and build cyclone shelters is dismissed scornfully even by civil servants.

Says Wadud Bhuniya, a resident of Hatiya island: "The Government has a massive programme for providing schools in every thana area in the country. It could easily build pucca schools that could be used as shelters." But that kind of investment and motivation will have to wait till the martial law administration first provides money to build the 1.37 lakh houses destroyed or damaged by the cyclone estimated to cost around Rs 6.5 crore. In all, the Government estimates it needs about US $ 50 million as foreign aid for the entire rehabilitation programme while contributions so far have totalled around $ 16 million.

But whether that money will be used for the actual purpose it is meant for is also open to question. "We are a poor country," says Abdur Razak, general secretary of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Bakshal), "but the Government never had any concern for the rural poor. Rural programmes, cooperatives and community centres have all languished during the military rule." The average Bangladeshi, like Wadud Bhuniya, asks the one poignant question that finds many an echo: "Why should people continue to die like dogs while crores of takas being pumped into the country from abroad go into the construction of Dhaka?" The answer, as the singer said, is still blowing in the winds.

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SRI LANKA

Hope on the Horizon

IT TOOK a terrible tragedy to achieve what months of diplomatic effort had failed to do—bring about a summit meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene to thrash out a possible solution to the escalating ethnic strife in the latter country. Last fortnight, as the two leaders met in New Delhi and then flew down together to Bangladesh in a rare gesture of South Asian solidarity with a country ravaged by one of the worst natural disasters in recent years, it was clear that hope for an end to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis hovered on the horizon. For the first time, a cease-fire, however temporary, in the bloody and brutal war in northern Sri Lanka was in the air if not yet on the ground. And, considering the build-up to the summit, that in itself symbolised a major miracle.

India's Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari had been dispatched to Colombo by Rajiv immediately after their return from Moscow. His mission: to persuade Jayewardene to come to New Delhi for a long-awaited summit. But Colombo was still smarting at the intemperate remarks made by Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Khurshid Alam Khan when he told Parliament that the situation in Sri Lanka's eastern provinces was "inhuman, cruel and barbaric".

> **For the first time, a ceasefire, however temporary, in the bloody and brutal war in northern Sri Lanka was in the air if not yet on the ground.**

The statement raised the curtain on a new round of tension in the Indo-Sri Lankan drama. Colombo stunned its neighbours by announcing that it would not attend the South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) meeting in Bhutan. But the set-back eventually produced a positive fall-out. Placated by appeals from Pakistan's President Zia-ul-Haq, Rajiv Gandhi and Bhutan's king Jigme Wangchuk, Colombo fielded a new personality on the south Asian scene. Instead of Foreign Minister S. Hameed or his deputy Tyrone Fernando who had called India the "biggest bully" on prime time television as well as in the Sri Lankan Parliament, the man chosen to represent Sri Lanka at Thimpu was Esmond Wickremasinghe. An ex-newspaper boss, the first Asian chairman of the International Press Institute, he was foreign policy adviser to former premier Sir John Kotelawela at Bandung and is a working

BANGLADESH

Air Craft

"YOU HAVE a pilot for prime minister. What else will you have if not airborne diplomacy?" asked a slightly incredulous Bangladesh army officer at Kurmitola Airport on the outskirts of Dhaka.

The build-up was indeed daunting and the action smacked of an airborne troop landing. Within moments of the landing of the Indian Air Force Boeing 737 carrying Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lanka's President Junius Jayewardene, everyone, including the horde of VVIPs swiftly walked up the red carpet to the waiting fleet of helicopters and within 10 minutes of the landing the first helicopter, a blue-and-white Mi-8 was airborne. The remaining nine followed quickly.

The same spirit continued on the inundated Uri Char island, ravaged by a cyclonic tidal wave last fortnight. The bone-dry patch of landing cleared by the Bangladesh authorities in the morning had suddenly got flooded all over again due to high tide and there were just four dry patches left, leaving the helicopters to offload their passengers by relay. Three Bangladesh army jawans, each one carrying a freshly-washed pair of gum-boots, waited at the perch for the VIP helicopter carrying Rajiv Gandhi, Jayewardene and Bangladesh President Lieutenant-General H.M. Ershad. Rajiv Gandhi alighted first wearing his own green gum-boots. Jayewardene refused to get out of his sandals and was supported by an army jawan across the treacherous path leading a western newsman to wonder how symbolic it was of the state of affairs in Sri Lanka.

The path led to a tiny house on stilts, the only one to survive the tidal wave in the area and used by the relief authorities as their local headquarters. After a briefing by Major-General Nuruddin, in charge of the relief operations, the three leaders merged with the waiting crowd of cyclone victims and distributed clothes and rations.

This was, by all means, a most unusual diplomatic coup. At a time when river water talks were in progress in Dhaka, President Ershad, who has normally been full of complaints against India, had no choice but to say he was touched. "This gesture will strengthen the spirit of South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC)," he declared at the evening press briefing. It was obvious that he and Rajiv Gandhi could not have had much time to talk in the course of a noisy helicopter ride. But it was possibly the first time in the post-Mujib era that an Indian prime minister and a Bangladesh president were spending a few cordial hours together.

The same in a way applied to Sri Lanka which has made no secret of its suspicions of India's intentions regarding the ethnic crisis in the northern parts of that country. All along the tour, Jayewardene was given pre-eminence in protocol and, according to diplomatic sources, talks on board the IAF Boeing were extremely cordial. The result was evident within two days of the visit: Jayewardene made a conciliatory statement to the Sri Lankan parliament and publicly stated that he trusted the Indian leadership.

More than a mercy mission, this was a diplomatic exercise and Indian officials were not too bashful about admitting that. After all, whether the Bangladesh Air Force could spare nearly half its operational fleet of helicopters for this occasion in the midst of a national calamity is a question that could have bothered them as long as Ershad was willing.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with the prime minister's party in Uri Char

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member of the ruling United National Party (UNP) as well as an intimate aide of President Jayewardene.

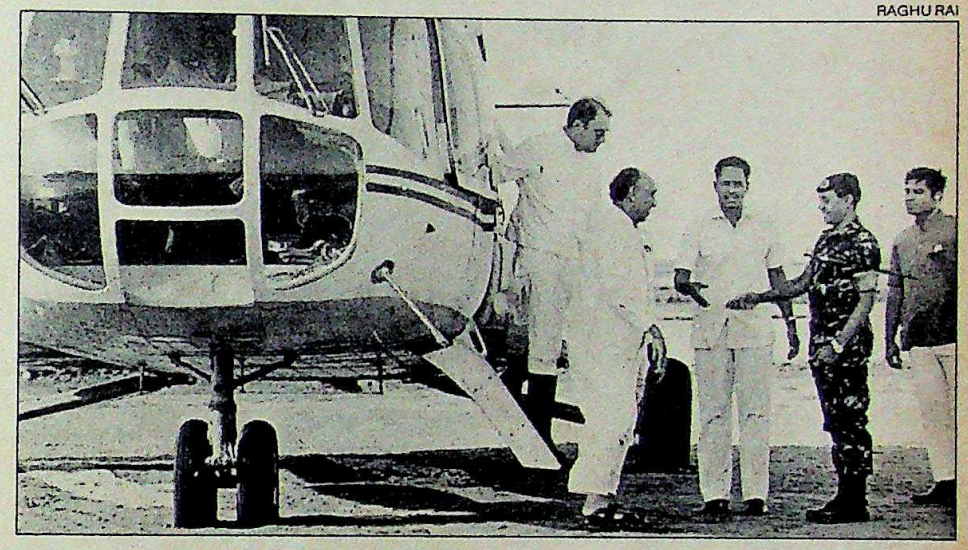
His reputation is that of an intelligent and quick-witted man with wide international experience and the epitome of old world charm. In other words, he was the perfect partner for India's new trouble-shooter for the neighbourhood, Romesh Bhandari. The change in negotiators on both sides produced immediate results.

In striking contrast to his predecessor, the ascetic, aloof and Brahmanical G.P. Parathasarathy, Bhandari arrived in Colombo bursting with bonhomie and succeeded in winning official approval in Colombo. He has earned the nickname Romesh "no problem" Bhandari and the hurriedly-convened Rajiv-Jayewardene summit was partly the result of his efforts. Wickremasinghe, on his part, had already smoothed the way during his 40-minute discussion with Rajiv Gandhi on his way back from Bhutan, a discussion widely hailed as a "breakthrough" by the media. When the killer cyclone swept through Bangladesh in late May, Rajiv's suggestion that the two leaders kill two birds with one stone by scheduling the summit along with a visit to Bangladesh found immediate favour.

Apart from the change in personalities it was the change in the situation in Colombo that lent weight to the pressure for a face-to-face encounter between the two leaders. The mid-May Anuradhapura massacre in which Sinhalese civilians were slaughtered, shook the Jayewardene Government and strengthened the groundswell of local opinion that the Government was incapable of controlling the situation. Admitted state minister Dr Anandatissa De Alwis: "Forty-five per cent of the people are opposed to the Government, right or wrong." The long-dormant Opposition suddenly found guts and voice and the Maha Sangha (the powerful higher Buddhist clergy) became a bold and unrelenting critic of the Government with 500 monks staging a demonstration near Parliament.

What put further pressure on the Government was the emerging alliance-in-action between the monks, who are held in high esteem, and the Opposition, particularly former premier Mrs Bandaranaike. The new spokesmen made it clear that in their view, the Government lacked either a military or a political solution. Colombo also is facing other unforeseen problems. Tea prices tumbled to their lowest level in two years while defence spending is eating away at the island's economy. The summit, according to top government leaders in Colombo, witnessed a "change of heart" in New Delhi. Evidently the Indian side expressed appreciation of the fact that with the best will in the world, the UNP is incapable of offering reasonable concessions to the Tamils in the face of increasing violence (the strategic port of Trincomalee with its racially mixed population was up in flames while the summit was on). The summit ended with the mutual agreement that only a reduction in the violence could create the climate for "progress towards a political settlement". In order to achieve that, India will clamp down on the Madras-based militants and stop any flow of arms and men to Sri Lanka across the Palk Straits. Colombo will reciprocate, once the de-escalation is seen to succeed, by stricter control over military operations.

RAGHU RAI



Rajiv Gandhi, Jayewardene and Ershad at Uri Char: effective diplomacy

On the other hand, the militant Tamil groups in Madras are dismayed at what they see as a victory for the Sri Lanka Government in the summit outcome, namely, New Delhi's agreement to pressurise the Tamil militants to lay down arms and check the arms flow into Sri Lanka. However, there is very little they can do if the Indian Government gets tough—India is their only hope for attaining their demands and it is India that has been providing them sanctuary.

But they insist that the ball is still in Sri Lanka's court. Says Professor A.S. Balasingham, spokesman for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam: "For us to announce a cease-fire, we insist on the Sri Lanka Government fulfilling a few conditions. They should send the army from the northern and eastern provinces back to the barracks; they should remove the restrictions on free movement in certain areas; they should withdraw the concept of the Prohibited Zone and they should stop indiscriminate arrests." They also insist that any package concessions should be with the consensus of the Sri Lankan opposition parties and the Buddhist clergy.

But the attitude of the four militant groups constituting the Eelam National Liberation Front is somewhat different. In their view, the Sri Lanka Government is only seeking to buy time. Says a spokesman: "The Sinhalese people are themselves disillusioned with the Jayewardene Government for its failure to protect Sinhalese lives. That is why Jayewardene is so desperate to get a cease-fire agreement so that he can consolidate his position and strengthen the Sri Lankan army. The whole thing is a trap."

In that context, the strategy worked out at the summit still has some hurdles to overcome. The strategy is based on the supposition that while the violence is abating—there is agreement on a three-month-long cease-fire—the two sides will thrash out a scheme of devolution. But New Delhi will first have to deal with the diverse militant groups with their deep-rooted suspicion of Colombo's motives. It will also have to deal with the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the Tamil Nadu Government. Colombo, on its part, has to control the war on the ground and see that the senseless killing of civilians and the creation of refugees comes to an end. More important, it has to produce concessions large enough to be acceptable to at least the TULF but not too generous to go against hardline Sinhalese opinion. The climb to the summit was smooth and swift. The descent to peace and political settlement will obviously be far more difficult.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo and S.H. VENKATRAMANI in Madras

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ARMS PURCHASE

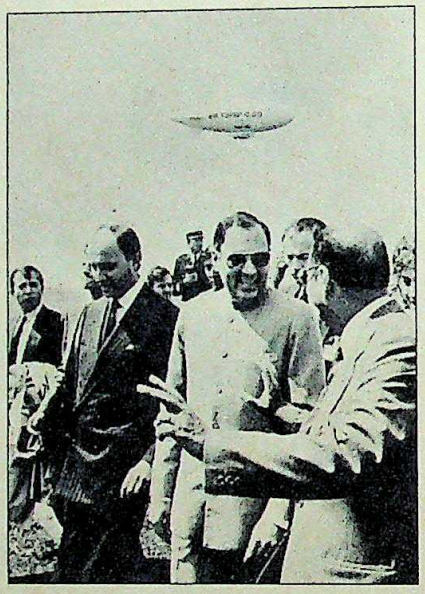
Delinking the Deals

AMIDST all the brouhaha that has enveloped Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's first and extensive diplomatic foray that has taken him from Moscow to Washington, the two ends of the ideological spectrum, one significant feature has been successfully obscured. Namely, the fact that despite much advance and enlightened speculation, no defence deals have been included among the many agreements signed during his globe-trot.

Before emplaning for Moscow in May, defence circles in India were abuzz with rumours that a major weapons package, including the MiG-29s, advanced missiles, submarines and howitzers was to be concluded in the Kremlin. Defence Minister Narasimha Rao had already visited Moscow prior to the prime minister's visit, ostensibly to put together the nuts and bolts of the package before the formal signing. In the event, the only agreements signed were of an economic nature.

Much the same scenario unfolded in Paris. In fact, speculation, even in the French media, had been even more intense than in the case of Moscow regarding the likelihood of India signing its biggest arms deal since the US$ 3.2 billion package it finalised in 1980 with the Soviet Union. The deal was widely reported to include additional Mirage 2000s (apart from the 40 flyaway aircraft already contracted for and due to start arriving next week) with the possibility of a transfer of technology agreement to produce the multi-role combat aircraft indigenously. It was also meant to embrace the purchase of helicopters to replace the aborted deal with the British-made Westlands, 105 mm Howitzers, another deal that has been hanging fire for years, missiles and electronic early warning systems. The package was also supposed to include civilian aircraft like the Airbus for Air-India and the Dauphin helicopter for the Oil and Natural Gas Commission. The speculation was further fuelled by the fact that Rao was along on the trip and that one of Rajiv's key engagements in France would be a visit to the Paris air show where the Mirage was the star attraction.

Ultimately, as in Moscow, no formal defence agreements were signed even though Rao met with his French counterparts to discuss terms and conditions and there is strong likelihood that at least in some areas, the discussions will prove fruitful in the near future. Even if the final agreements are announced shortly, the basic intention is to delink it from the visit. What all this represents is a new and long required approach to India's defence purchase strategy.No longer is a state visit seen as an opportunity to sell weaponry as was the case earlier. Witness Giscard d Estaing's visit to India when the original Mirage 2000 deal was signed scuttling the claims of the less profitable Anglo-French Jaguar or Mrs Gandhi's visit to Moscow in 1982 when India's stable of MiGs was updated considerably.



Rajiv at the Paris air show

Rajiv Gandhi obviously has a different style and approach to weapons purchases, by one, ensuring that it is tied to political objectives as in the case of the British Westland deal where the Indian Government, upset at the inability of the British Government to bring Sikh extremists to heel despite assurances, abandoned the agreement while in its final stages. Secondly, he is also making it clear that whatever efforts are made to improve bilateral exchanges, as in the case of France or the Soviet Union, weapons purchases will no longer be an expected bonus.

The fact that no defence purchases were finalised indicates that the new strategy is to take a more careful look at possible options before making the final choice—both the MiG-29 and the Mirage 2000 are being touted by their respective manufacturers as a counter to the F-16s in Pakistan's arsenal.

A significant pointer to the new strategy is the fact that though quite a few of India's urgent defence requirements are, and have been, hanging fire for some time, since Rajiv's ascension to prime ministership, no major defence purchases have been made in knee-jerk reaction to Pakistan's recent highly sophisticated arms acquisitions from the US.

According to defence sources, the new approach is evident in the decision making process as well. In previous years, recommendations were made by the bureaucrats in the Defence Ministry based on evaluation reports and requirement orders provided by the users, namely, the services. In many cases, bureaucrat preferences and perceptions overruled the user's recommendation, or, as in the case of the Sea Harrier deal, inter-service rivalry played a major role. The final decision-making process, consequently, was a mixture of various elements and pressures, all pulling in different directions. The classic example is the 105-mm field gun that has been under evaluation for the last eight years.

Further, the fact that Mrs Gandhi had little time for extended meetings with the concerned parties usually meant that it was the bureaucratic recommendation that eventually took precedence. Rajiv, on the other hand, partly because of his interest in and knowledge of aircraft and military equipment, is a different proposition. According to insiders, reports by evaluation teams are carefully scrutinised, queries raised and additional information asked for. He or his close aides hold regular meetings with purchase committes to finalise the exact requirement, and narrow down the options. But the final decision is left to Rajiv along with one or two of his closest aides. Apart from streamlining the procedures and making arms purchases more realistic to the country's needs, the new approach is intended to put an end to the pressure of political elements, both external and internal, eliminate the traditional evil of kickbacks and reduce the role of the bureaucracy. The French at least, considering the Bolley embarrassment, will no doubt *parlez vous* with enthusiam.

—DILIP BOBB

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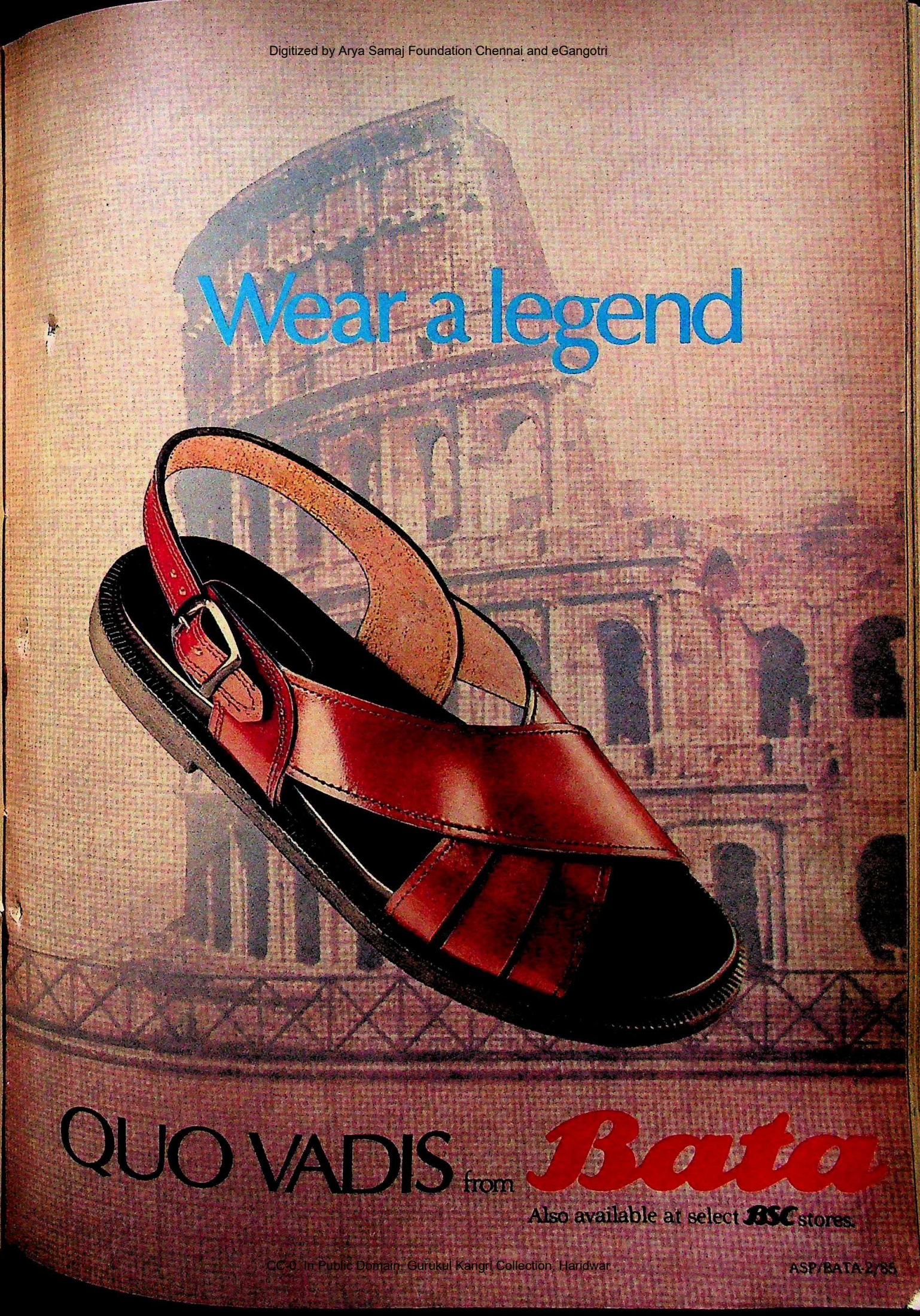

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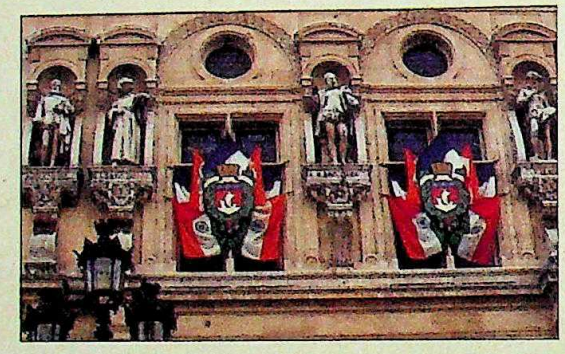
FESTIVAL OF INDIA

A Spectacular Success

PARIS has everything. But today we bring you India." If anybody in the select gathering was sceptical about Rajiv Gandhi's words, he only had to peer 187 feet down from the "Belle France" restaurant on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower to look at the sprawling, rapturous spectacle unfolding in the vast expanse between the tower and the Trocadero. The Indian tricolour fluttered everywhere, luminous Ahmedabadi kites snaked and darted across the grey skies, camels and elephants ambled in front of the pavilions of the Palais de Chaillot. 210 Indian performers began their acts at various points on either side of the Iena bridge, the air was pungent with the aromatic smells of lamb biryani and crisp masala dosas as though it were a street in Chandni Chowk or Mylapore. Mesmerised by the 'exotisme', colour and spectacle, over 200,000 Parisians congregated eagerly at the inaugural Mela signalling the beginning of the *L'Annee de L'Inde* in France.

As the extraordinary Mela began, Rajiv Gandhi and President Mitterrand moved around chatting with some of the country's most distinguished personalities. France's second TV channel, Atenne-2, covered the event live at prime time just after one of the country's foremost series, *Chateauvallon* was shown. That night India seemed omnipresent in France. TF-1 showed several hours of Indian 'variety entertainment' that began with Satyajit Ray's *Sadgati* followed by vocal music by M.S. Subbalakshmi. Never mind if it started close to midnight on a working day and not many could have found it hypnotic enough to stay up to watch.

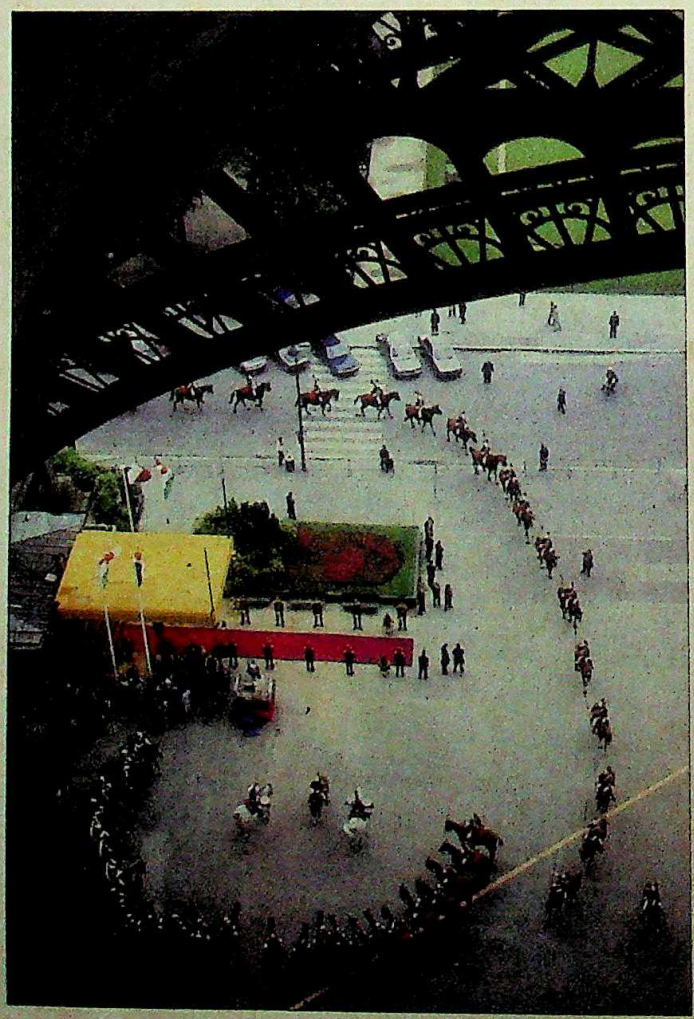
For the Indian prime minister, it must have been a beguiling moment. As an 11-year-old, he had visited the Eiffel Tower with his brother Sanjay. The gilt-edged visitor's book at the Eiffel Tower marks the entry: "Visit by the little Nehru children." Thirty years later, Rajiv Gandhi was back at the Eiffel Tower as prime minister to inaugurate what was India's most ambitious cultural event abroad. He had earlier been welcomed along with President Mitterrand by the French cavalry guard at the northern pylon of the Eiffel Tower.



The inauguration began when Rajiv handed a jar containing holy water from the Ganga to Mitterrand and simultaneously, at the Quai Branly, 10 Indian girls poured Ganga water into the Seine while 10 more threw flowers into the river. It was a ceremony dosed with heavy symbolism. But it seemed to generate unexpected reactions. Rajiv was asked at his farewell news conference with Laurent Fabius, if he thought that since French technology was being sought to depollute the Ganga, did it mean that by pouring Ganga water into it the Seine was now polluted? The prime minister patiently pointed out that it was from the Himalayas where the Ganga was still at its purest that the water was collected for the ceremony.

But polluting the Seine further could have been a prodigious feat since it remains one of the dirtiest rivers in Europe. There were no audacious Parisian volunteers willing to take a "holy dip" in the Seine as was initially suggested by some Indian officials. As one watching Frenchman remarked to INDIA TODAY, "obviously it is not going to be easy to recreate a "Benaras-sur-Seine." Following the symbolic ceremony, Rajiv presented Mitterrand with a baby elephant, Kaveri, at the landing between the "Belle France" and the Gustave Eiffel room. As Kaveri serenely relished her diet of bananas in her wooden cage, in the adjoining ornate salons of the Belle France, champagne and caviar, samosas and chicken tikkas were being served.

Below at the splendid



French cavalry waiting for the arrival of Rajiv and President Mitterrand and (right) crowds at the Mela with the welcome arches in the background

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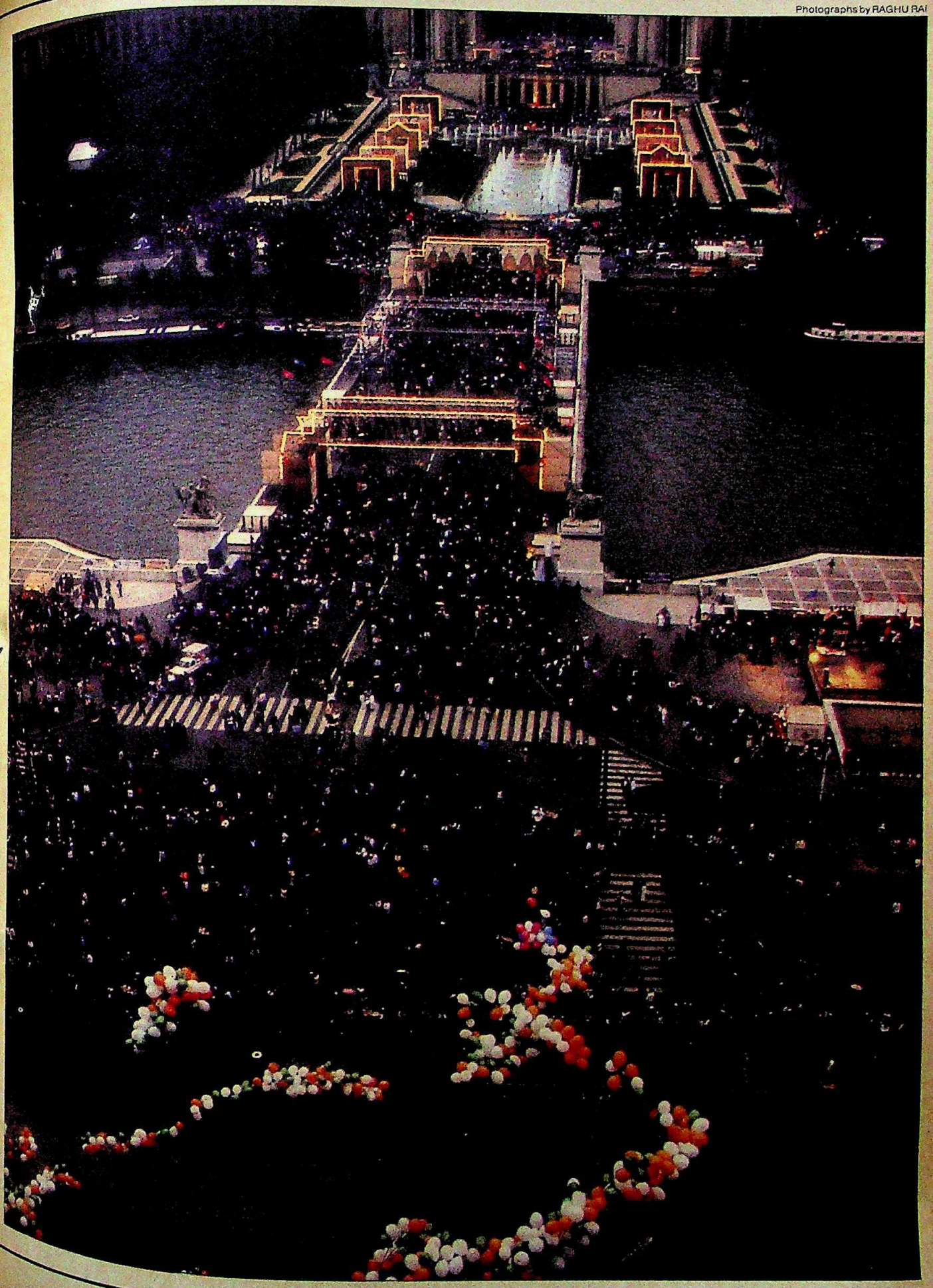
Photographs by RAGHU RAI



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Panthi dancers from Madhya Pradesh performing at the Mela

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complex of terraces and stairways embellished with multicoloured water-jets and fountains, the Mela was gathering momentum. The richly embroidered bamboo arches were aglow with lights as hundreds milled around the puppeteers from Calcutta, acrobats, jugglers, magicians and strolling singers. The largest crowds were seen in front of the stunning panthi dancers from Madhya Pradesh doing their whirling human pyramid, Kerala's spellbinding Kalaripayattu and the Panchavadyam percussionists, and Teejan Bai's regal rendition of the Mahabharata. As darkness fell and the dazzling fireworks began, the crowds participation became livelier. Many a youngster was seen trying out the intricate steps of Gujarat's Ras dancers.

Befitting the French tradition, the longest queues were in front of the foodstalls. Catered by an Indian hotel, on the first night every morsel of food, from biryani and bhelpuri, tikkas and dosas to kulfis and jalebis, vanished within hours, much to the irritation of the late arrivals. Compared with the joyful radiance of the Mela, the initiators of the festival seemed a bit isolated in the upper confines of the Eiffel Tower. Rajiv himself seemed pleased at its extraordinary success. So did Mitterrand, his popular Prime Minister Laurent Fabius and the controversial Minister for Culture, Jack Lang. Watching the spectacle in introspective silence was the doyenne of Indian culture, Pupul Jayakar. The less formal members of the large Indian delegation like H.Y. Sharada Prasad and Mani Shankar Iyer ventured to mix with the dense crowds.

Buoyed by the spectacular success of the Mela, both delegations seemed to be in an upbeat mood when they met to discuss the more serious affairs of state. The French made an exceptional effort to treat Rajiv as a "very special guest". Contrary to normal practice, Prime Minister Fabius was present in person to receive him at the airport—a job usually entrusted to a minister. Rajiv, Sonia, their children Priyanka and Rahul were lodged

Chirac (standing) applauds Rajiv after his inaugural speech

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at the opulent Palais Marigny, a stone's throw away from the Elysee Presidential Palace, associated with such legendary characters as Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV, Baron Gustave de Rothschild and since the days of President Pompidou, used to house sovereigns and selected heads of state.

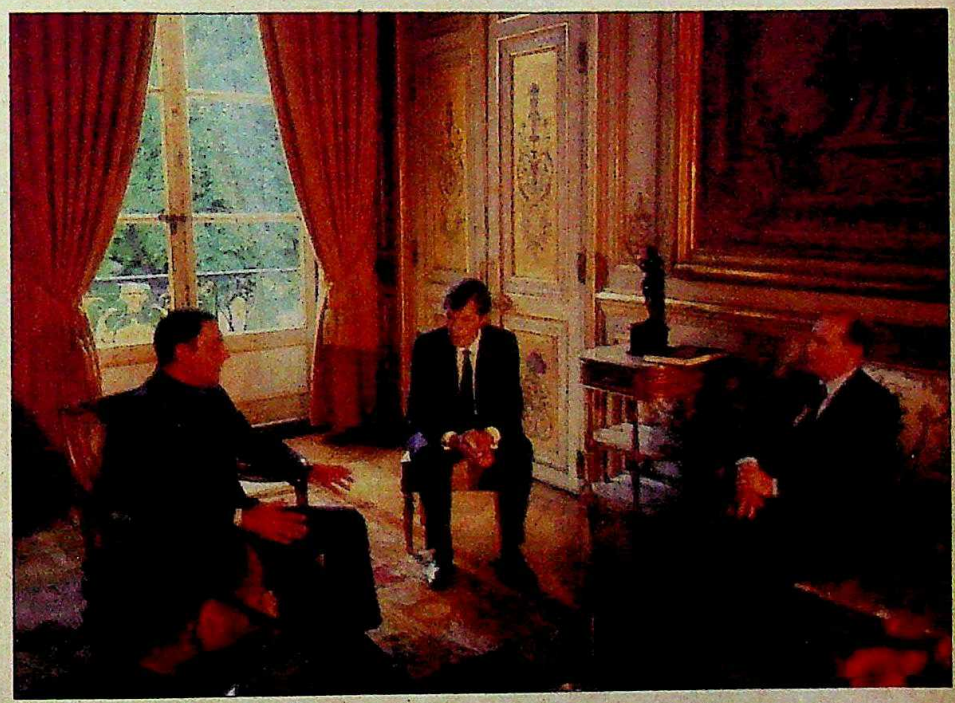
Rajiv Gandhi met Mitterrand four times and yet again, as a special gesture, Mitterrand attended a dinner at Indian Ambassador Air Chief Marshal I.H. Latif's residence hosted by the prime minister.

The pomp and glitter of the elaborate French protocol was reinforced by unprecedented security arrangements. A dozen outriders were followed by carloads of special agents. Crack sharp-shooters manned rooftops whilst elite anti-terrorist squads were on constant alert. The ubiquitous gendarmes were mobilised in their hundreds and the venue of every function Rajiv Gandhi was scheduled to attend was minutely searched. Even at spots where the prime minister was seen only for seconds while descending from his car, the secret service had the neighbourhood finely combed and watched windows through binoculars.

The French secret service worked in close coordination with its British and American counterparts for Rajiv's visit. An Indian leaving for Paris from London during this period had to run the gauntlet of separate checks and questions. And anyone who resembled an Indian and was seen in inter-state trains was singled out for "special attention". The massive security operation seemed worth the effort when the visit went off smoothly with not even a single black flag—threatened by Khalistan zealots based in London—in evidence.

The prime minister and Sonia Gandhi appeared to have charmed both the media and the public. Newspapers eulogised the "handsome and dignified couple" and their well-behaved children. One commentator described Rajiv as "discreet", "direct", "practical" and one who

Rajiv with Mitterrand at the Elysee Palace, and (below) Sonia, Madame Chirac and Bilkees Latif at the mayor's reception



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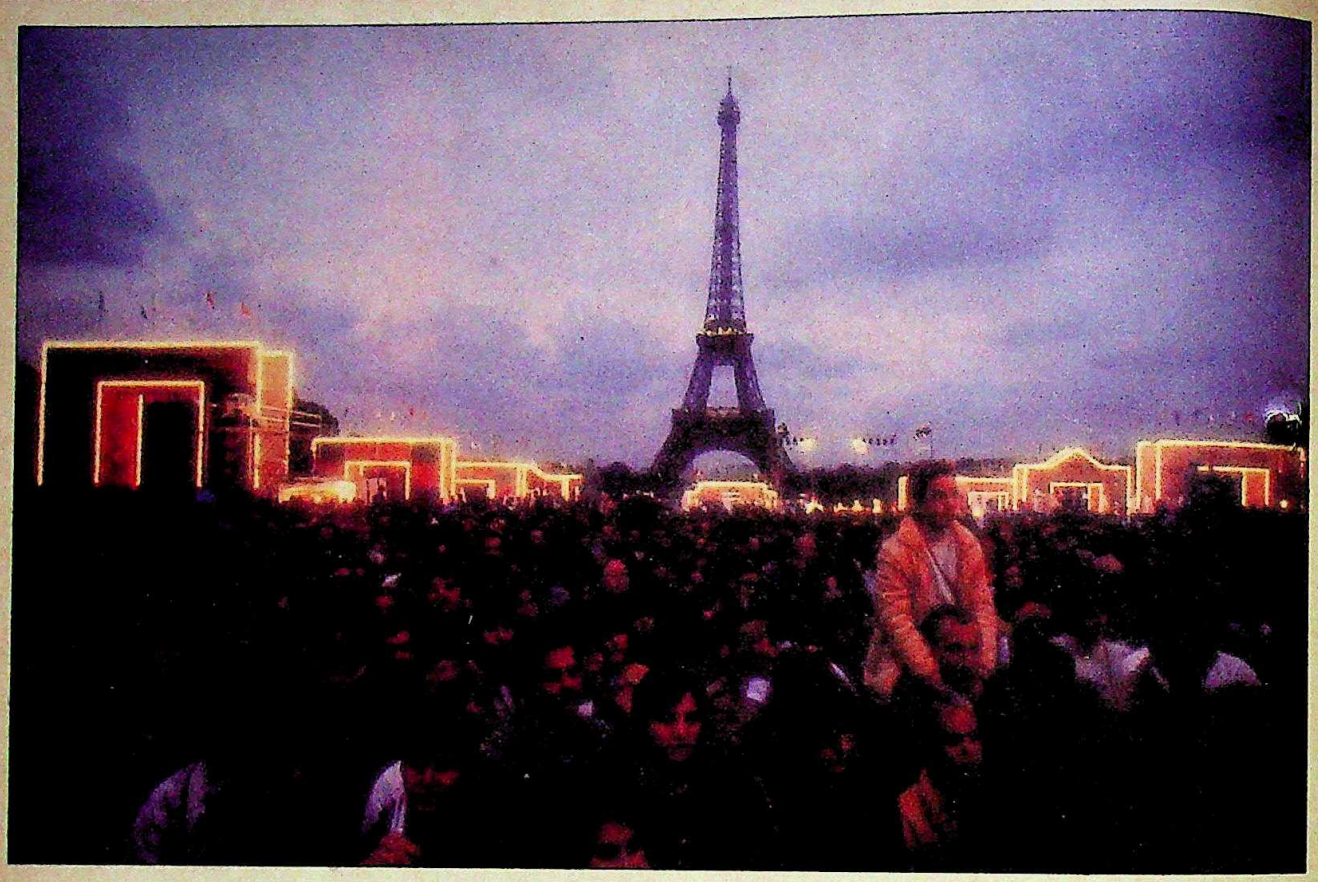

Crowds throng the Mela in the Trocadero

refrained from rhetoric and moralising. He described Rajiv Gandhi as the "computer boy who had the grace of a young rajah who had abandoned his turban and his jewels". Rajiv conducted his meetings and his public engagements with commendable self-assurance. One example was at his meeting with senior editors of the western press. Asked by a British journalist if appalling wages made Indian bureaucrats and administrators susceptible to bribes or indulging in espionage, Rajiv retorted that there was no evidence that better salaries enhanced a person's personal integrity. After all, Britain, which was known to pay its administrators well, had produced some of the greatest spies of modern history. Even the redoubtable foreign policy specialist, Marie-France Garaud, seemed visibly impressed by Rajiv.

His speeches, although well-drafted, attracted little attention except for his strong support for UNESCO. His statement that "strong nations" were trying to bend international organisations to their purposes, was interpreted by an Associated Press correspondent as an attack on the US and Britain. He also referred consistently to Pakistan's nuclear programme. Answering to a reporter of the left-wing political weekly, *Le Nouvel Observateur* as to whether relations between France and India would be affected if France helped Pakistan acquire a nuclear bomb, Rajiv responded that it certainly would since this bomb could only be used against India.

Besides favourite issues like the North-South dialogue, disarmament, and the possibility of restructuring global trade through a new international monetary conference, what was of immediate interest was the review of bilateral relations. The French media obsession centred around how many helicopters India was buying. How many Airbuses? How many more Mirage-2000s? What about the 155-mm gun deal? Rajiv Gandhi seemed equally determined not to sign any commercial agreements during his trip, emphasising broader political ties and mutual goodwill instead. The accords that were agreed upon included the use of French know-how to clean the Ganga, the creation of a centre for advanced research in New Delhi (INDIA TODAY, June 15) and the setting up of an Indian consulate in the French overseas territory of Reunion in the Mascarene Islands of the Indian ocean. On the pipeline are negotiations for the supply of Dauphin helicopters for the ONGC, Airbuses, the billion-dollar 155-mm gun deal.

The first delivery of the Mirage-2000 is scheduled for later this month. There is also speculation over the possibility of the design and development of a light combat aircraft in India with the help of French expertise. If this project comes through the Dasault group would be involved. The setting up of an Indian culture centre in Paris is also being envisaged while tie-ups in computer technology between France and India using Indian software are being considered.

Two major obstacles remain to be sorted out, failing which they will continue to hinder Indo-French commercial ties: the French terms of financing are still unattractive and almost unaffordable, although Fabius argued that in certain areas French resource allocations to India have not been 'fully utilised'. The other problematic area which Rajiv Gandhi focussed on was ways to increase as well as diversify the range of Indian exports to France, apart from the traditional items. Breaking open France's protectionist market is not going to be an easy task. But unless and until Indian exports are increased, the balance of trade will remain heavily weighted in favour of France.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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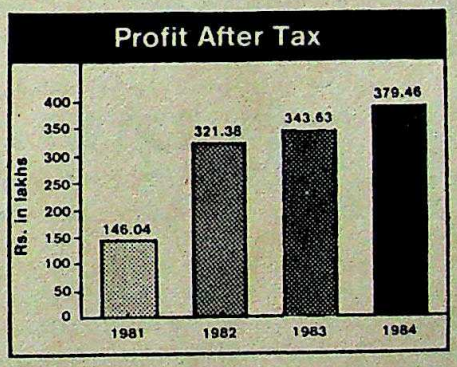
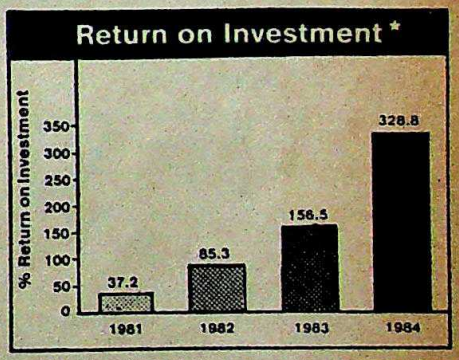
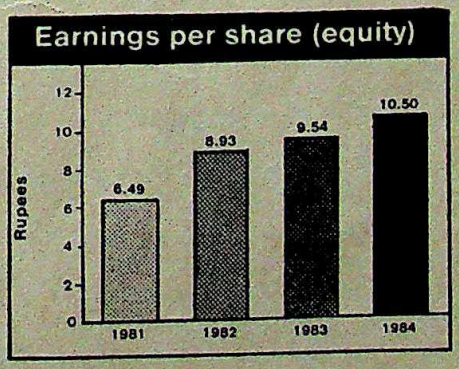
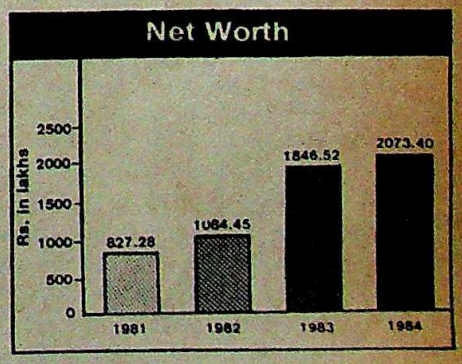
Earnings per share	**– Rs. 10.50 – up 10%**
Net worth	**– Rs. 2073.40 lakhs – up 12%**





* To the investor including appreciation in share value





Best & Crompton

Best & Crompton Engineering Ltd.
29 Rajaji Salai Madras 600001.

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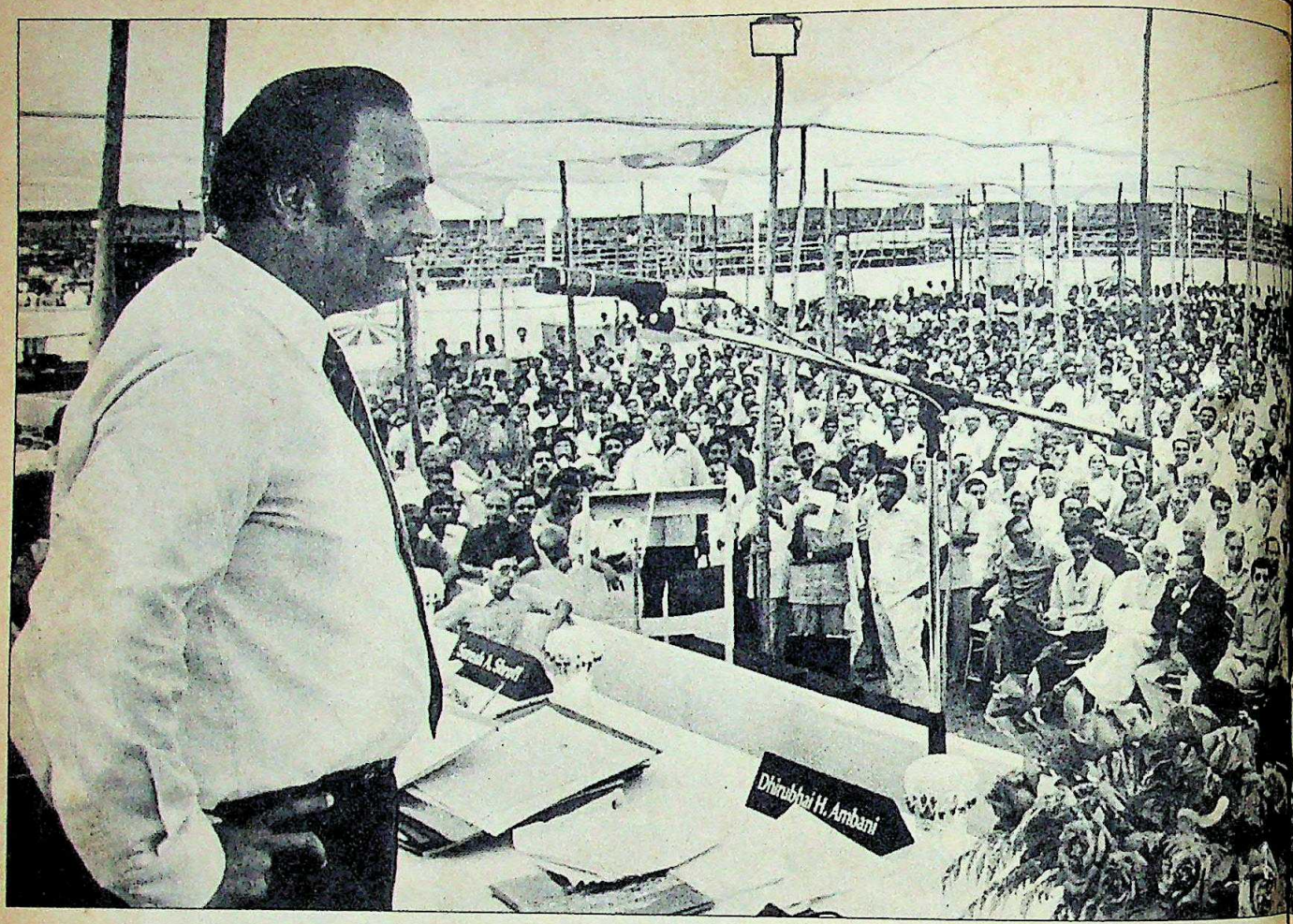

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

THE SUPER TYCOON

I AM the bubble that burst," says Dhirubhai Hirachand Ambani with a wicked gleam—recalling media forecasts a few years ago that his company, Reliance Textile Industries, was a "bubble that could burst". But the press has been wrong, his numerous critics have been wrong, and the doomsayers have finally fallen silent. For the facts now stare them in the face.

Today, Reliance is barely 18 years old, but it already has the largest net worth among all private companies in India. It made more profits last year than any private company in the country, and it ranks third in both sales and total assets among the country's corporate giants.

Reliance has just paid out more money as share dividends than any company in Indian history. It has more investors than anyone else: 1.2 million. And Ambani talks of taking that figure to five million in the next two or three years. That is equivalent to the head of every household in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi becoming an investor in Reliance.

The company last month had the largest ever attendance at any annual shareholders' meeting: 12,000. No hall in the city of Bombay could hold that number, so the meeting had to be finally held in a football ground.

The list of 'firsts' continues. Reliance produces more cloth every day than any other textile company, and does it more profitably than any other company. It is the country's largest importer of synthetic yarn. The company already produces more polyester filament yarn than any other rival in the business (10,000 tonnes), and is more than doubling its capacity. Soon, it will also be the country's largest if not its only producer of polyester staple fibre, purified terephtalic acid and mono-ethylene glycol—both these being raw materials for polyester fibre—and of linear alkyl benzene, which is used to make synthetic detergents.

Reliance is investing more money every day than any other private corporate entity. The projects currently under way involve a total investment of Rs 675 crore, and all the projects will be completed in two years, which makes for an investment of almost Rs 1 crore every day. Already, Reliance holds what is probably a world record in setting up a 10,000, tonne polyester yarn plant in 14 months, and the plant reached full capacity production in four days. Ambani now plans to break that record: his 45,000-tonne polyester fibre project may be completed in 12 months.

It goes without saying, of course, that Reliance has proved to be the finest investment proposition ever seen by the

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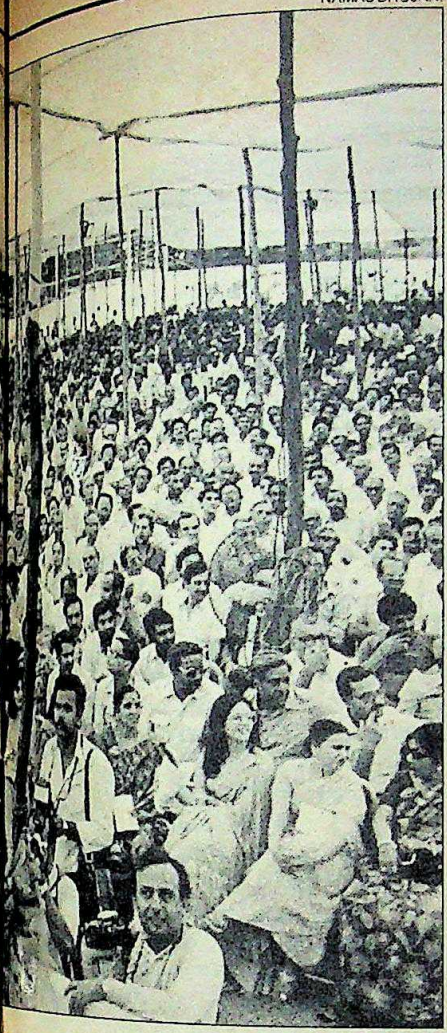
NAMAS BHOJANI



Ambani addressing shareholders in a football field: stock market deity

Indian investor. Anyone who invested Rs 1,000 in Reliance when the company first offered shares to the public less than eight years ago, in late 1977, has so far got Rs 3,937 in dividends alone, while the market value of his investment is more than Rs 50,000.

Dhirubhai Ambani himself started his first venture, the Reliance Commercial Corporation, 25 years ago with a total capital of Rs 15,000. In 1967, he then floated Reliance Textiles with Rs 15 lakh in the kitty. Today, the market value of Reliance shares totals—hold your breath—more than Rs 10,000 crore. And Ambani estimates his personal net worth at Rs 150 crore.

The village schoolteacher's son has certainly made good. His company will soon be the single largest contributor to tax revenues, with excise and other duties payable estimated for 1987 at Rs 600 crore, which is roughly 5 per cent of the Central Government's total excise collection. By then, Reliance will almost certainly be the country's largest private company in terms of both sales and assets (it currently ranks third, behind the two Tata giants Tata Steel and Tata Engineering—both many decades old). And it will in all probability be the first private Indian company to figure in *Fortune* magazine's list of the 500 largest corporations outside the United States.

Indeed, when everyone thinks that Ambani has finally arrived, he himself thinks that he has only begun. Everything that the company has achieved over the last 18 years will be achieved all over again in the next three years. The company's turnover is billed to go up from Rs 604 crore last year to Rs 1,400 crore in 1987, its net worth is expected to climb from Rs 246 crore to Rs 550 crore, and its fixed assets from Rs 520 crore to Rs 1,200 crore. As if that weren't enough, gross profit as a percentage of sales is expected to climb from 19.6 per cent to an unbelievable 29 per cent.

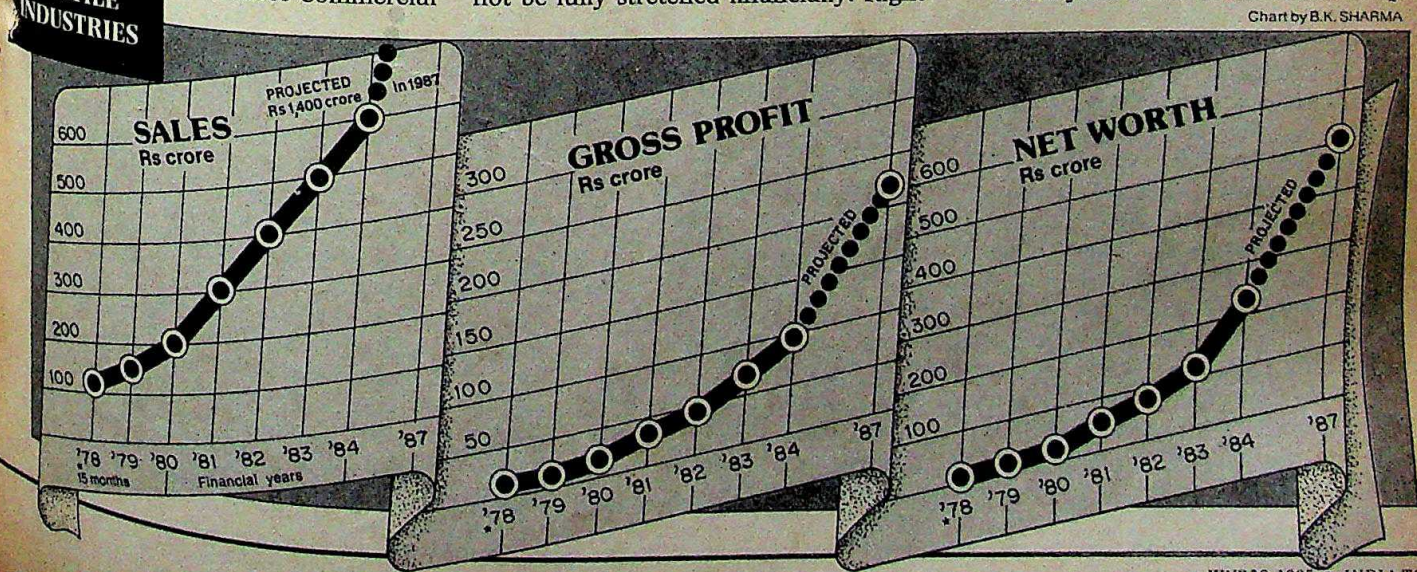
The most incredible part of this story is that even after investing Rs 675 crore in the next two years, the company will still not be fully stretched financially. Right now, Reliance does not owe a paisa to any of the Government-owned financial institutions, on whom virtually every other company depends for finance. And even when the current projects are completed, the ratio of its loans to share capital will leave room for more loans to finance fresh investment of between Rs 800 crore and Rs 1,000 crore. And though Ambani is not saying so, he is already working on new projects to venture into as soon as he is ready for them. The growth, it seems, will continue. And the bubble does not seem about to burst.

No one, least of all Dhirubhai himself, could have foreseen all this. At school in Junagadh in Gujarat, from where the young tycoon-to-be matriculated while staying in a local hostel, his ambitions were limited to possessing a car or a jeep. Later, he went to Aden as a clerk in A. Beesse and Company, a French firm that acted as agents for Shell Oil. Dhirubhai was soon put in charge of retail marketing, his work taking him to such out of the way places as Eritrea, Djibouti, Somaliland, Kenya and Uganda. *"Mazaa aathi thi"* (I used to have fun), he now says of his past with a laugh.

Soon enough, the entrepreneurial bug bit him, and he returned to Bombay to start his first venture, the Reliance Commercial Corporation, with a total capital of Rs 15,000 and a shared office in Bombay's Bhaat Bazaar. He exported ginger, cardamom, turmeric and other spices to the west Asian market where he had established links during his Aden stint, and then branched out into textiles and yarn in the early 1960s. His most unusual export, however, was the good earth: a sheikh in Saudi Arabia was keen on cultivating a rose garden and needed a good soil mixture, which Ambani supplied, ready as always to seize a commercial opportunity.

In the years that followed, Ambani sp-

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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ecialised in hawking imported yarn. A Bombay businessman recalls the Ambani of those days as being a "pucca Gujarati bania", stalking the city's yarn market, living off tea-shop snacks and endlessly chewing paan. Dhirubhai's younger son, Anil, recalls that through much of the 1960s the family lived in a one-room chawl, with Anil and elder brother Mukesh growing up in the neighbourhood bylanes.

By 1967, Dhirubhai was ready to start Reliance Textile Industries as a private limited company with a share capital of Rs 15 lakh. He didn't have all the money he needed, so he asked the people he knew for help. This included Viren Shah of Mukand Iron and Steel Company, who came from Ambani's seaside village of Chorwad (now a tourist spot) and whose family was the biggest landowner in the village. Shah told a friend later that he was asked by Dhirubhai for Rs 4 lakh, but that he turned down the request on the ground that "this project will not fly". He couldn't have been more wrong.

Somehow, Ambani has always attracted scepticism. Even in 1977, when Reliance was changing to a public limited company and its shares were being offered to the general public, numerous investors didn't want a slice of the still untested cake. D.N. Shroff, then president of the Silk and Art Silk Mills Association and a long-time friend of the man he calls Dhiru, remembers trying to persuade friends in government to buy Reliance shares worth Rs 1 lakh, but with practically no luck.

If few people saw then that this was going to be a goldmine, and that Ambani had the fabled Midas touch, the critics kept pace with Ambani through his early successes. Throughout the 1970s, Ambani made most of his money importing and exporting rayon and nylon yarn and fabrics, on which the profit margins were stupendous because of their domestic scarcity. Grabbing scarce import licences, often hawking them at a premium, Ambani was quicker off the mark than everyone else in the biggest money-spinning operation of the decade. Critics have charged then and ever since that there was more to this initial success than is publicly known.

Shroff recalls criticism at the time from a host of rival industrialists, who charged that Ambani was indulging in black marketing. He informed Dhirubhai of the criticism, and the man's response was typical. He asked Shroff to summon a meeting of his executive committee, comprising the biggest industrialists in the synthetics business. Dhirubhai was then invited to face his critics, but he had them silent with one question: "You accuse me of black marketing, but which one of you has not slept with me?" Since all of them had at one stage or another bought yarn from or sold yarn to Ambani at the going rate, none of them had an answer. Dhirubhai had made his point: no one in the business could act holier than Ambani.

Other criticisms have been voiced over the years: that Ambani has used friends in high places to get his way and to put down rivals, that Ambani has mysteriously managed to always get the licences he wants, and to get the Government to announce duty rates that help him while putting own his rivals. Dhirubhai himself affects impatience with such carping, but there may well be a point to what the critics say.

In 1982, for instance, Reliance was getting ready to manufacture polyester yarn from imported dimethy terephthalate DMT, while the rival Orkay Silk Mills planned to use polyester chips as raw material. But in the budget of that year, the Government raised the import duty on polyester chips so that the Orkay project now faced a price handicap in the market. Then, in November 1982, almost immediately after the Reliance polyester yarn factory went into production, the import duty on the yarn was raised by the Government—giving Ambani a price protection that helped his profit margins.

Such cases can be multiplied. And Ambani's denials and explanations are not entirely convincing. He argues, for instance, that his friendship or acquaintance with people like former prime minister Indira Gandhi and her special assistant, R.K.Dhawan, were not helpful to him in his business: "One bureaucrat low down the ladder can say no to something which no one can then overrule."

Nevertheless, the fact remains that in 1980 he joined hands with some Congress(I) members of Parliament from Gujarat to host a party in a New Delhi hotel immediately after the Lok Sabha elections, a party that Mrs Gandhi attended as almost her first public engage-

RECORD GAINS

An investor who has invested Rs 1,000 in 100 equity shares of Reliance in 1977 has gained 50-fold in eight years.

Investment in 1977 • 100 Shares	**Rs 1,000**
Dividend for 1977-78	**Rs 275**
Dividend for 1979	**Rs 250**
Bonus at the rate of 3:5 • 60 shares	
Dividend for 1980	**Rs 400**
Dividend for 1981	**Rs 560**
Dividend for 1982	**Rs 660**
Bonus at the rate of 3:5 • 96 Shares	
Dividend for 1983	**Rs 768**
Dividend for 1984	**Rs 1,024**
Total dividends earned	**Rs 3,937**
• Total shares in 1984 = 256	
The market value of 1 equity share today is around	**Rs 210**
	Rs 210 x 256 = Rs 53,760
Total dividend received	**Rs 3,937**
Total gains on Rs 1,000	**Rs 57,697**

THE TOP THREE

	Net Worth	Net Sales	Gross Profit
Reliance	246	604	95
TISCO	233	781	64
TELCO	195	755	62.

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ment after being sworn in. Also, a liaison manager in an industry quite unconnected with Ambani's recalls sitting in the office of a joint secretary in the Industry Ministry when the joint secretary got a telephone call from Dhawan asking why Ambani's licence application had not been cleared. A short while later, Dhawan was on the line again, asking about progress, and the joint secretary was reduced to stammered explanations about the cyclostyling machine taking too much time.

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute more importance to all this than is warranted. As a friend of Ambani explains, "Any poor man who has made his money quickly and become wealthy has used a ladder that is not clean. But anyone who thinks that Ambani is successful only or largely because of this is living in a fool's paradise. The fact is that Ambani is a consummate businessman."

That point should be well taken. For

NARODA & PATALGANGA

Old and New

IN A DARK corner of a huge shed stands the machine which began it all: a warp knitting machine, one of four which Dhirubhai Ambani had installed less than two decades ago at Naroda, a few kilometres from the textile city of Ahmedabad. Today, Reliance's Naroda Textile Complex houses over a thousand machines in 110 acres of land, employs 8,400 workers, uses up electricity to the tune of Rs 3 lakh and turns out 2 lakh metres of fabric daily. Says Susheel Kothari, chief executive: "No one else could have done what we have in such a short time."

Kothari belongs to the old guard —he was with Dhirubhai in his first venture, the Reliance Commercial Corporation—and it is perhaps a measure of the company's overpowering work ethos that he has had no difficulty adjusting to the new guard: represented by none other than Anil Ambani, 26, the younger of Dhirubhai's two sons and the boss of what is the most modern mill in the country. "Our greatest advantage," says Anil, "is that we adjust very quickly to change. The other mills are decades old, so are the people who work there. It's much easier for us to institute newer procedures."

Anil explains that they are constantly modernising: last year, 280 state-of-the-art water-jet looms—where the yarn is flung across the threads by a jet of water—were installed. The textile industry in general still uses machines that are many decades old, but at Reliance, the average life of a machine is five to seven years. This makes sense, because as the licensed capacity is linked to the loom, putting in faster and faster loom means more production. Already, a loom today produces five times as much cloth as the ones 10 years ago did.

The pride of the plant is its unique computerised information system installed early this year at a cost of Rs 1 crore. Tapping keys on a terminal in his office, Anil can get information on each and every loom's functioning—production, stoppages, efficiency and so on. "We know what is happening at any given minute. The grasp that this gives us of every day working is tremendous." M.P. Gupta, manager, weaving, says, "Anil plans to link the system to the head office in Bombay, so that his father can have the same kind of access."

The lack of paper on managers' desks is another refreshing aspect of corporate life at Naroda. Says H.N. Arora, general manager, personnel and administration: "We try to take all decisions as quickly as possible, without going through the hassles of in-trays and out-trays. Anilbhai is very accessible." Anil himself recounts how he sometimes comes in early and drops little pieces of paper on everybody's desk, saying, "Why isn't this file cleared? Why is there so much paper lying about?" "It seems to work," he says impishly.

Anil Ambani with his water-jet looms: constant investment

Modern and immensely functional as it is, Naroda is already the past for Reliance. The future is closer to Bombay, on a sprawling 300-acre site, 71 km from the great metropolis where Dhirubhai's drive to become a petrochemicals potentate is taking shape at a frenetic pace. The Reliance complex at Patalganga takes up almost half of the entire industrial estate, dwarfing other plants like Orkay's Polyester and Bombay Dyeing's DMT factory. The core of the complex is of course, the 10,000 tonnes a year PFY (polyester filament yarn) plant, designed by Du Pont, set up in a record time of 14 months. The expansion to 25,000 tonnes is going ahead rapidly and all around can be seen the skeletons of structures which will house the other petrochemical operations. According to Mukesh Ambani, 28, Dhirubhai's elder son who is incharge of the crucial petrochemicals drive, the company started thinking about backward integration in the late '70s. "We were already in textiles so from there to production of the basic chemicals was a logical step backward." In about 10 years, therefore, Reliance will have conceived of, planned and implemented a series of projects which should see it producing, beside 25,000 tonnes of polyester yarn, 45,000 tonnes of polyester staple fibre (PSF), 75,000 tonnes of purified terephthalic acid (PTA), 40,000 tonnes of mono ethylene glycol (MEG) and 50,000 tonnes of linear alkyl benzene (LAB). "Diligence is the main reason for our speedy success," says Mukesh.

The man who has fuelled this enormous drive sits miles away in Bombay, leaving his sons and other colleagues to carry on the job. Dhirubhai Ambani visits Naroda twice a year, and Patalganga once in three months. His confidence in his people is not surprising, really, for it is only a function of his tremendous confidence in himself.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI in Naroda and Patalganga

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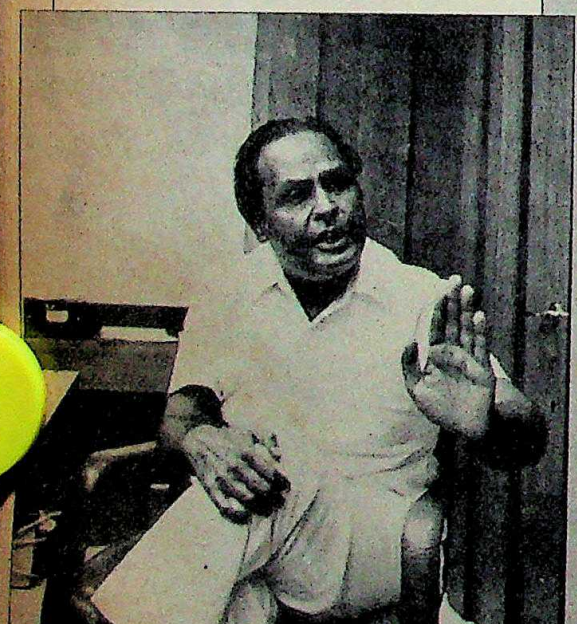
one thing, Ambani uses the same techniques and strategies that others do to influence government decisions and to run his business. The difference is that he is better at the game than they are. And as he himself says, "You have to sell your idea to the Government, and show how the company's plans fit in with national priorities. For instance, we import edible oils worth Rs 1,400 crore every year, so Reliance is looking at the possibility of going in for commercial plantations. The Government says it does not have money for projects, and I point out that Reliance can finance the project from its own resources."

The more important point, of course, is that Ambani has numerous strengths as a businessman, combining a talent for everything from marketing to finance and choice of technology. If he excelled in his early years in spotting a quick-money commercial opportunity, latching on first to a high-profit area of exports and imports, fixing on synthetic textiles as the growth-cum-profit area with maximum potential and later in knowing how to get his way with the Government, he has other strengths as well: spotting the right technology to adopt, working out innovative ways of marketing his yarn and financial wizardry with the hallmark of genius that has not been seen in Indian industry for some decades.

While other businessmen were thinking of going in for DMT plants that would feed polyester fibre units, Ambani spotted a worldwide shift in favour of a cheaper substitute, purified terephthalic acid (PTA), and went ahead with a PTA project.

While most yarn producing companies sold their product wholesale, Ambani and cousin Rasiklal Meswani, executive director in charge of yarn sales, set up a complicated retail selling system under which yarn is sold directly to small-



Ambani in characteristic white: scoring points

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

"I will salaam anyone in the

A QUARTER century ago, Dhirubhai Hirachand Ambani put up his first commercial name-plate, that of the Reliance Commercial Corporation, in a corner of a borrowed office in an unpretentious part of Bombay. He couldn't afford his own office then.

Today, the 52-year-old tycoon has a 'Chairman's office' that takes up 8,000 square feet of plush carpeting in downtown Nariman Point. Ambani himself sits in a personal office embellished almost wholly in white, including white telephones. Four floors below is parked a white Cadillac, which Ambani used to use until he switched recently to a gold Mercedes 500. And on most days he prefers to dress in white safari suits that have almost become his sartorial trade mark.

The man himself is a bundle of energy, pacing in and out of his office, hitching up his trousers on an increasingly weighty torso, then sitting for a while to answer questions, and reaching out for a handshake after a wisecrack.

He obviously enjoys his increasing financial muscle, but has a problem with keeping his physical weight down. "I take a walk every morning, and go to the Oberoi health club in the evening. On week-ends, I try to go hiking in the Khandala hills." Although he still checks in at 76 kg, he has lost 14 kg in recent weeks. But even when he exercises or goes through his health club work-outs, his razor-sharp mind is never off business. Share brokers and yarn traders crowd round him constantly at the Oberoi health club.

He is not religious and does no regular pujas, but believes in God. He clearly has less faith in journalists, for he is constantly on his guard during interviews, watching which way the questions are headed, promising confidential information off the record and then delivering some innocuous titbit.

Last fortnight in Bombay, he spoke at length to Senior Editor T.N. NINAN *and Senior Correspondent* JAGANNATH DUBASHI. *Excerpts:*

Q. *We'd like to start at the beginning. How did you start in life?*

A. I had a very humble beginning. My father was a village schoolteacher. I started at the age of 17 as a clerk in a French firm in Aden. Please mention this, because I am proud of it and people should get inspiration from this.

Q. *What were you paid?*

A. Rs 300 a month. But I rose quickly, and when I left after eight years, I was in charge of retail marketing, getting Rs 1,100 a month.

Q. *Why did you go to Aden?*

A. I got the opportunity. I would have gone to South Africa if I had got a job there. *Roti ka sawal tha* (It was a question of bread).

Q. *Did you finish school?*

A. I did my matriculation, with only pass marks (laughs).

Q. *What was your ambition when you were young?*

A. I wanted to buy a car, an old jeep perhaps. I was a member of the Civil Guards, something like today's NCC. We had to salute our officers who went around in jeeps. So I thought: one day I will also ride in a jeep and somebody else will salute me.

Q. *Did you think then of starting any industry?*

A. Not at all. At 17 you can't expect much, and that too in a small village.

Q. *What is the main reason for the success of Reliance Textiles?*

A. I have seen over the past 15 years that people with savings do not have the correct avenues for investment. This is particularly true of the salaried and the middle class. They have to invest in bank deposits or units, which do not give very good returns. So more and more middle class people are attracted to my shares, and this is the success of Reliance.

Q. *Would you call this Reliance's biggest contribution to industry?*

A. What was the situation 15 years ago? Suppose I wanted to start a company: 60 per cent shares I would buy, 20 per cent would go to relatives, and the

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scale weavers who then sell their grey fabric back to Reliance, which processes and finishes this before unloading it on to the market as Reliance cloth with its Vimal brand name. In the process, Ambani has been able to get around the licence capacity limitations of his own weaving section and turn out far more cloth than he would otherwise have been able to. Says a contented Meswani: "As many as 25,000 units convert yarn into fabric for Reliance, and 30 to 40 per cent of our fabric comes this way. In the process, we have also earned the support of large numbers of customers for our yarn, because we guarantee them a market for their cloth."

If that speaks of Ambani's capacity for innovation, there are numerous other examples, especially in the field of finance, that underline the same point. Back in 1979, it was Ambani who first pushed through a forgotten idea in corporate finance, the convertible debenture. He had the devil of a time convincing the Government of its attractiveness as an investment proposition, arguing that it offered investors a guaranteed return as interest while simultaneously offering the prospect of capital appreciation when a part of the debenture was converted into shares.

The idea clicked, Reliance has issued six series of debentures in as many years for raising a record Rs 268 crore from the market, and other companies have jumped onto the bandwagon. As a result, the share market in the country has got its biggest boost in recent years because of the advent of the debenture. In the process, of course, Ambani has become the ordinary investor's stock-market deity.

More daredevil ideas were to follow, some of them breathtaking in their originality. Ever since 1977-78, for instance, Reliance had not paid a rupee as tax on

AMBANI

in the Government"

rest the brokers would get. Now Reliance has created a revolution in the corporate sector. I have 12 lakh investors in Reliance, and this will become five million. Middle class people are joining hands to build something big. In the process, the country benefits.

In 1980, the total resources mobilised in the capital market was Rs 100 crore. Last year, it was Rs 2,500 crore. That shows we had the water but no pumping station. Everybody is now installing pumping stations. Just look at the number of people who have issued debentures.

Q. *Do you think your financial strategy could be applied on a broader scale in India?*

A. Yes, of course. For our seventh plan we don't have money for power projects, bridges, railways. There is no money with the Government, that is true, but there is money with the public. We can pump that money to a hundred Reliances and build a strong country.

Q. *One reason for your success is your ability to manage the external environment. How do you do this?*

A. The most important external environment is the Government of India. You have to sell your ideas to the Government. Selling the idea is the most important thing, and for that I'd meet anybody in the Government, I am willing to *salaam* anyone. One thing you won't find in me and that is an ego.

Q. *But if three companies are trying to get the same licence, why does the Government favour you?*

A. I tell them that I am putting in my own company's resources, and that the others will have to borrow from the financial institutions. My main edge is that we mobilise our own resources.

Q. *Pranab Mukherjee is supposed to have helped get your last four licences.*

A. People who wanted to criticise Pranab Mukherjee used me as gunpowder. Pranab was in the Finance Ministry, which does not issue licences. Also, how many people have got licences in India, and how many of them have implemented these licences? The country should salute people who implement projects quickly.

Q. *You say the Finance Ministry does not issue licences, but it does decide duty levels, and these have often been structured to help you.*

A. I don't think this is true.

Q. *The new Government is said to be less friendly towards you, and the report is that they did not allow you to issue a convertible debenture issue, so that you had to go in for a non-convertible debenture issue.*

A. We asked for a non-convertible issue and we got it. We don't require more equity, so we don't need to convert the new debentures into equity.

Q. *What do you think of Rajiv Gandhi, and of the policies that he is trying to implement?*

A. He is a first-class person, very honest, very sincere. And his policies will work. He is not just helping industry, he is helping the country to move faster.

Q. *What new projects do you have in mind for Reliance? There is talk of oil exploration, computers, plantations and so on.*

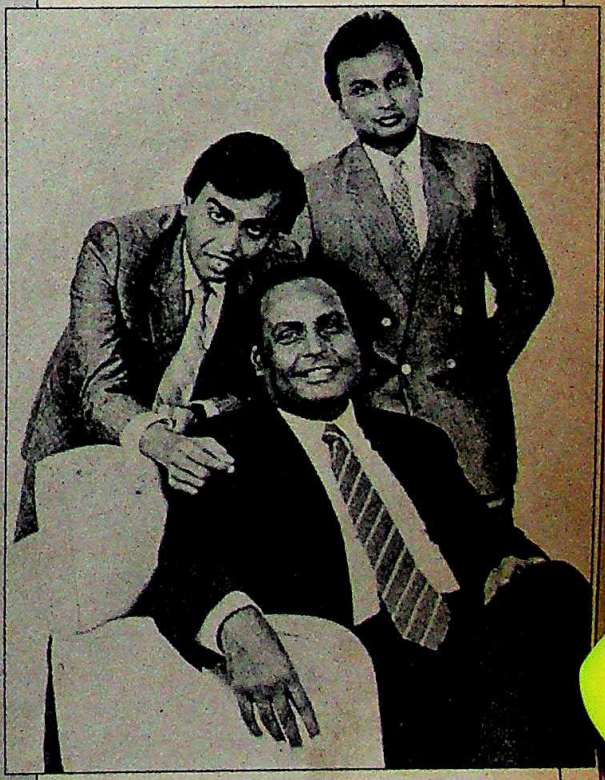
A. We will seize every opportunity we get. We continuously monitor every area, but that does not mean we will go into all of them. After all, if I see 100 girls, it doesn't mean I will marry all of them. But I must see all of them before I make my choice, mustn't I?

Q. *How do you see your basic role in the company, now that it has grown to such a size?*

A. Supervising everything and everybody, seeing that everything runs to schedule, solving problems.

Q. *Have you set yourself a goal, like making Reliance the largest company in the country?*

A. I would not like to say what I want to do before I do it.



With sons Mukesh (left) and Anil: the builder and the inheritors

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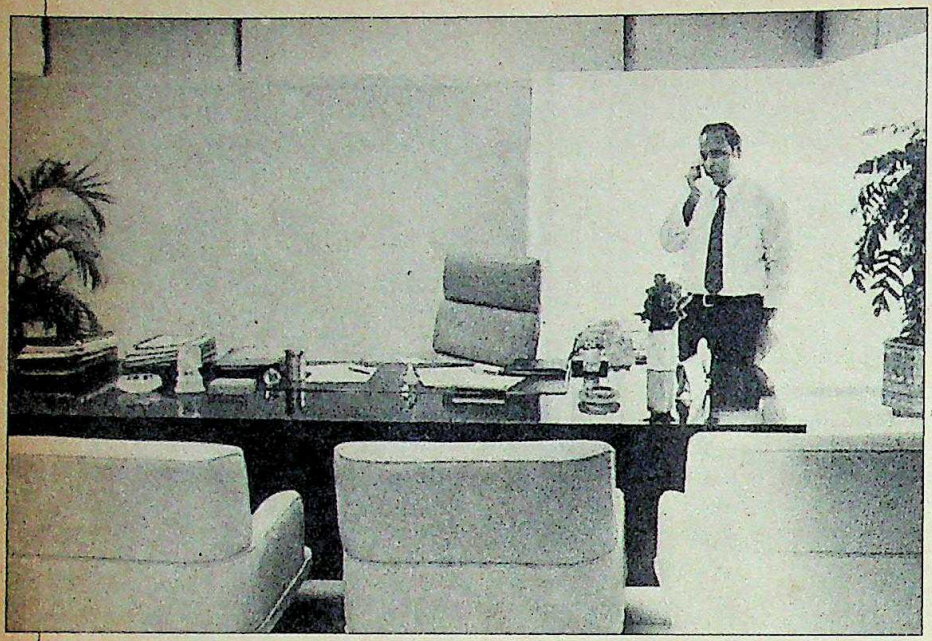

Ambani in his palatial office: centre of a growing empire

the substantial profits it earned, essentially because of outstanding tax planning by Ambani. But in 1983, the Government announced in the budget that companies would have to compulsorily pay tax on at least 30 per cent of their profits. Almost everyone thought then that this would slow down Reliance's frenetic expansion as some of the company's profits would be mopped up by the Government. But Ambani would have none of it. He announced shortly afterwards that the company was capitalising Rs 93 crore interest charges on its project loans, an unheard of stratagem that converted on-going expenditure into assets on which Reliance could now claim a higher depreciation write-off from its profits. Result: Reliance has stayed a zero tax company.

The purists have demurred, of course. Reliance's own auditors have noted in the company's annual report that the capitalisation of interest is not a practice recommended by the Institute of Chartered Accountants. But Ambani is undeterred, and he has got what he wants.

Still more breathtaking financial legerdemain was to follow. Last year, Ambani was getting ready to launch on his latest clutch of projects. But the company was financially stretched, with little elbow room to increase its borrowings. The solution: the non-convertible part of the company's debentures were also converted into shares.

This seemingly simple gimmick killed several birds with one stone. First, it reduced the company's debt while increasing its equity capital, so that the debt-equity ratio now provided room for more borrowings. Second, the debentures with a face value of Rs 100 were exchanged for 1.2 equity shares of Rs 10 each. This would seem unattractive for the investor, except for the fact that the Rs 10 share was then selling at Rs 115, while the market value of the Rs 100 debenture was only Rs 84. So the investor handed in an asset worth Rs 84 and got back another asset worth Rs 138 on the market.

The element of genius showed through this because while the investor gained, Reliance did too. The company had liquidated debt worth Rs 100 in the books and given out assets worth Rs 12 in the books. The balance went into the reserves fund, which swelled overnight by a whopping Rs 63.2 crore, while the 13.5 per cent interest burden on the debenture was replaced by a smaller dividend burden. Dhirubhai demurs modestly when asked who thought of this absolutely brilliant stratagem, attributing it to teamwork, but son Anil says the real brain was none other than Dhirubhai himself.

So the list of Ambani's strengths grows longer: commercial skill, technical understanding, financial wizardry, managing the Government, marketing innovation. But even this is not a complete list, for there is still more to the man who is now reckoned by everyone as the brightest star on the corporate firmament. Two additional strengths are revolutionary project management techniques that compress construction and erection time and the constant drive to modernise plant and machinery so that his own company escapes the fate of much of the textile industry.

Ambani takes an obvious pride in the speed with which he implements his industrial licences. His worsted spinning plant at Naroda, near Ahmedabad, was installed in eight months of getting the licence. In 1981, when he got the Government's permission to instal the latest draw texturing machines, he had the equipment flown in and installed in next to no time. This may partly have been because of criticism from his rivals that he had been allowed to get the machines when others had not, and he may have wanted to instal the equipment before the Government changed its mind. Nevertheless, the lightning reflexes of the man clearly stood out from the episode.

In 1982, he outdid E.I.Du Pont de Nemours, his collaborators for the polyester filament yarn project at Patalganga in Maharashtra, by getting the plant ready in 14 months, something that Du Pont itself had never managed to do in other countries. The real hero behind this achievement is Dhirubhai's elder son, Mukesh, an unassuming youngster of 28 years who wears his Stanford MBA lightly but who clearly has his father's genius in his veins. Mukesh attributes the record pace of project implementation very matter-of-factly to "diligence", and to the fact that he had no prior experience, "so I did not see the problems, only the solutions". But it takes S.P. Chakravorty, chief executive at Patalganga, to point out that whereas other companies would wait for equipment on order to land before linking its various pieces through the long arrays of pipes that are integral to a petrochemical complex, Reliance has done the opposite: at Patalganga, scores of kilometres of pipes were laid in readiness for the equipment, which was installed as soon as it landed. The magnitude of this achievement can be judged from the fact that one of Reliance's new projects has 220 km of pipes.

Modernisation is another key to Reliance's success. The Naroda plant was first started in the early 1970s with four warp knitting machines, but these are already museum pieces. As Dhirubhai's younger son Anil, who completed his own MBA from the Wharton School in 14 months before taking charge of the Naroda complex, points out, the average life of the machines at Naroda is only five to seven years. Last year, the com-

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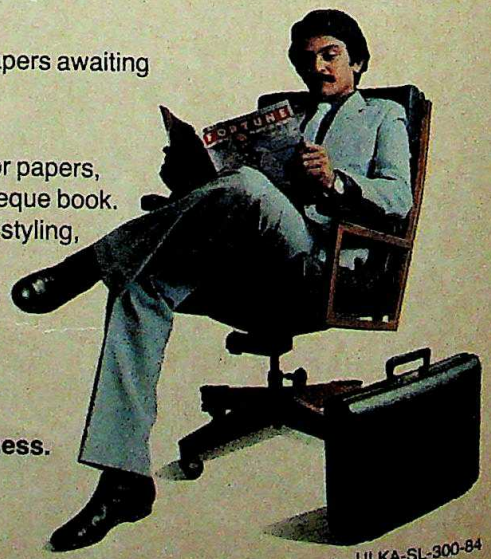

The luggage that knows its business.

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pany spent Rs 50 crore for importing 280 state-of-the-art waterjet looms and 16 projectile jacquard weaving machines. Investment of an even higher order is now planned for further modernisation and expansion.

When all is said and done, however, Ambani's greatest strength is probably his ability to keep changing to the situation in which he finds himself. He started out as an operator in international trade; when he shifted to manufacturing, the vast bulk of his sales continued to go out as exports—because that is where the profits lay, given the premium-fetching import replenishment licences that he got on his exports. He then shifted from knitting to weaving, switching focus to the domestic market. And just when everyone thought that Ambani's profile was getting fixed, he did the chameleon act yet again by starting a petrochemical operation that has now resulted in the logical culmination: Reliance Textile Industries is changing its name to Reliance Industries.

The bulk of the company's investment will soon be in polyester filament yarn and staple fibre, and then in PTA, mono-ethylene glycol (MEG) and linear alkyl benzene (LAB). And future investment could well be in a Rs 500, crore aromatics plant in Uttar Pradesh that will use four lakh tonnes of naphtha turned out every year by the Mathura oil refinery. Aromatics is the upstream raw material for synthetic fabrics, and will mark for Ambani the culmination of his drive for backward integration. So from being the country's most high-profile textile magnate, Ambani is about to transform himself into a petrochemicals giant. But he might change yet again, moving into oilseed plantations and oil exploration. As he himself says, "I will go in whatever direction that suits me."

Through these transformations, he has managed change in other ways as well. When he started out, his business forced him to footslog it through Bombay's teeming yarn market, and to wait outside the doors of the very textile tycoons who now envy him his success, because at that time they were his valued clients. Today, he can sit through half-day long sessions with journalists without a telephone call to disturb him: he has passed responsibilities down the line, and people take decisions at their levels.

He puts in no more than an eight-hour day, clocking in at 10.15 every morning when a 50-to 60-page report is always waiting for him, giving every

"His methods are controversial, but he has been successful."

KAPAL MEHRA
chairman, Orkay Silk Mills

detail that matters on the previous day's operations: production, marketing, finance. His role now is confined to supervising the functioning of his senior executives, making sure things are running to schedule and that problems are solved. And there is a mildly puzzled incomprehension when asked how he managed the shift from a one-man yarn hawker to the rarefied atmosphere of an 8,000 square feet 'Chairman's office'. "Decentralisation is the answer," he says simply.

If that is indeed the case, the two people he relies on most of all are his sons. For while he scoffs at their American degrees, touting instead the home-grown virtues of native entrepreneurship, he clearly relies on Mukesh to see the company through its Rs 675 crore expansion spree and on Anil, the more outgoing and articulate son, for running the textile complex and looking after the company's total marketing.

Meswani is another key figure: paunchy, and wise in the ways of the yarn market, Meswani has been with cousin Dhirubhai for the last quarter century. "He has taught me everything," Meswani says, and Dhirubhai clearly trusts his cousin to look after the company's complex yarn marketing operations.

"He used to buy yarn from us, now we buy from him."

VIRENCHEE SAGAR
managing director, Nirlon Synthetic Fibres and Chemicals

Chakravorty is another key executive, pulled out of J.K. Synthetics by Dhirubhai and asked to help Mukesh with the Patalganga operation. There are others like these, but Ambani now says he does not even bother with the recruitment of most of his personnel. He gives candidates the once over only if they are going to join in the key slots at the top. Everything else is decided lower down. And asked as to what kind of people he looks for, Ambani answers simply: "Engineers with talent."

All this decentralisation notwithstanding, Ambani's interests range far and wide. He is probably the best informed man in the country on the ups and downs of the smuggling business, because synthetic textiles are one of the most prominent items on the smugglers' list and these smuggled supplies his main competition.

Ambani's men estimate that a staggering Rs 3,000 crore worth of textiles are smuggled into India every year, a figure compiled by referring to the supplies reaching the United Arab Emirates from such sources as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Ambani also keeps a close check on the activities of his rivals. Last year, the excise authorities mounted a major raid on Orkay Silk Mills. The result reported in the newspapers last month was a Rs 10-crore fine on the company and a Rs 50-lakh personal fine on its chairman, Kapal Mehra.

It is widely believed in Bombay's business circles that Ambani had a hand in the initial tip-off to the authorities, who then mounted the raid. Whether this is true or not the fact remains that there is no one to beat Dhirubhai when it comes to close-range fighting. Four years ago, when Ambani was trying to get a licence from the Government to manufacture polyester filament yarn, all the existing producers under the banner of the Association of Synthetic Fibre Industry ganged up to prevent Ambani from getting the Government's go-ahead.

But they reckoned without the trick up Ambani's sleeve. Knowing that the best way to break a cartel is to get one or two of its members on your side with the promise of goodies. Ambani seems to have driven a wedge through the ranks of the opposition, which quickly fell apart for his own licence to come through. It may be purely coincidental

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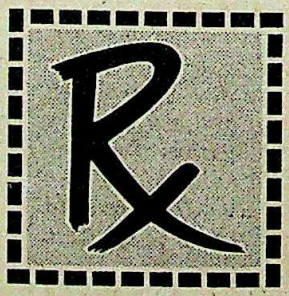

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that around the same time J.K. Synthetics got the Government's clearance for expanding its own plant, but there are few in the industry who do not believe that the two events are connected.

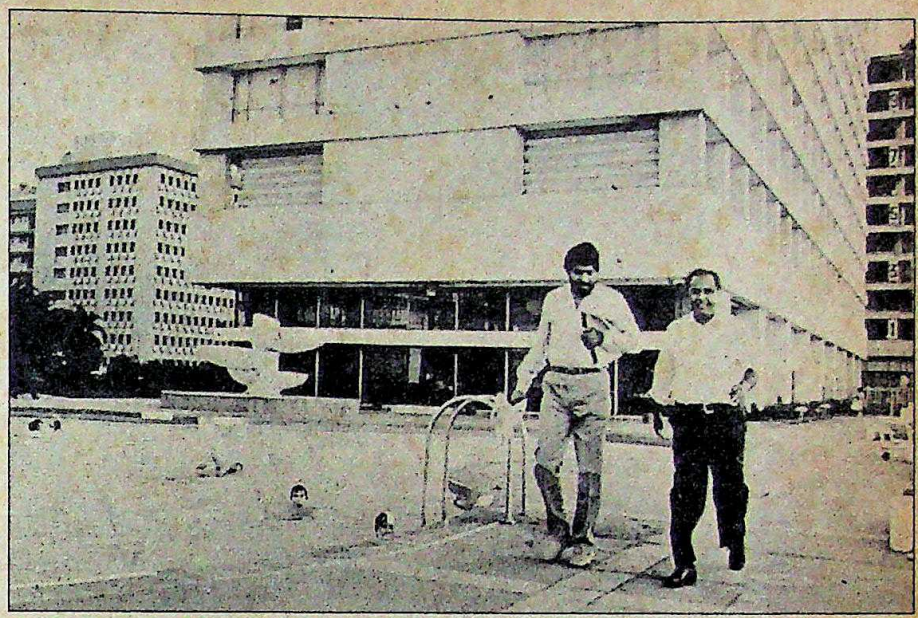
But such successes in the teeth of opposition inevitably generate more opposition, and some of this surfaced on the Bombay stock exchange in 1982. Ambani was just then readying for the single biggest capital issue in Indian corporate history (convertible debentures worth Rs 50 crore), and it was important that Reliance shares maintained a good price on the market so that investor confidence in the company was boosted.

But barely six weeks before the debenture issue was due to open in May, mysterious forces began hammering down the price of the Reliance share, which dropped from Rs 131 to Rs 121 in 25 minutes of unprecedented trading and near panic. But Ambani reacted with lightning speed and his men were quickly on the floor of the stock exchange, picking up every share that was offered. By the end of the day, the price had recovered to Rs 125, and a quickly formed "Friends of Reliance Association" took the battle into the opponents' corner. They kept buying for the next few weeks, driving the share price up.

In most share market transactions, sellers do not have shares ready for delivery because they intend to buy back later at a lower price. This game was now thwarted because Ambani's men had driven the price so high. So the very sellers who were trying to beat down the price earlier now started buying because Ambani's men insisted on delivery, and this took the share price still higher, to a record level of Rs 175 and more. The sellers eventually lost an estimated Rs 3.5 crore for their pains.

Ambani's men had turned the knife with a vengeance after getting in deep, and the forces who had mounted the attack in the first place—presumably Dhirubhai's rivals in business—learnt a lesson that they will never forget: do not meddle with Reliance shares. In fact, Ambani is suspected to have tried to pay Orkay in the same coin last year, when it was Orkay's turn to float a share issue.

If Ambani emerged triumphant from some of these financial skirmishes, he got his fingers slightly burnt in 1983 when some non-resident Indian companies with such unlikely names as Fiasco Investments and Crocodile Investments bought Reliance shares. It turned out on investigation that some of the people whose names were listed as the directors



Ambani exercising at hotel poolside, with stockbroker in tow: healthy growth

of these companies had not even heard of Reliance, casting some doubt on who the real investors were. Ambani himself explains this away by saying that "non-resident Indian investors will never reveal their true identity", but most observers believe that this particular episode has not yet been fully explained.

But such controversies appear to be nothing more than occasional hiccups even as Reliance continues to digest one project after another and to gain weight rapidly. So even Ambani's contemporaries in business are now forced to pay tribute. Says Kapal Mehra of Orkay: "His track record shows that he is a go-getter. There has been a lot of controversy about the method he has adopted, but he has been successful, and I wish there were more people like Dhirubhai in India." And Virenchee Sagar, managing director of Nirlon, says: "He has this enormous, extraordinary ambition which should see him go far."

Such accolades, some of them grudgingly delivered, come on top of the adulation that is already Ambani's because of the unprecedented returns that he has given his investors. And the question inevitably crops up: what next?

There are clear signs that some leading lights of the Rajiv Gandhi government are not fond of Ambani, and one minister has a dossier ready on his past activities. But it is doubtful if even this can now come in Dhirubhai's way: Reliance is too big, and its creator still has a lot of creativity left in him.

Persistent rumour suggests that Ambani might get into the media game. His Mudra advertising agency, launched initially for in-house work, has already become one of the largest agencies in the business, with billings last year of Rs 8 crore. Mudra's offshoot is now investing Rs 4 crore in new video equipment that will launch Ambani into the growing field of TV and video film production. Bombay has also been buzzing with talk of an offer he made to R.K. Karanjia, editor of the local tabloid *The Daily*, and journalists have been approached with job offers by people claiming to be speaking on behalf of Ambani.

But Ambani denies emphatically that he wants to get into the media business. If one takes him at his word, he still has numerous fields beckoning him. Quite apart from the various projects that he has already on hand, he has a stake in a new private oil exploration company floated with other investors by H.T. Parekh. And as he points out, he has the ability to "pump money out of the people." In a capital starved economy, anyone who can get the capital together will clearly have no shortage of work to get done whether it is in edible oilseed plantations, oil related projects or computers, which too Dhirubhai is looking at.

One thing is certain. As he takes his morning constitutional on the Worli seaface, or has his standard breakfast of a papaya, Ambani is still thinking of the future, not the past. At 52, he has a good decade of work still ahead of him; and if his dreams come true, at the end of that period Reliance Industries could well be four or five times the size it is today. No one, of course, will be surprised.

—T.N. NINAN and JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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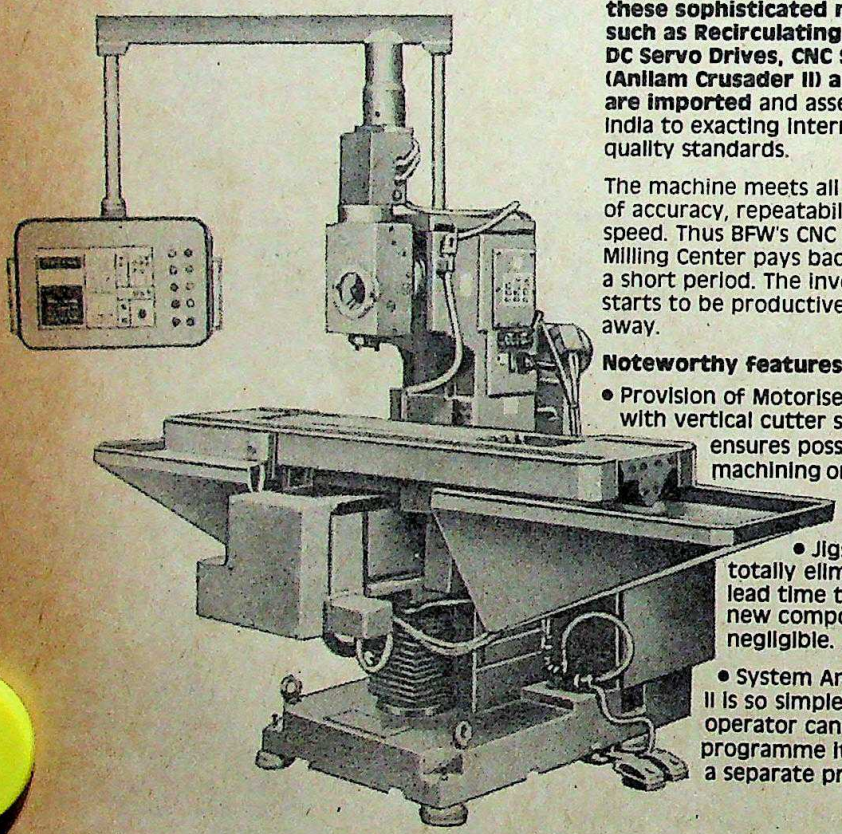

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CAPITAL GAINS

DELHI is fast becoming the new mecca for advertising agencies. Three Bombay-based agencies—Sista's, Enterprise and Hindustan Thompson Associates' offshoot Contract—are opening branches in the capital, while three other agencies have been, or soon will be, set up in the city. Tara Sinha, former head of Clarion, is floating her own agency, to be called Tara Sinha Associates, Rediffusion's former Delhi branch manager is putting up an agency called Milestones, and Ulka has set up an associate company called Interface Communications. The rush to Delhi reflects the rapid growth of new business in the city, at 40 per cent a year.

Meanwhile, in Madras, R.K. Swamy Advertising has tied up with the New York-based BBDO International Inc claimed to be the world's fifth largest advertising agency in terms of turnover and the largest in profits. Swamy believes that the new tie-up gives his agency a particular advantage in Japan, South-east Asia and West Asia.

SECOND THOUGHTS

THE MODIS have developed second thoughts about tying up with the US communications giant AT&T, intended at one stage to launch a computer manufacturing project. They are, instead concentrating elsewhere: consumer products. Exploratory talks are on with Christian Dior, the French fashion products firm, to start a venture in garments and handbags. Meanwhile, the negotiations with Canadian whisky giant Seagram have proved fruitless, and the Modis have turned their attention to a manufacturer of Scotch whisky in Britain. Other consumer products on the agenda include floor cleaners and shiners. The group may launch a bid for Modern Home Care Products, which has joined hands with Johnson Wax of the US and is test marketing the floor cleaner in Bombay.

UNEXPECTED TWIST

THE TUSSLE for the management of Swadeshi Polytex suffered an unexpected twist when Sitaram Jaipuria died last month. Meanwhile, the results of the voting during the shareholders' meeting are still to be announced. But it is understood that the financial institutions, who shifted support from Sitaram Jaipuria to Rajaram Jaipuria at an earlier meeting of shareholders, have shifted back again and deserted Rajaram Jaipuria. Nevertheless, Rajaram Jaipuria had mounted an aggressive proxy-hunting campaign in his bid to gain control of the company, and also won over some key shareholders with substantial holdings.

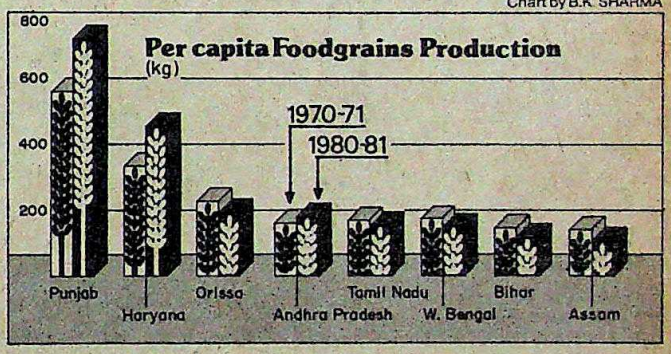
LOSING HOLD

THE SLOW exodus from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) may not mean any immediate loss of status for the premier spokesman of Indian business. But, with Rs 2 crore already committed to adding two floors to its building in the heart of New Delhi, and with departing members signifying a loss of membership revenue, FICCI will almost definitely have to tighten its belt in the near future. The only other option is for the organisation to charge a higher membership fee from its remaining members. But reports from Federation House talk of a freeze on new appointments and of a reassessment of the organisation's finances. The Government may also allow a greater say to other chambers of commerce and industry associations.

AGAINST THE GRAIN

EASTERN India's industrial decline has been well documented; but what has not been realised with the same degree of clarity is the region's accompanying agricultural decline, which has occurred despite the fact that it has an abundance of fertile land. Thus the per capita production

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



of foodgrains in Assam has dropped from 141 kg in 1970-71 to 119 kg a decade later. In the case of Bihar, the drop is from 149 kg to 125 kg and for West Bengal from 179 kg to 152 kg. The simultaneous trend in both north and parts of the south offers a stark contrast.

MINER PROBLEMS

COAL India chairman M.S. Gujral seems to have run into a head wind in his efforts to streamline the working of the coal behemoth and improve worker productivity. As one result, his relations with the Central minister concerned, Vasant Sathe, have dipped to a new low while problems have also cropped up with the Orissa Government. Sathe has objected to the transfer of about a thousand surplus miners from coalfields in the Chindwara area of Madhya Pradesh to other collieries belonging to western coalfields, and has in fact asked the company to recall those workers who have already been transferred. Similarly, Coal India had sought to transfer 500 surplus workers from Bihar to Orissa, following an assessment of surplus manpower in the former and the need for additional hands in the latter. But the Orissa Government has objected strenuously, with the chief minister summoning the local general manager and offering to pay Rs 100 to every worker sent back. The objective: recruitment of workers from Orissa. It remains to be seen whether Gujral sticks to his guns.

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TEXTILES

New Frontiers

WHAT was once the nation's top industry has fallen on hard times. Over 70 mills are closed nation-wide, throwing almost one lakh workers on the streets, profitability ratios of the industry are lower than the average for most other industries, output has just about inched up over the last six years or so, the per capita cloth available has dropped (*see chart*), and capacity utilisation has plunged in the same period by 11 per cent. So the textile industry is in sick bay—and it has been put there by mismanagement, high input costs and illegal powerlooms which till recently used to escape the tax man.

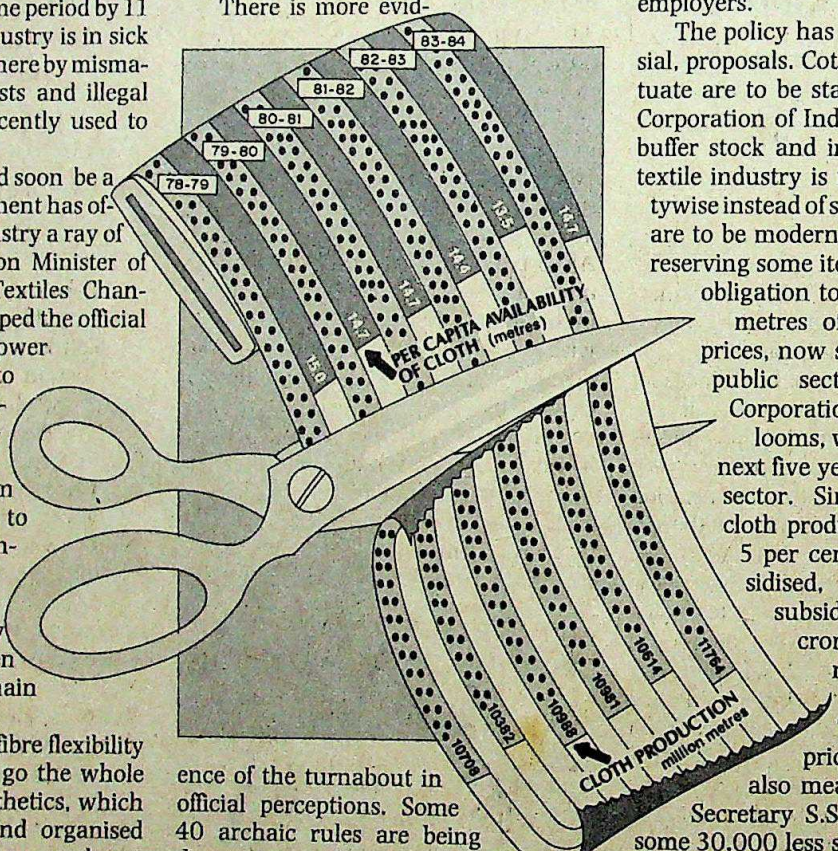
All this, however, could soon be a bad memory. The Government has offered the ailing textile industry a ray of hope. Last fortnight, Union Minister of State for Supplies and Textiles Chandrashekhar Singh unwrapped the official remedy for its problems: lower levies on man-made fibres to reduce their prices and encourage their use, permission to textile mills to use any fibre they wish to, and an invitation to powerlooms to register with the Government (with the last budget having shifted duties upstream to yarn which they buy, powerlooms have been left with no incentive to remain out in the cold).

Mills had considerable fibre flexibility before, but they can now go the whole hog and produce only synthetics, which they could not before. And organised sector mills will be placed on an almost equal competitive footing with powerlooms which will have to pay all the taxes they do, though powerlooms still have lower overheads going for them. Exults Prafulbhai Anubhai, managing director of the Ahmedabad-based Rustom Mills: "Competition between the mill and the powerloom sector will now become more fair, and the industry will survive with this newfound competitive strength."

The Government's latest policy package is certainly radical and sharply breaks with the past. Says R. Jagdish Chandran, chairman of the Southern India Mills Association: "No single policy change introduced by the Government in the past three decades has been as sweeping as the new textile policy." Almost two years ago, 13 textile mills were taken over to save workers' jobs. Now the textile policy says that take-overs or nationalisation are not the answer to sickness. Mills have been allowed to expand or contract production capacities, and Government acknowledges that unviable mills may have to down their shutters and jobs can be a casualty in the process.

There is more evidence of the turnabout in official perceptions. Some 40 archaic rules are being done away with, many rooted in war time regulations. And over the past decade taxes on man-made fibres were raised by 450 per cent, excluding levies on petroleum-based inputs. The premise then was that synthetics were for the rich. Now Government wants to lower prices of synthetics because it feels that most people want them. Much of the official turnabout can also be attributed to a feeling that past policies haven't worked. As Textiles Minister Chandrashekhar Singh told INDIA TODAY: "There were certain difficulties with the previous policy. Significant departures from the past were necessary."

Of course, many of the liberalisations are hemmed in with "ifs" and "buts". The reasons for sickness in mills will be evaluated on a case by case basis before a mill is permitted to shut down, and a Government official warns it would be hasty to presume that all the mills closed now will be allowed to call it a day. Also, workers laid off will be provided with a three-year financial cushion that will be funded by levying a cess on the industry's output. The minister says that workers will get 75 per cent of their salary in their first jobless year, 50 per cent in the next year and 25 per cent in the third year. They will also jump the queue for any job vacancies that arise at other units owned by their former employers.



The policy has other, less controversial, proposals. Cotton prices which fluctuate are to be stabilised by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) building up a buffer stock and importing cotton. The textile industry is to be regarded activitywise instead of sectorwise, handlooms are to be modernised and protected by reserving some items for them, and the obligation to produce 650 million metres of cloth at controlled prices, now shared equally by the public sector National Textile Corporation (NTC) and handlooms, will be shifted over the next five years to the handlooms sector. Since controlled price cloth production is to go up by 5 per cent a year and is subsidised, that means the subsidy of around Rs 130 crore the Government now foots will go up correspondingly. The shift of controlled price cloth to handlooms also means, Textiles Ministry Secretary S.S Verma argues, that some 30,000 less skilled seasonal handloom weavers who are not covered by any of the official handloom institutions will get employment round the year. Verma claims that NTC mills will not be affected by losing the controlled cloth business. As they modernise over the next five years, the newer machines will be geared to producing higher quality cloth.

That this package is breathtakingly different from the prescriptions of the past is recognised by the Government itself. The final policy document was therefore vetted first by a committee of secretaries, then by a group of Union ministers headed by Defence Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and finally by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The report was released for clearance by the cabinet committee on

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There were certain difficulties with the previous policy. Significant departures from the past were necessary.

CHANDRASHEKHAR SINGH
Textiles Minister

economic affairs only after the prime minister and his advisers discussed it for an hour with the textiles minister.

But the broadsweep policy document has attracted flak for not spelling out how it will be translated into action. Charges G.N. Palriwala, president of the Northern India Cotton Textile Mills Association (NICTMA): "As a policy document, there is much to rejoice in it. But it's a paper full of hope which nowhere mentions how those hopes are going to be implemented and how soon." Adds F.C. Rustagi, president of J.K. Synthetics: "Yes, I am happy with the policy—if it is implemented. I had expected corrective measures to be announced with the policy." But government officials retort that "white papers such as this are never precise and the 1978 and 1981 textile policy statements also did not go into details." In any case, the notifications to enforce the policy will be issued in the next few days and by month-end even the fiscal measures will have been set in motion.

Once that happens, competition, closures and perhaps higher cloth production may be the order of the day. Says a Commerce Ministry official: "When you remove barriers to entry by new firms, competition will be inevitable." Surplus capacities already exist in the industry, and mills that cannot face the pressure will close down. In the near future, eight unviable NTC mills may face the axe, and some of the 74 closed mills could be closed down though many of them may be handed over to new managements.

Convulsions in the industry apart, the policy will have other consequences. With blended fabrics selling more quickly at retail shops than cotton cloth, the few mills that have not yet switched to producing blends will be forced to do so. NICTMA's Palriwala reckons that most mills can make the switch fairly easily in two or three months, though they will have to foot bills of Rs 3 crore or more. And synthetic fibre manufacturers see pickings in an expanded market. Says Mahendra Kumar Modi, Vice-president of Modipon Ltd: "If the Government cuts levies on synthetic fibres drastically, the market will boom." Modipon may quadruple its present annual capacity of 9,000 tonnes of nylon and polyester yarn if the Government permits companies to expand plants. There is evidence it is inclined to do so. Average plant capacities in the country range from 6,000 to 10,000 tonnes, and a government official says that 50,000-tonne plants are required for economies of scale to operate. Almost all the polyester filament yarn and polyester staple fibre manufacturers in the country have applications pending with the Government to expand capacities, and many of these may now be cleared. If they are, that would call for investments in upstream petrochemical-based industries which feed synthetic yarn firms with raw materials. To some extent, such investments are already on the cards; firms have letters of intent in their pockets to expand capacities.

If the Government cuts levies on synthetic fibres drastically, the market will boom.

MAHENDRA KUMAR MODI
vice-president, Modipon Ltd

Photographs by HARI OM GULATI

The policy document is a paper full of hope which nowhere mentions how those hopes are going to be implemented.

G.N. PALRIWALA
president, Northern India Textiles Mills Association

The proposed cut in duties on synthetics should put the Government out of pocket. But official calculations are the production base will expand with more mills switching to lower-taxed synthetics. So revenue the Government rakes in may go up. Says Verma: "It is difficult to predict whether the Government will lose money or not. When the rate of duty goes down, the quantum of revenue may simultaneously go up."

Where the policy could fall flat is on sick units. The decision to permit mills to close rests with state governments, not the centre —state governments could refuse to allow mills to close even though judged unviable by the Centre. Also, the unions may not take kindly to workers being thrown out of work, dole or no dole. Points out Arvind Buch, president of the Textile Labour Association: "Trade unions will have to resist closures if there is no job security for workers." The effectiveness of the CCI in stabilising cotton prices is also questioned. The CCI could face problems in buying cotton for its buffer stock in states which have local bodies with a monopoly on cotton buying.

What is evident is that if the new policy's goals of lower cloth prices and higher output are achieved, the Government's prescription will have been proved right. If the policy fails, the gamble will have been in vain—and will have exacted a heavy toll in terms of mill closures and jobs lost.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
with bureau reports

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SHAW WALLACE

Volte Face

THE SHAW Wallace case gets curiouser and curiouser. Last February, the Calcutta company's directors were asking the Company Law Board to investigate who had bought R.G.Shaw, the overseas company that holds 38.7 per cent of Shaw Wallace shares, and to freeze R.G. Shaw's voting rights pending the enquiry. The Company Law Board obliged, an inspector was deputed to conduct the investigation, and a hearing fixed for June 7.

But when D-day came around, one of the directors of Shaw Wallace got an injunction from the Calcutta High Court that prevented the board from conducting its hearings. As a lawyer in Delhi said, "I have not come across a case before of a company's directors asking for government intervention, and then taking legal steps to prevent such intervention."

The contents of the petition before the high court, and the reasons for the court's order, could not be immediately ascertained. But the substance of the various submissions before the Company Law Board, obtained for the first time by INDIA TODAY, throw fresh and fascinating light on the Shaw Wallace drama, and on the battle being fought between its chairman S.P.Acharya and the proclaimed new owner of R.G.Shaw, the Dubai-based M.R. Chhabria.

The initial complaint to the Company Law Board said that Sime Darby of Malaysia had sold R.G. Shaw to an unidentified party. The sale was termed mysterious and clandestine, and though it purported to be an overseas transaction, the purchase price was mentioned in Indian rupees, so that the real purchaser was believed to be a leading liquor manufacturer in India. If that was the case, control of Shaw Wallace would give the buyer virtual control of the country's liquor business, since Shaw Wallace is the country's second largest liquor company. It was also stated in the submission to the Company Law Board that the transfer of R.G.Shaw's shares really meant buying shares in Shaw Wallace, which amounted to a breach of Indian law as no permission had been taken from the Reserve Bank.

Acting on this complaint, the Company Law Board froze R.G. Shaw's voting rights pending an investigation, and also declared that no change in the Shaw Wallace board could take place.

That set the cat among the pigeons. Chhabria, chairman of Carasco, the Hong Kong company that has bought R.G.Shaw, said in his submission to the Company Law Board two months later that no Indian authority had jurisdiction to investigate transactions by foreign companies abroad, and charged that the initial complaint was based on conjecture and market gossip. There was no violation of Indian laws, and since R.G. Shaw continued to own Shaw Wallace shares as before, its rights as a shareholder could not be frozen.

Acharya (left) and Chhabria: getting curiouser and curiouser

The Shaw Wallace case is perhaps the first one where a company's directors asked for government intervention, and then took legal steps to prevent such intervention.

But the most interesting part of Chhabria's submission was that the initial complaints had suppressed information from the Company Law Board, that Acharya had known all along that the new owner of R.G. Shaw was Chhabria, and that far from being a clandestine transaction the sale had been done by tender, with the Indian management putting up a nominee to bid.

Also, as early as January 4, that is before the sale took place later in January, Chhabria's lawyer had tried to contact Acharya through his lawyer. A meeting with Acharya was fixed for January 7, but the flights to Calcutta were delayed or cancelled and when Chhabria's lawyer reached the city, Acharya said he was leaving for Bombay.

Chhabria then goes on to charge that Acharya went to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, accompanied by another director of Shaw Wallace, that the two of them met the chairman of Sime Darby and asked for the opportunity to procure a purchaser for R.G. Shaw. This was agreed to, and a tender floated. But Chhabria's bid was accepted.

Shortly before this, Chhabria called Acharya's lawyer from London, asked for a meeting with Acharya, and added that he had no intention to disturb the company's management, which would stay with professionals. But Acharya remained unwilling to meet Chhabria, saying a meeting would compromise his position in case the new buyer was not Chhabria. When, after Chhabria became the successful bidder, he asked for a fresh meeting, Acharya declined yet again, saying he would not sit on the same board as Chhabria and would fight him. According to Chhabria's submission, Acharya also advised Chhabria to sell R.G. Shaw at a higher price than he had paid.

Chhabria ends his submission by saying that the R.G.Shaw deal was neither mysterious nor clandestine, that Acharya had tried to compel him to sell R.G. Shaw to a foreign multinational corporation, and that his complaint to the Company Law Board was mala fide, and designed to perpetuate his control of a company in which he has no personal stake. He also denied that any Indian liquor manufacturer was involved.

In counter-submissions, Acharya has denied that he went to Kuala Lumpur after June 1984. The company's directors also asked for more information from Chhabria, including a copy of the agreement between Carasco and Sime Darby for the transfer of R.G.Shaw. They also asked for a three-week postponement of the June 7 hearing.

In its reply, the Company Law Board said that all the submissions before it would be taken up for consideration on June 7. But this could not be done because of the high court injunction. At the moment, that is where the matter stands. No interpretation of the future turn of events is immediately possible because the reasons for the court's stay order are not yet known. But it can be predicted that the Shaw Wallace case will develop into a fascinating story of a struggle for the control of one of the leading companies of eastern India.

—T.N.NINAN

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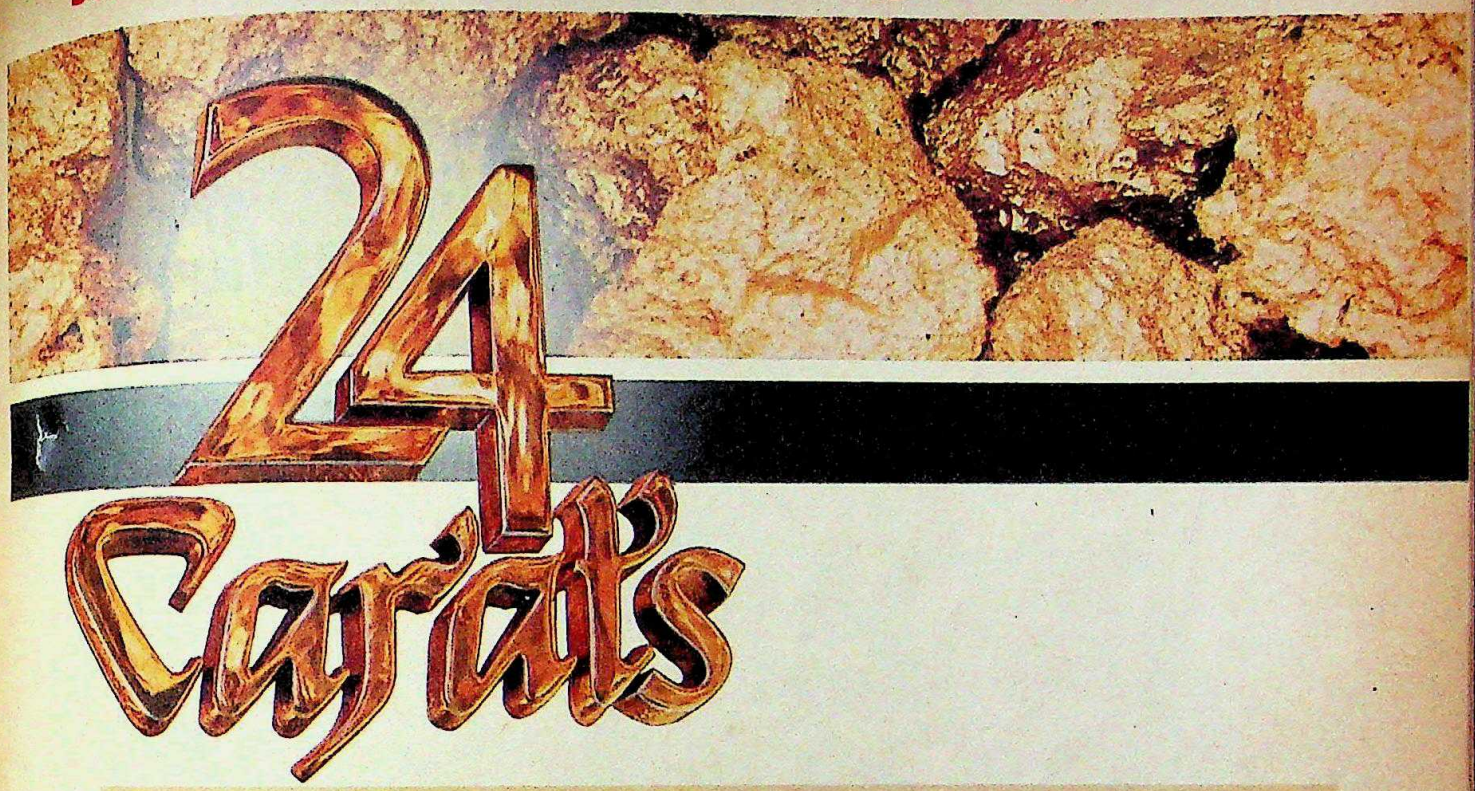

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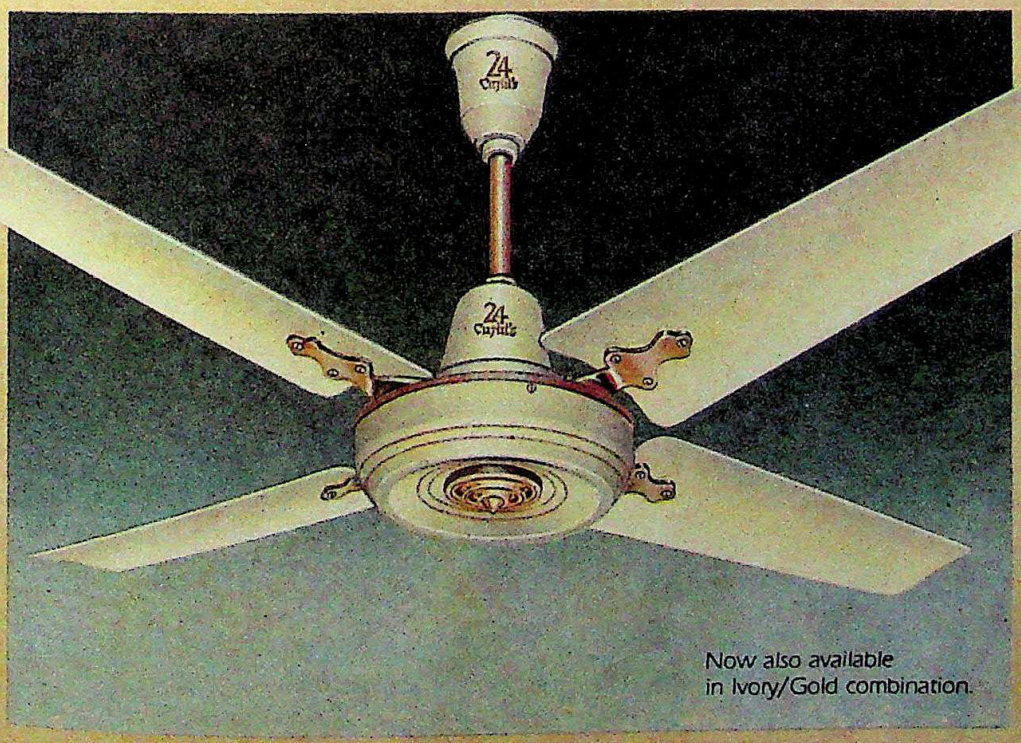

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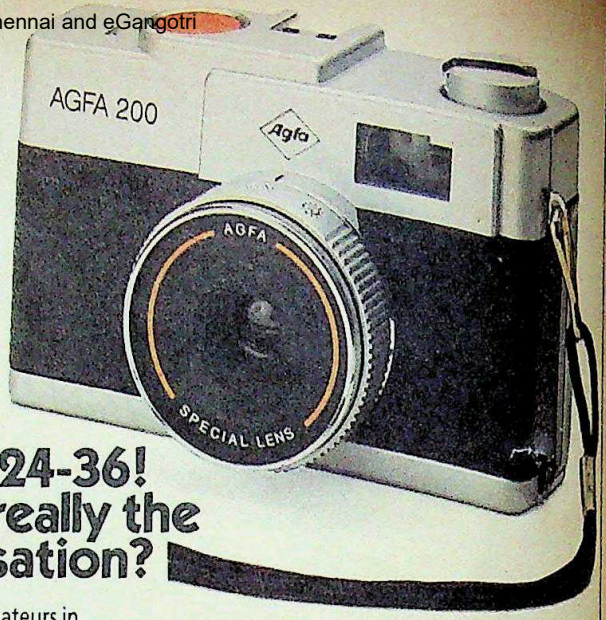

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LIC

Problematic Solution

OFFICIAL policy somersaults are hardly novel, but the way the Government has gone about this one may mark a watershed of sorts. First it accepted the Era Sezhiyan Committee's suggestion that the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) be broken up into five regional companies to decentralise its functioning. Then it shilly-shallied over the matter for months. Finally, it introduced a bill in the last monsoon session of Parliament to translate the proposal into law. Now, four-and-a-half years after the Sezhiyan Committee handed in its controversial report, the Government has quietly dropped the move while continuing to maintain that it has not. Says A.K. Pandya, additional secretary (insurance) in the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs: "Officially, the move to split the LIC has not been given up. The Government's stand in Parliament is that reintroduction of the bill has been deferred pending its further consideration. The papers will be put up to the Cabinet any time now."

Nevertheless, the Government had already back-tracked on its decision last April, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi wrote to Sunil Maitra, joint secretary of the All India Insurance Employees' Association. The prime minister told Maitra: "The Government has reconsidered the matter and decided not to proceed with the bill." Last fortnight, photocopies of the letter were doing the rounds in divisional and branch offices of the LIC.

The letter itself threatens to kick up a storm with Sezhiyan, a former Janata member of Parliament, questioning the propriety of the prime minister informing Maitra of a policy decision while the Lok Sabha was in session. Charges Sezhiyan: "If the Government had decided not to proceed with the bill, it should have informed the Lok Sabha first before officially writing to Sunil Maitra. This shows the slipshod manner in which the Government is proceeding."

Even so, the letter is bound to go down well with LIC employees. They have been fiercely opposing the move to split the monolith. LIC Managing Director A.S. Gupta told INDIA TODAY: "The split would have created more problems than it would have solved." Many policyholders transfer their policies from one area to another, and with each region's business handled by a separate company, confusion would have been the inevitable result. Nor would it have made for commercial viability, he argues. In the north and the east, it costs more to sell insurance policies than in the west and the south. So the northern and eastern companies may not have been viable.

"If the Government had decided not to proceed with the bill it should have informed the Lok Sabha first..."

ERA SEZHIYAN

"The split would have created more problems than it would have solved."

A.S. GUPTA
managing director, LIC

The merits of the proposal apart, what has been overlooked in this brouhaha is that the bill largely took note of only one of the Era Sezhiyan Committee's many recommendations—and did not offer solutions to the LIC's numerous problems. Certainly, it did not address itself to the need to provide insurance cover for the rural and urban poor, or to the fundamental concerns of policyholders such as the low returns on policies. Says Sezhiyan: "I was most unhappy that the bill did not give effect to some of the more important recommendations of our committee."

The committee's report had indicted the LIC on a number of counts. One goal of nationalising private insurance firms in 1956 was to spread life insurance to rural areas and among the poor, but the LIC has concentrated more on the urban well-to-do. The number of new policies it has issued in the countryside over the last 20 years has actually declined. And a recent survey by the National Council of Applied Economic Research shows that while 35.1 per cent of the salaried class in the country are insured, only 2.3 per cent of self-employed farmers are covered by insurance.

The Sezhiyan Committee pre-empted the argument that the poor cannot afford the premia on policies. It suggested that the LIC promote the much cheaper group insurance policies more vigorously, raise the group insurance policy limit of Rs 10,000 and issue one-shot premium policies to farmers who do not have a fixed income. The LIC could issue a policy to a district cooperative bank covering all farmers who borrow money from it, and the bank could collect the premium along with the interest on the loans.

The bill also blithely overlooked the most contentious issue of them all—the raw deal that the LIC gives its policyholders. The net yield on an LIC insurance policy is less than 7 per cent a year, which falls short of what is offered by the Provident Fund authorities, the banks, the post office, the Unit Trust of India or private firms which hold out anything between 10 and 15 per cent for deposits.

The LIC's answer to all this is that its policies are not an investment but a hedge against "life risks". In any case, the corporation is hamstrung by the Government in offering policyholders better returns: 75 per cent of its money has to be put into low-yielding government securities.

But these arguments are clearly invalid. The LIC itself admits in its actuarial calculations that its insurance policies are investment propositions. For example, its charts say that just 3.3 per cent of the annual premium goes for covering the risk of death; most of the premium represents plain investment, on which there should be a better return.

Also, as LIC officials admit, when the

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company's actuaries calculate the premia to be charged on policies, they assume that most people will live for less than half the time they really do. In addition to that they also deflate the estimate of LIC returns on investments by half and double estimates of expenses and overheads. So the LIC, in fact, is flush with funds: about Rs 3 crore goes into its reserves everyday.

The only redeeming feature in all this is that the corporation has been trying to decentralise its functioning by installing 300 mini-computers at some of its 1,042 branches, as well as at its divisional offices. Explains LIC Executive Director (organisation, management and corporate planning) M.G. Diwan: "The basis of our decentralisation is to move decision-making from the central office to the zonal offices, to the divisional offices and finally to the branches." He says that 41 of the 43 divisional offices are functioning almost independently, and that the Bombay and Calcutta divisional offices will follow suit very soon.

But even the LIC's decentralisation efforts could run into squally weather. The unions fear that widespread computerisation will displace staff, though this has not happened so far. They question the wisdom of investing a staggering Rs 15 lakh in each computer when over 40,000 clerks in LIC offices nation-wide service the corporation's 252 lakh insurance policies.

On an average, a clerk has to handle only 680 policies a year—or two policies a day. And N.M. Sundaram, joint secretary of the All India Insurance Employees' Association, warns that decentralisation could be counter-productive in another sense. He argues: "There is a danger in making branches totally self-sufficient to handle policies. Branches are basically business procurement centres, and if all claims are going to be settled at the branches, there is bound to be cheating and fraud."

That may or may not become a serious problem, but what is evident is that, with the bill to split the LIC having been dropped, the Government is back to square one. The ills that flow from a firm's functioning in a monopoly situation continue unchecked, the policyholder continues to be taken for a ride, and the four-and-a-half-year-old efforts of a committee set up to prescribe remedies quietly and possible solutions have been consigned to the dustbin.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

FILM IMPORTS

Dull Picture

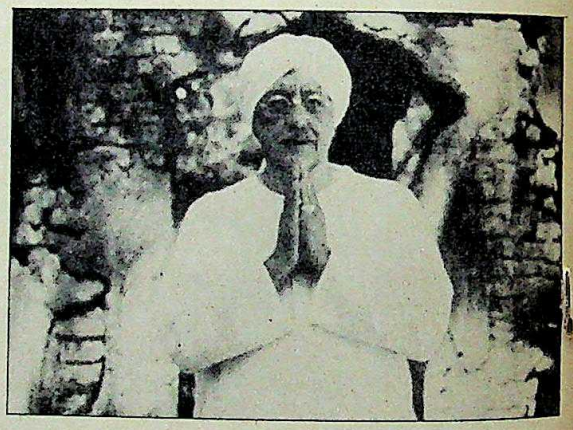
LAST fortnight when David Lean's long-awaited and Oscar-winning film *A Passage to India* was premiered in New Delhi in aid of the prime minister's relief fund, Indian audiences were at last hopeful of a better deal in getting to see the latest foreign films soon after their commercial release in the West. Alas, the situation is not as simple as that. It may be weeks, even months, before *A Passage to India* is released commercially, and the problem lies not with importer-distributor quarrels but with the Government's new policy of permitting film imports by non-resident Indians (NRI's).

Under the new film import policy initiated October last, foreign films can be imported for commercial screening in the country by NRI's after a payment of a canalising fee of US $ 10,000 per film to the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and 15 per cent of the overflow in profits, if any. The Government embarked upon the policy in good faith: it did not wish to restrict its import via the all-powerful Motion Pictures Export Association of America (MPEAA) and at the same time did not wish profits to be repatriated abroad.

So far, applications for the import of 54 films by NRI's have landed at the NFDC's offices in Bombay, but their quality is another matter altogether. The films include titles like *Nine Deaths of the Ninja*, *Body Rock* and *Chain Gang*. Indian tennis player Ashok Amritraj, who is based in Los Angeles, has applied to import six films including such B-grade masterpieces as *Avenging Jungle* and *Razor Back*. Three 3-D films (*A.P.E.*, *The Fantastic Invasion of the Earth* and *Lonely Lady*) are also in the pipeline but NFDC Managing Director Malati Tambay Vaidya admits that she holds no brief for the artistic or aesthetic merits of the NRI imports. That the Government has legitimised the import of third-rate dross is clear, and already a subject of dispute between the NFDC and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in New Delhi.

According to the ministry, the NFDC was clearly deputed with the responsibility of ensuring that the imports were of "the highest thematic, aesthetic and cinematic standards". Accordingly, Tambay Vaidya says she invited members of the NFDC board—film makers Shashi Kapoor, Shyam Benegal and Basu Bhattacharya as well as distributor Gulshan Rai—to arbitrate over the selection. The group cleared only *Lonely Lady*, and thought it was "meaningless" to sit in judgement over the rest, given their appalling standard. "We now feel that the NFDC is in no position to decide on the quality of film imports. Why shouldn't the Censor Board take on the responsibility?" says Vaidya. But the ministry argues that the NFDC, being the sole financial beneficiary of the scheme, it should also take in hand the quality of the films being imported.

Meanwhile, the sole import of any value, *A Passage to India*, has run into problems for release. A single print was imported by Dass Media. The company now says that there is a shortage of raw stock to make more prints but the NFDC (which is again the sole agency for distributing raw stock) denies this. "They simply haven't applied for raw stock," says Vaidya. Undeterred the importer is trying to clinch the best deals for distributing the film nation-wide.



A still from *A Passage to India*: in short supply

In this picture of confusion and disarray, the only promise of decent cinematic fare is provided by the MPEAA, which has an excellent selection of recent Hollywood films coming up for release in the next couple of months. Titles include the prize-winning *Ghostbusters* and *A Soldier's Story*, *Educating Rita* and *The Razor's Edge*. As a stopgap arrangement it will also release new prints of some old blockbusters such as *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *Guns of Navarone* and *Ben Hur*.

—SUNIL SETHI

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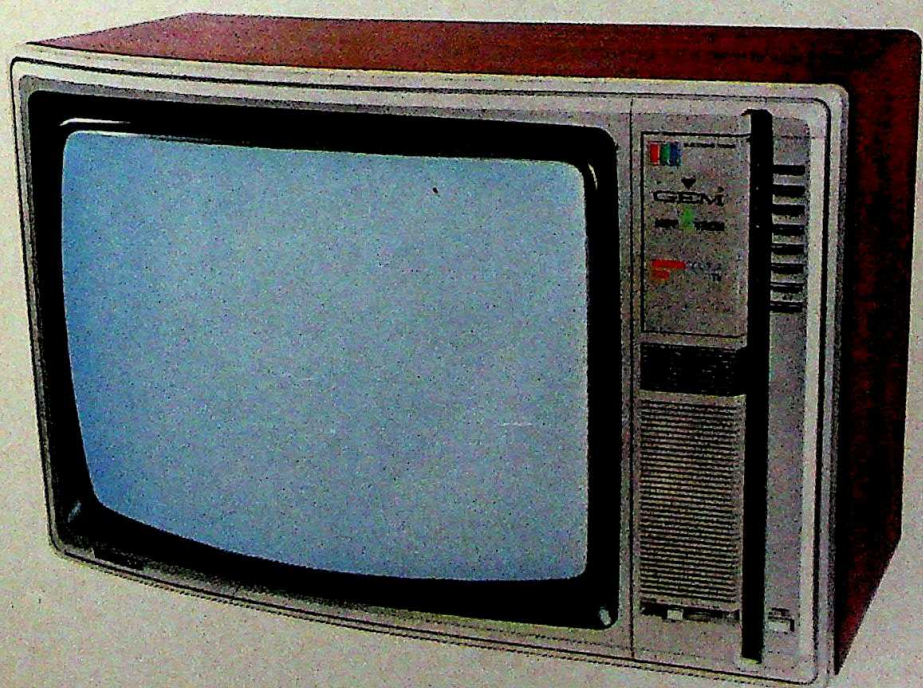

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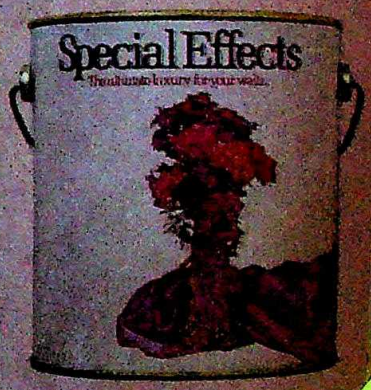

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WIMCO

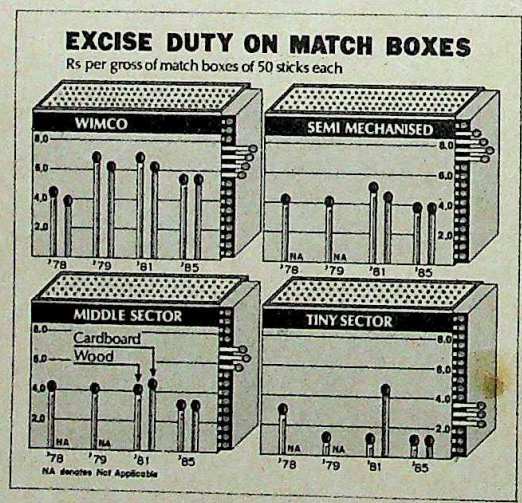
Matchless Future

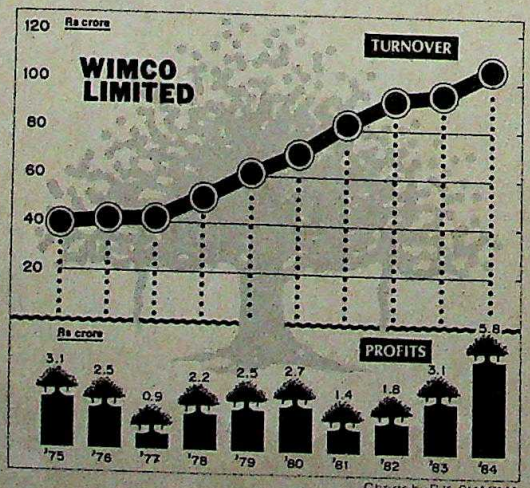
WIMCO Ltd is a company that manufactures matchboxes. Right? In less than a decade, the answer to that question could be "maybe". One out of every five matchboxes made in the country bears the Wimco label; in five years only one out of 10 or 15 may do so. But, strange as it may seem, that possibility does not appear to dismay the company's management. After years of match making, Wimco has seen the writing on the wall and is currently involved in an ambitious programme of diversification. It is consequently one giant company which seems to be successfully making a transition from traditional to new fields of activity.

The dice were loaded against it when the Government fixed a ceiling for Wimco and levied penal rates of excise on its matchbox. So Wimco decided to cut loose from a business it has been in for 60 years. Its new course will take it to such products as titanium metal anodes, a component of the electrolytic cells used to turn out some chemicals, packaging materials, processed foods and vegetables, farm extension services, biotechnology and the frontiers of the agro business. Explains the company's Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Kamaljit Singh: "From a consumer product company, we are becoming an agro-based firm. We have to be prepared for the fact that matchboxes won't be our mainstay for long."

There are signals that Wimco's gamble is beginning to pay off. Profits at Rs 5.8 crore and dividends at 20 per cent are at new highs, sales have shot up to over Rs 105 crore, and last month the firm's Rs 10 share was quoted at Rs 48 on the stock-market. Says a Wimco watcher: "For a company that has weathered a crisis, a 6 per cent rate of return on sales is not to be considered a bad performance."

Certainly, the company has pulled out of the tailspin it was flung into by Charan Singh's budget six years ago. On the premise that handmade is beautiful, the excise duty on the mechanised sector's (read Wimco) wooden and cardboard matchboxes was sharply stepped up, while the duty on semi-mechanised, medium and tiny firms was cut (*see chart*). That meant that Wimco's excise and sales tax bill more than doubled to Rs 22 crore a year after the 1979 budget. The burden was passed to wholesalers and retailers, sales plummeted by 20 to 25 per cent, matchboxes piled up in warehouses and its working capital shot up. Inevitably, Wimco slashed matchbox production by some 10 per cent, and its seven match factories worked at lower rates of efficiency. Two of them were nearly shut down. Profits were squeezed, though that showed up on the balance sheets only a year or two later, ready cash became a problem, and borrowings went up to Rs 25 crore. Workers were laid off, Wimco shares plunged to Rs 10 a few months after the 1979 budget (two years before, they had been sold for Rs 13.25 when the company came out with a public issue), and major plans to branch out into meat exports and the manufacture of agricultural chemicals were shelved. The management also went slow on projects it had launched before 1979, though these eventually helped the company turn the corner. Admits Wimco's Singh: "The company would have gone into liquidation had we not taken steps before 1979 to diversify. What was in the pipeline saved us."





Charts by B.K. SHARMA

To help retrieve the situation, the company swung into action on a number of fronts. In matches, factories were geared to produce more higher quality cardboard matchboxes, which require less labour than wooden ones. As a fallout of this, the match division's 8,000-strong labour force had to be pruned. Some 1,100 workers were sent packing through an early voluntary retirement scheme which held out to each worker Rs 30,000 plus legal dues. And the company ventured into new areas of business, sticking all the while to three ground rules: the technology had to be readily available from its foreign partner Swedish Match Company or its associates; the new project had to be allied to its traditional line of business so that the company would not be at sea in it; and the project had to require small sums of investment (Wimco has put only Rs 7 crore into diversification since 1978). So it bought or put up three small fruit and vegetable processing firms, Sun Sip, Chandigarh Foods and Cleanfoods Corporation, a packaging machines company called AR Packaging Systems, and Wimco Seedlings, formally floated early last year to breed genetically superior trees, fruits and vegetables.

Underpinning all this is a basic perception—the importance of sewing up raw material supplies. To have wood on tap for its match factories, the company last year handed out four lakh saplings to farmers in the north under a scheme administered by the state-owned National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. That takes the total number of trees Wimco has given farmers to plant to a million—enough wood to meet half its match stick needs from 1990 onwards.

With all this on the anvil, and bigger projects in sight in the next few years, Wimco may scale new heights, match division or no match division.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

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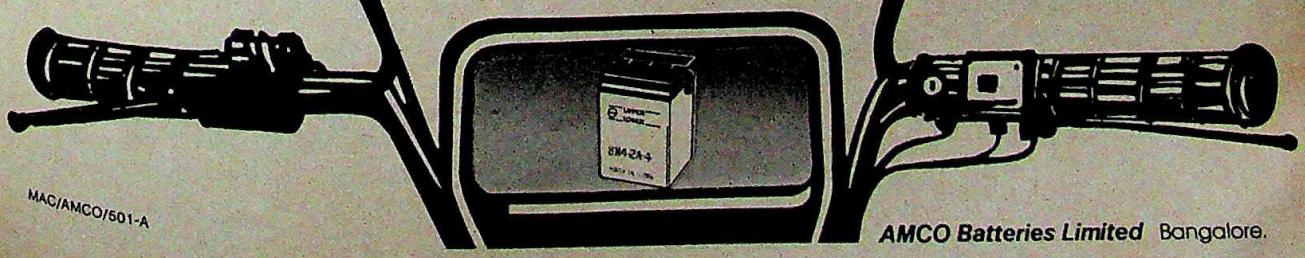

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GUJARAT

The Raid Reversal

MASSIVE tax raids are known to get the adrenalin flowing, but this one had blood flowing as well. And before the action died down, no fewer than 40 excise officials were in hospital, one of them had facial burns after a chemical was thrown at him in Century Mills, and in a reversal of roles the excise men began beating up businessmen during subsequent interrogations. To add to the unprecedented drama, some of Surat's biggest textile magnates were arrested for having instigated the violence, and questions were inevitably being asked about the nexus between the local industry and the city's police and excise establishments. All in all, there was enough to justify a big budget Hindi film.

But the budget here was of course far bigger than any film's. Reports had been piling up in New Delhi's Directorate of Revenue Intelligence about large-scale tax evasion by Surat's textile producers and traders, but the Government was galvanised into action only after press reports estimated the evasion at as high as Rs 500 crore. The name of the game was classifying cloth wrongly so as to pay a lower rate of excise duty, or to stamp the same number on different bales of cloth so that the excise paid on one bale helped clear many bales, or to use any of a number of other ingenious stratagems.

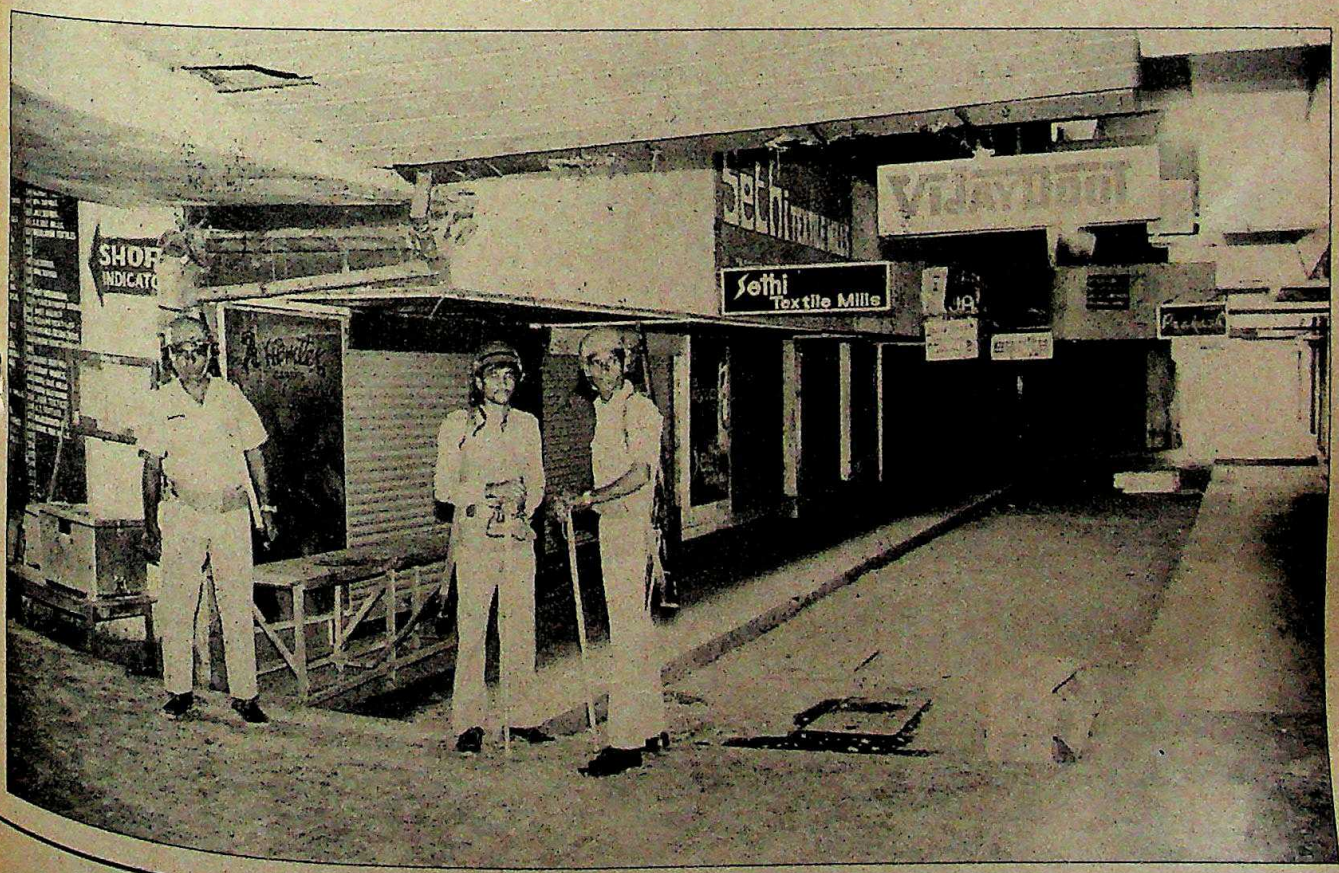
So the raid that was mounted was one of the biggest in the history of the excise department. No fewer than 435 officials divided into 48 raiding parties converged on Surat from three different originating points, their target initially being the massive textile market on Surat's Ring Road, with 1,200 shops. Secrecy was so complete that even the local excise officials were kept in the dark, and no police protection was considered necessary because, as one official put it, "We thought we had strength in our sheer numbers."

They were hopelessly wrong, of course. As the officials strode confidently into the shops and began checking documents, there was at first no reaction except compliance. But when the size and scale of the raids became apparent, the hundreds of shops dealing in wholesale cloth began to clang down their shutters as panic spread. And then, before officials could fathom what was happening, henchmen materialised out of nowhere and started attacking the raiding parties with pipes and sticks. The documents that had been seized were snatched back and immediately destroyed. In some textile mills, the documents were thrown into boilers, where instant incineration destroyed all evidence completely.

The vilest of abuses were flung at the officials, most of whom ran for their lives, often leaving behind watches, wallets and gold chains. Hostile slogans rent the air: *Excise department hai hai, Rajiv Gandhi murdabad, Rajiv Gandhi yeh nahin chalega.* The traders were openly directing their men to specific officials, and one official heard a gang leader telling a trader that they were now moving out of the market so as to "take care" of another raiding party at a textile mill.

C.P. Arya, an assistant director of anti-evasion, was saved from a mob by hutment dwellers who gave him shelter. But he was among the lucky ones. Many of the others finally managed to find their way to the Pandasera police station, only to find that the police were not prepared to record their complaints. Surat Police Commissioner Manmohan Mehta argued that the police were already busy maintaining peace in the city

Armed guards at closed textile market



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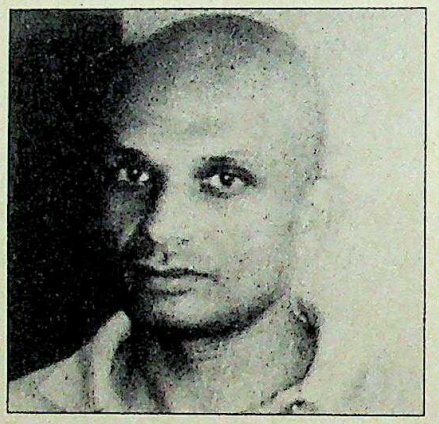
because of the anti-reservation agitation, that constables could not as a consequence be immediately taken off duty, that the raid was badly timed because of this reason, and that the police should have been informed in advance. But this did not explain why policemen were reluctant to register the officials' complaints. The local officials' attitude changed somewhat after Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh got on the telephone to Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki. But many excise officials chose to return to Bombay, where their counterparts sported black armbands in protest at the incidents in Surat.

NEVERTHELESS, the raids continued after a break of 24 hours. This crucial time-lag almost certainly helped numerous traders and industrialists destroy incriminating evidence or to manipulate their records, but R.Bhattacharjee, the deputy director of anti-evasion who led the raid, remained confident: "We picked up all the documents and will meticulously decipher each one to piece together the evidence," he said. Bhattacharjee had in fact stood out in the opening day's drama for his display of personal bravery. When his men were attacked in the textile market, the tall bald officer rushed to the troublespot with a handful of armed men from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Customs and stood like a rock in the midst of the chaos and directed the operations. When he heard of acid being thrown at an official in Century Mills, he rushed there to help and seize the available documents.

The raids and the violence brought to the surface deep fissures in Surat's textile industry, with a major section decrying the violence and refusing to take part in the subsequent protest. In part, this is because of a rift between the two dominant communities in the business —Gujaratis and Marwaris—and the fact that most of the raids happened to be on Marwari establishments. Said Rajnikant Sheth, president of the Textile Association of India, south Gujarat unit: "The trade here has always had a reputation of being peace-loving, now this attack has destroyed our image." Other Gujarati businessmen shared this sentiment, and when the Garden Mills was raided, the owners fully cooperated with the excise officials, who seized reportedly unaccounted goods worth about Rs 1.76 lakh. Despite this, there was not a murmur of protest. Said a senior manager of the mill: "How can we protest or beat them up? They are doing their duty and they can come back and check our mill any day they want." Many traders who were raided were calling for meetings to voice their protest, but a majority of the business community kept away, not wanting to be a party to condemning the excise raid. The South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry was also unusually silent, and a local businessman said: "Outsiders have changed the business norms here. Traditional Gujarati businessmen would never have indulged in such violence." The rift implicit in all this came out into the open last fortnight



Bhattacharjee: confident

when the Marwari lobby demanded the resignation of Surajram Bachkaniwala, president of the Surat Textile Market and Warehousing Society, as he did not condemn the raid.

Suspicion now dogs textile business circles in the city. The Marwari group suspects that their Gujarati counterparts were behind the raids, while the latter thinks that rival traders and businessmen in Bombay and Ahmedabad may have tipped off the excise establishment and provoked them into taking action. Whatever the truth of the matter, the excise officials themselves have no doubt in their minds that large-scale evasion has in fact been taking place in Surat. Said one of them: "It is by unscrupulous methods like tax evasion that the trade here in Surat has flourished and become so prominent."

There is also little doubt that the Surat textile business has been acting in collusion with the city's tax officials. The story is told of a Young Assistant Collector of customs, Karan Sharma, who was transferred because he raided the residence of a well-connected industrialist in the city three years ago. The industrialist had challenged Sharma, who seized contraband, and warned him that he would soon be out of Surat; and true enough, marching orders were soon issued, banishing Sharma to Bikaner. This time around, however, nemesis caught up with the industrialist, whose mill was raided, unaccounted cloth seized and documents taken into custody.

Meanwhile, as if to atone for the initial lack of support, the local police swung into action and arrested half-a-dozen well-known businessmen and millowners who are charged with having engineered the attack along with 42 others, and with violating the Excise and Salt Tax Act. Among the businessmen arrested were Ashok Chotalal Shah, Vinod Kumar and Ashok Garg of Hariom Textiles, Hundan Devnani and Lekhraj Madhwani of B.N. Prints, Ramesh Jain of Nemtex Textiles and Om Prakash Jain of Salu Textiles. This sent shock waves through the Surat industry, with over 80 major traders and industrialists securing anticipatory bail from the Gujarat High Court. And though the arrested businessmen were subsequently released on bail that went up to Rs 50,000, the traders were sufficiently annoyed to close down all the textile markets in Surat for 10 days, paralysing all business activity. In a city that is almost dominated by the textile business, this meant that over a lakh of people were unemployed, while more than 100 transport companies operating out of the city had to look for work in other sectors. And the absence of payments from traders created its own problems.

The unexpected fall-out of the entire episode was the reaction of some of the excise officials, who could not restrain themselves from giving some businessmen a sound thrashing during their interrogation. Prakash Nandkishore Gupta said in a statement to the Chief Judicial Magistrate, M.D.Dhruv, in Surat that he was mercilessly beaten and insulted by excise officers.

This provoked comments from millowners that had a rare quality of honesty about them. Said one: "They (the excise officials) got a beating because they deserved it. What did they expect? We cough up thousands of rupees paying them regular bribes and giving them expensive gifts, and then they come and raid our mills. Obviously, this angered us. There has to be some ethics. We may not be clean, but nor are they." That extraordinary comment coming after extraordinary events, can have no riposte. —RAMESH MENON in Surat

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K.S. RANGARAJ
executive director, Kothari General Foods

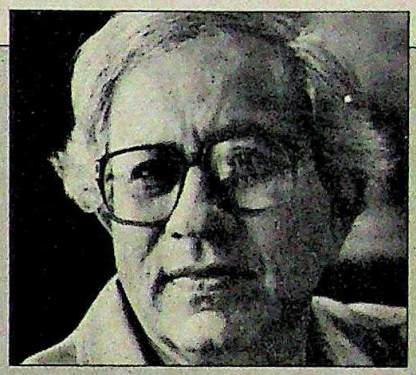
Lured by the attractions of a largely untapped market, at least three firms have launched rival products. Corn Products, which makes the Rex range of squashes, has re-launched Trinka after several years, Kothari General Foods Corporation has tied up with US food giant General Foods Corporation to introduce its Ju-C and has invaded the capital after hawking its multi-flavour product in Bombay last summer, and HMM Ltd of Horlicks fame is test marketing its Florida in Delhi. Other firms too are eyeing the pickings. McDowell and Company, which turns out the Dipy's and Kissan range of squashes, and Food Specialities Ltd, the Maggi Noodles company, may be waiting in the wings to see how the others fare before taking the plunge.

Certainly, most have so far done themselves proud in the marketplace. Kothari has rung up sales of Rs 2.5 crore in Delhi, almost 60 per cent of the turnover it expects this year, and is readying to notch up a turnover of about Rs 15 crore next year when Ju-C goes national. HMM too may offer its Florida all over the country next year, and is shooting for Rs 20 crore to Rs 30 crore sales of its powder orange drink. And quite some lengths ahead of the pack is instant drink mix pioneer Pioma, which sells some Rs 17 crore worth of Rasna annually.

At the moment, there is room for everyone in a growing market. Reckons an industry executive: "The total soft drink market, excluding sodas, is worth about Rs 400 crore; 80 per cent of these sales take place outside the home. And it is growing by 15 to 20 per cent a year."

So the instant soft drink mix market is all set for a boom. The big question is: why now? The answer, food industry men say, is applicable to most processed foods: the times are a-changing. Disposable incomes are up and consumers may be willing to experiment with new brands. Pioma Chief Executive Ashok Vithlani claims that the spadework done by his firm has played a part in making instant soft drink mixes acceptable to the public—and this now helps the competition. Says Vithlani: "Thanks to Rasna winning the confidence of people, most have come to accept soft drink concentrates as an acceptable source of daily refreshment."

It is true that powder drink mixes are going down well with the buyer and that they did not do so before. Most of the ready-to-drink wares that hit the market after Pioma launched Rasna in 1978 have faded into oblivion while low-priced Rasna kept going. Food Specialities, for one, launched Paloma a year after Rasna was introduced in the market and came a cropper. It spent around Rs 35 lakh a year on promoting it, though it sold just Rs 20 lakh of the powder tea drink annually, till finally the company decided to call it quits last year. And Corn Products withdrew Trinka some years ago because, industry men believe, it did not make much headway in the market.



"Squash manufacturers will reassess marketing strategies, something that is done in any situation. We'll protect our flanks."

KISAN MEHTA
president, McDowell's food and beverages division

Some firms may also have wanted to mark time till they hit upon the right product. HMM Marketing Manager Pradip K. Chanda says that this was the case with his firm, which has a tie up with Beecham of the UK. Lastly, industry executives point out that bottled fizz at almost Rs 2 is now more expensive than a glass of instant drink mix.

That is certainly true. The price-tag for a glass of Florida is Rs 1.25. A glass of

The new mixes: profitable market

HARI OM GULATI

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Ju-C, Trinka or Rasna costs even less: 50 paise, 36 paise and 35 paise, respectively—though these hinge on the prevailing price of sugar. The price difference may offer a clue as to why firms have not so far been treading on one another's toes. HMM's Florida is an upmarket product; Ju-C is looking to the middle range. Says K.S. Rangaraj, executive director of Kothari General Foods: "It is the middle and lower middle classes who are patronising Ju-C." But, Trinka and Rasna may be sticking to down market buyers. Says Kisan Mehta, president of McDowell's food and beverages division: "It's a classic case of market segmentation."

For all that, the players in the instant drink market are hedging their bets. Many are spending 10 to 15 per cent of their expected turnover on pushing their wares in a high impulse buying market. Explains an industry executive: "It is the amount of media noise you make that makes the difference."

Others out of the immediate game have been looking afresh at market positions. Bottled soft drinks which are largely sold outdoors remain unaffected, but squash manufacturers could be squeezed. They claim that this has not happened because the new drinks are artificially flavoured and contain no fruit juice. Not everyone shares this assessment, and even McDowell's Mehta says: "Squash manufacturers will reassess marketing strategies, something that is done in any situation. We'll protect our flanks."

The competition offered by the big daddies of the food industry could hit Pioma too, though its chief executive dismisses the possibility. Most of the new drinks use powder technology which, he claims, is inferior to using a liquid base. Rasna has nine flavours, some tailored to local tastes, and a tenth will soon be on the market. But Rasna has scored on its low price, and Trinka could give it a run for its money. So while the immediate outlook for instant drink firms may be rosy, a convulsion in the industry in the long run cannot be ruled out.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI with S.H. VENKATRAMANI

BIHAR

Bank Blues

WHAT IS the effect on a state if four employees of a bank are transferred? The answer in Bihar last fortnight was quite stunning: Rs 300 crore worth of cheques held up, the Patna clearing house paralysed, trade in the state grinding to a halt, salary cheques not cashed, and prices of a variety of items shooting up while others become scarce on the market. No economy can function without the free flow of money, and the transfer of four bank employees proved this conclusively.

The four transferred employees of the State Bank of India (SBI) belong to the powerful Bihar Provincial Bank Employees Association (BPBEA), which gave a call to its members in the other nationalised banks to boycott all SBI documents and instruments throughout Bihar from May 3. Result: the Patna clearing house for cheques was paralysed, and with the SBI management refusing to buckle under what it called economic terrorism, an unpecedented financial crises resulted.

The BPBEA charged that the transfers were vindictive and meant to prevent the growth of the organisation and some transfers had been cancelled when membership of the union was given up. But SBI spokesmen said transfers were cancelled only on compassionate grounds.

At one stage, the state Government feared a serious law and order problem, and Prabhat Kumar Prasad, secretary of the Bihar Chamber of Commerce, asked the Government to invoke the National Security Act to "curb trade union terrorism". The Bihar Chamber of Commerce in fact organised an angry demonstration in front of the local Reserve Bank of India (RBI) office, holding it responsible for the crisis when it refused to intervene. The demonstration was joined by a host of other chambers.

Protest rally outside RBI

State Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey was sufficiently alarmed by the developments to send repeated SOS messages to the Finance Ministry in New Delhi and the RBI governor in Bombay. Numerous businessmen in Patna were meanwhile talking of possible industrial violence because salaried employees were unable to encash their pay cheques.

The state Governor, P. Venkatasubbiah, also chipped in with his efforts and convened a meeting of government officials, the local RBI manager and trade spokesmen. But this had little immediate effect. A suggestion was made that the State Bank could be excluded from the clearing house so that the other banks could function, but this was shot down by the RBI representative on the grounds that the problem did not lie with the clearing house and that the State Bank had not violated any rule. While technically correct, this amounted to a continuation of stalemate and industry spokesmen began focussing their ire on the RBI.

Meanwhile, the Bihar Chemists and Druggists Association said that the state was definitely heading for an acute drugs shortage because manufacturers and wholsalers operating outside the state did not want to send supplies, as their payment would be held up. And a parallel banking system seemed to be emerging in pockets, with people pulling money out of fixed deposit accounts to lend in the informal money market, which was suddenly hyper-active. The public mood was summed up by the normally sober Patna daily, *The Searchlight*, which said editorially that the bank employees' behaviour was worse than that of criminals. Finally, towards the end of last week, the clearing house reopened after Dubey appealed to the BPBEA. But the backlog of problems would take time to be sorted out.

—FARZAND AHMED

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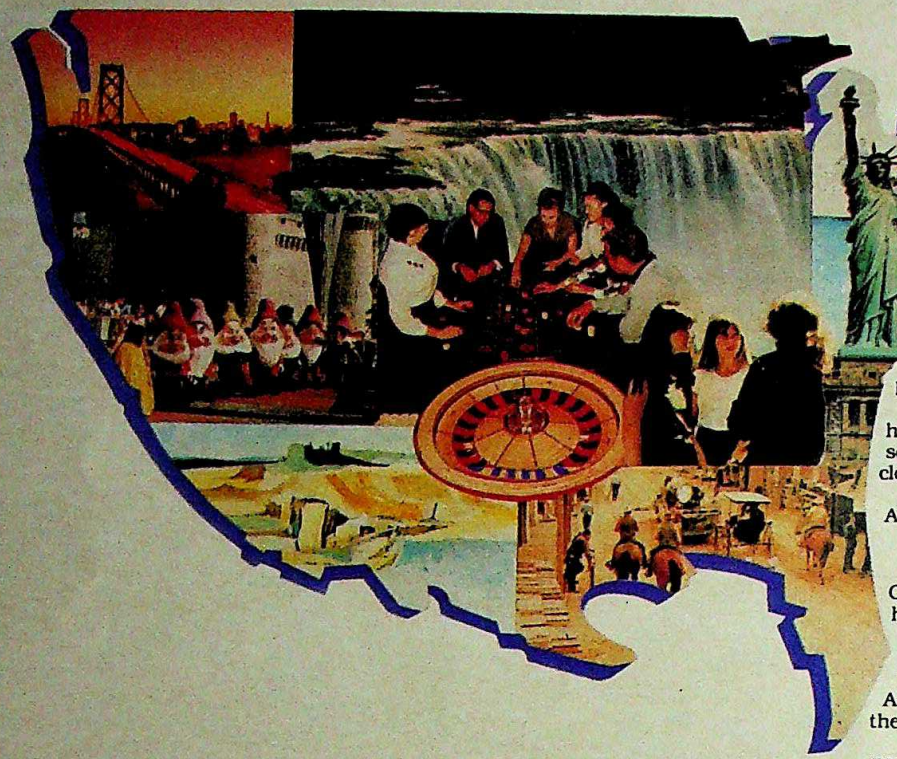

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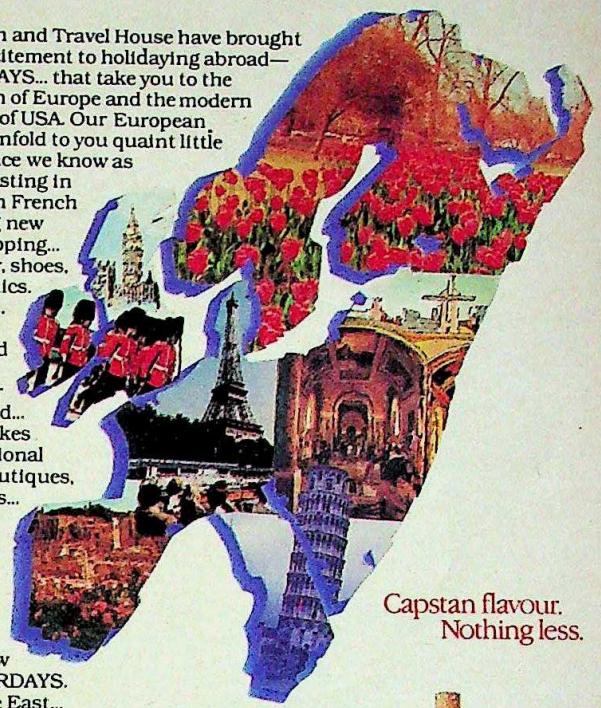

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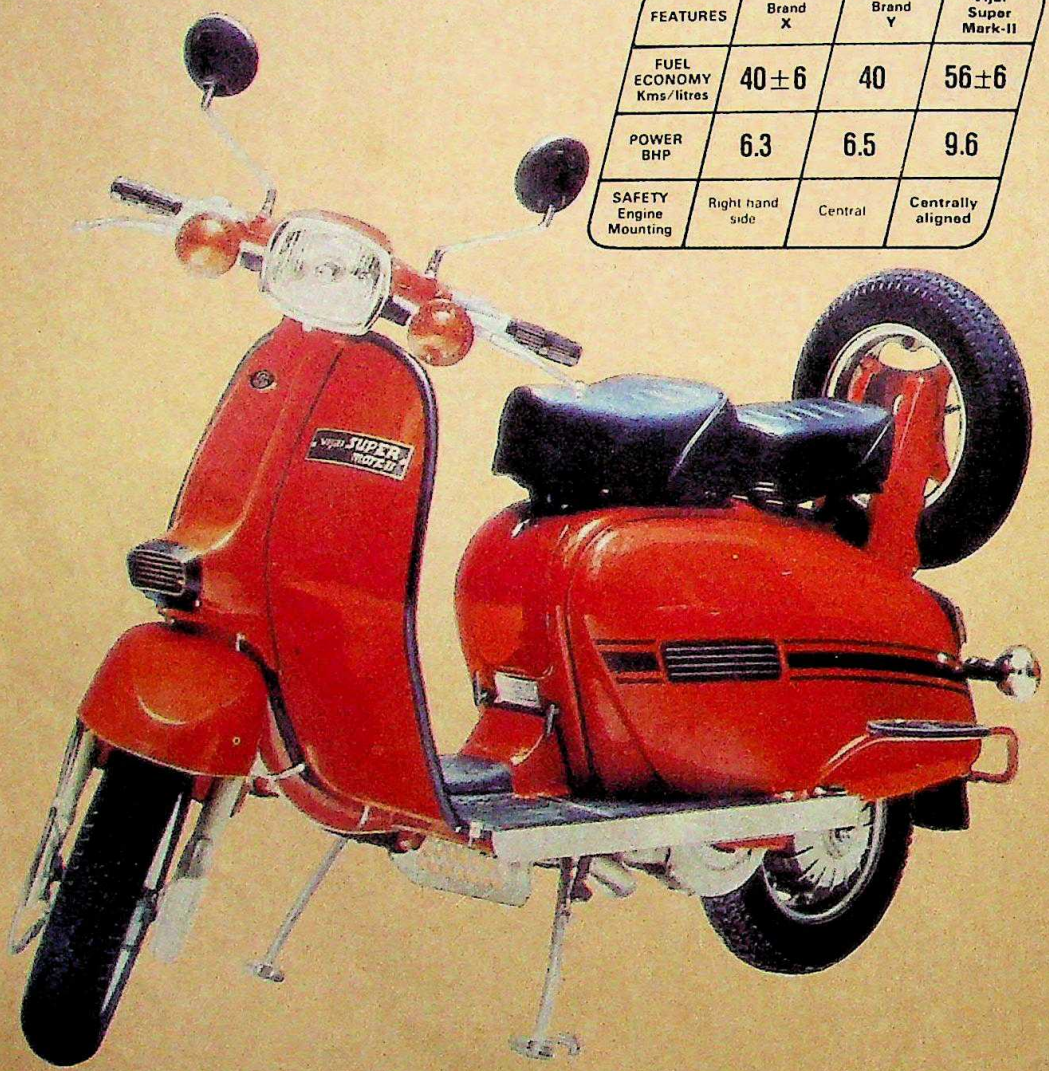
FEATURES	Brand X	Brand Y	Vijai Super Mark-II
FUEL ECONOMY Kms/litres	40±6	40	56±6
POWER BHP	6.3	6.5	9.6
SAFETY Engine Mounting	Right hand side	Central	Centrally aligned



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A new variable venturi carburettor, improved cylinder design, increased compression ratio and modified gear ratio impart optimum fuel economy. SAVING FUEL.

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Goes from 0 to 60 kms in 12.75 seconds flat. Negotiates gradients with ease. And keeps ahead of others.

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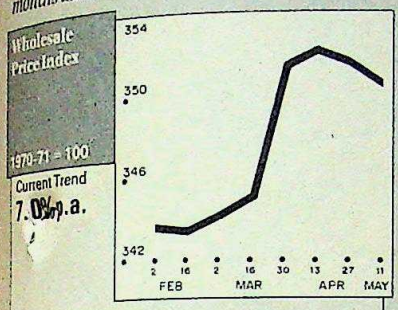
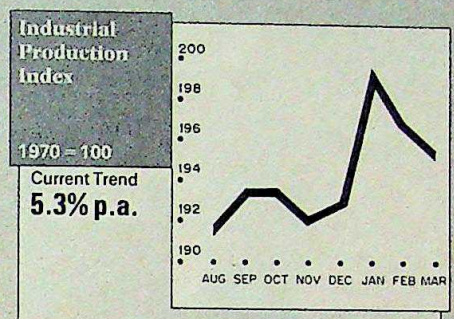
THERE IS still no sign of inflation—wholesale prices dipped again last fortnight. Industry, never too healthy, suffered a further setback last month chiefly because of a fall in manufacturing output. Another disturbing factor was the fall in power generation even after accounting for the seasonal drop. Credit conditions in the economy were easy and the boom in bullion prices has been checked.

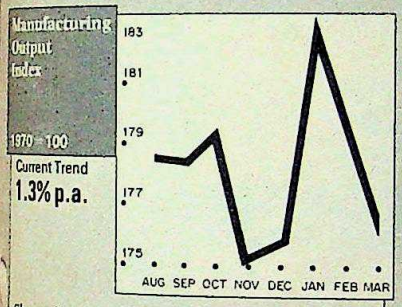
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trend is computed on the basis of the past six months data to which a regression is fitted.



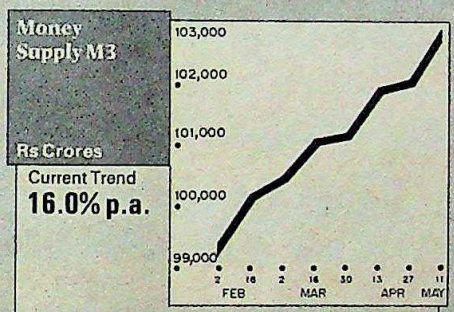
Wholesale prices were down again last fortnight, by 0.3 per cent, mainly because of a fall in the prices of primary goods.



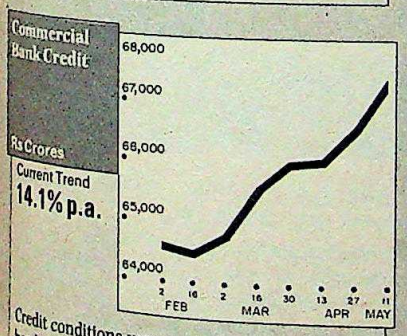
Industrial production dipped by 0.7 per cent last month. A rise in mining and quarrying activity was offset by a drop in manufacturing output.



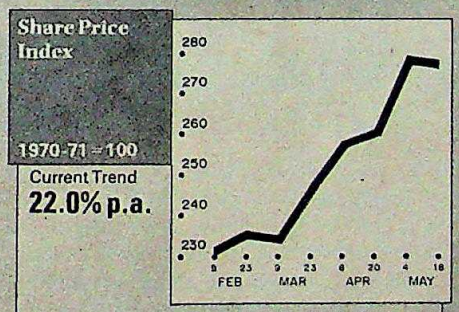
Sharp drops in electrical machinery, textiles and transport equipment to a disturbing 1.7 per cent drop in manufacturing output.



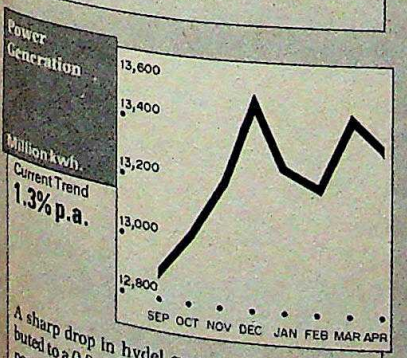
Increase in bank credit to firms and government and in foreign exchange assets led to a 0.7 per cent rise in money supply last fortnight.



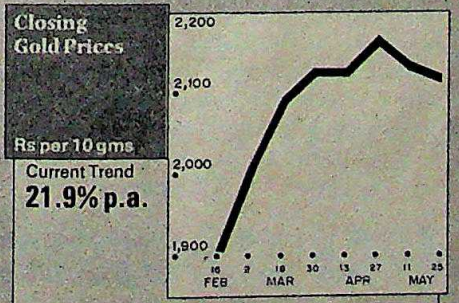
Credit conditions were easy last fortnight with bank credit to firms increasing by 1.2 per cent, way over the long-term trend.



Share prices were temporarily checked after a boom of over several weeks. Tea plantation and chemical fertilisers were major contributors.



A sharp drop in hydel generation has contributed to a 0.8 per cent drop in the generation of power last fortnight.



Gold prices, imitating share price movements, dropped 0.7 per cent last fortnight indicating a reversal of a bullish trend.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Items with maximum growth in January, 1985

	% Growth
Earth Moving Machinery	154.50
Dairy Machinery	96.64
Syntheic Rubber	91.96
Salt	91.48
Generation Equipment	49.07
Railway Locomotives	40.88
Telecommunications	38.58
Tea Machinery	31.98
Grinding Wheels	30.15
Jute Textiles	30.06
Textile Machinery	28.92
Electrical Lamps	28.49
Laboratory Ware	24.00
Jute Machinery	20.31
Electrical Motors	19.72
Iron & Steel Casting Forging	17.50
Razor Blades	17.01
Iron & Steel Pipes	14.63
Tyres & Tubes	13.12
Conveying Equipment	11.87
Nuts, Screws & Bolts	11.45
Chemical & Pharmaceutical Machinery	10.69
Insulators	10.52
Matches	9.91
Steam Generating Plants	9.25
Motor Cars	8.94
Paints, Varnishes & Lacquers	8.69
Motorcycles & Bicycles	8.47
Air Compressors	8.19
Cotton & Blended Fabrics	7.90
Automobile Ancillaries	7.50
Cement	7.48
Buses, Trucks & Jeeps	7.33
Handtools & Small Tools	7.20
Power Driven Pumps	7.13
Cotton & Blended Yarn	6.96
Hard Board	6.70
Ferro-Alloys	6.25
Agricultural Machinery	6.14
Sewing & Knitting Machines	5.90
Bakery Products	5.68
Watches & Clocks	5.64
Asbestos Cement	5.60
Explosives	5.27
Railway Rolling Stock	3.91
Internal Combustion Engines	3.75
Weighing Machines	3.49
Mining & Quarrying	2.48
Refractories	1.86
Organic Chemicals	1.78

of 119 important series considered, 68 with a weight of 50.5 accelerated while 51 with a weight of 44.0 decelerated.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, April	2323	2211
Electricity Generated Million kwh, April	13285	12133
Thermal Plant Load Factor Per cent, April	55.8	51.6
Call Money Rate Per cent, April	9.97	10.00
Rail Movement Net Tonne km, April	14017	13224

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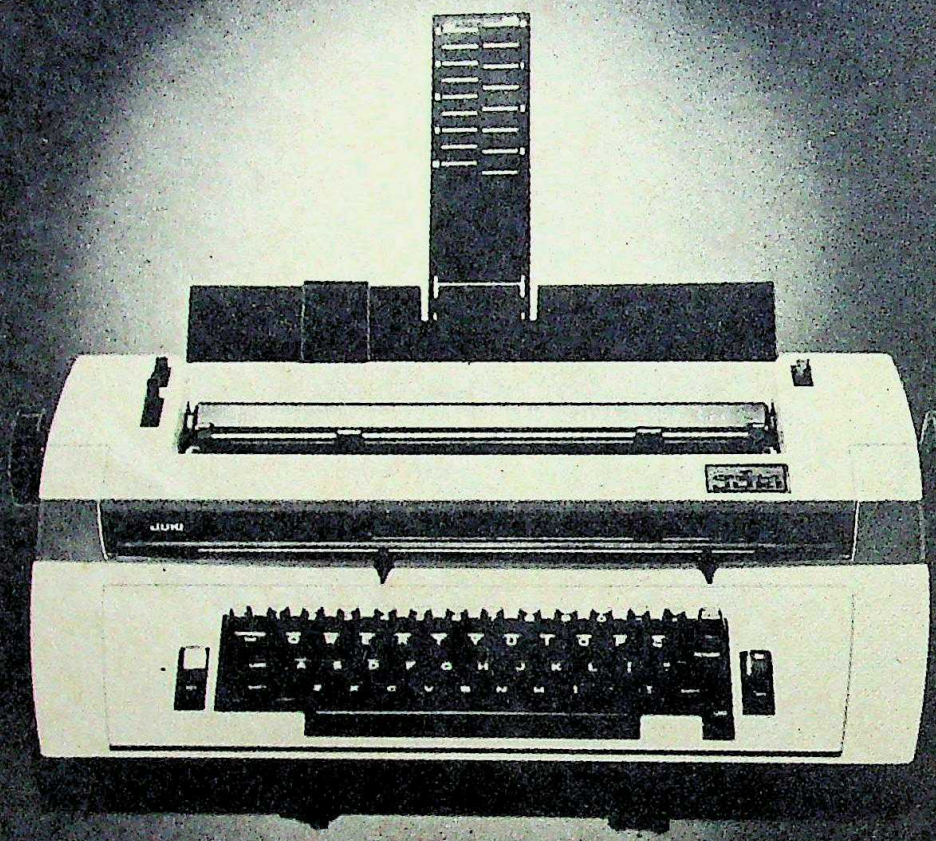

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THE MARKETS

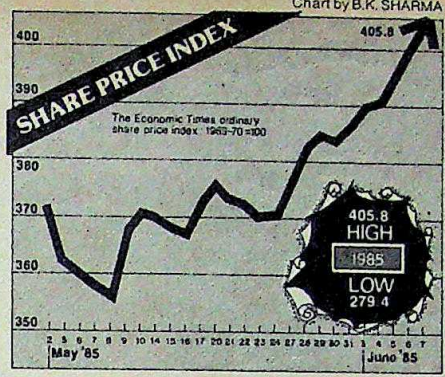
High Point

THE GODS in the heavens and the demigods who run the stock exchanges came together last fortnight to wish investors and share prices well. And as stock values kept rising, the supergods in the Government chipped in with policy announcements on specific industries, sending prices rising further.

The timely arrival of the south-western monsoons heralded another good agricultural year, and the controller of capital issues in New Delhi unbent after a marathon, five-hour meeting with the heads of the four major stock exchanges, and announced a new set of margins for business done in specified shares. Bulls on the market got two more concessions: the penal margins on highly speculative shares were lowered and the number of scrips attracting these margins was also reduced.

With these and other relaxations indicating change of heart on the part of the Government, which had looked askance at the upsurge on the markets, the bulls virtually ran amuck. There had been a momentary sag earlier in the rising price curve, but this soon gave way to renewed buying. Glamour stock like Hindustan Motors, Tata Ordinary, TELCO and Premier Automobiles advanced to new peaks. And just when the tide seemed to have reached its high point, the Government came out with its new policy package for the textile industry, reduced the levy quota for the cement industry and delicensed a host of pharmaceutical products. After that, nothing could keep the bulls at bay.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The share prices of companies producing synthetic fibre and yarn suddenly looked rosier once the textile policy was announced, including the promise of lower taxes, lifting of licensing restrictions and flexibility in fibre use. However, there was disappointment over the absence of a price increase for cement, though the reduction in the levy quota should help companies return improved results. There was also the mysterious and inexplicable rise in the prices of DCM shares in Delhi, and no one seemed any the wiser about the identity of the bulls active on this battered front.

There may be still more good news in store. The prime minister seems set to conclude successful visits to France and the US and there is likely to be an understanding on the details of Indian access to high technology available in the US. So shares are in full bloom, and have brought handsome rewards to those who bought in this year.

The big question, of course, is how long the boom will last. At the moment, there seems nothing that can bring about a regrouping of the bears, who are still in hiding. But everything that goes up must come down, and the sharp-eyed will have to watch carefully for the dip in the rising curve that could be something more than a momentary hiccup.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	1985 LOW	CLOSE 6.6.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	38.00	29.00	31.75	0.25 +
Associated Cement	474.00	385.00	439.00	25.00 +
Atlas Copco	56.00	37.50	56.00	8.50 +
Avery India	74.00	56.00	72.00	1.00 –
Bajaj Auto	1500.00	855.00	1495.00	155.00 +
Ballarpur	51.00	45.00	48.60	0.10 –
Baroda Rayon	403.00	281.00	385.00	35.00 +
Bata India	82.00	48.00	82.00	18.75 +
Bayer	395.00	305.00	345.00	20.00 +
Best & Crompton	83.00	61.00	82.00	2.00 +
Bharat Forge	79.00	35.50	77.00	21.00 +
Blow Plast	55.00	36.50	54.00	8.00 +
Blue Star	57.00	33.00	56.50	1.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	139.00	66.00	137.00	9.00 +
Brooke Bond	71.00	47.50	71.00	8.25 +
Ceat Tyres	210.00	180.00	202.50	2.50 +
Century Spinning	955.00	810.00	955.00	45.00 +
Chloride India	86.50	56.90	86.00	5.00 +
Cliurgia	57.00	32.25	57.00	11.50 +
Colgate	318.00	147.00	310.00	45.00 +
Cyanamid	66.00	33.00	60.00	1.00 –
DCM	119.00	45.00	116.50	23.00 +
Dunlop	29.75	22.30	29.75	4.25 +
Elecon	88.00	54.00	78.00	nil
Escorts	73.00	49.87	68.50	8.50 +
Finolex Cables	29.00	23.00	28.00	0.50 +
Food Specialities	200.00	86.00	175.00	7.50 +
Garware Nylon	39.00	24.50	36.00	2.00 +
Glaxo	48.50	24.00	41.00	1.50 –
Gujarat St Fertilisers	680.00	537.00	630.00	30.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	66.00	53.75	66.00	6.50 +
Hindustan Lever	98.50	51.25	97.00	10.00 +
Hindustan Motors	54.00	37.50	53.50	7.50 +
Indian Cable	35.50	21.75	35.50	3.00 +
Indian Explosives	55.00	33.00	52.50	0.50 –
Indian Hotels	114.00	76.00	106.00	4.50 +
Indian Organic	86.00	50.50	84.00	8.00 +
Indian Rayon	91.00	66.00	84.00	5.50 +
Indrol	165.00	90.50	154.00	11.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	275.00	162.00	270.00	60.00 +
ITC	42.50	29.00	42.50	9.00 +
J K Synthetics	78.00	52.75	76.00	7.50 +
Kinetic Engineering	282.00	128.00	263.00	58.00 +
Kirloskar Oil	33.00	23.00	25.50	2.00 +
Lakme	94.00	74.00	86.00	2.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	143.50	72.00	143.50	24.50 +
Lipton	48.50	26.50	48.50	12.00 +
Lohia Machines	58.00	42.00	50.00	1.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	63.00	48.00	55.00	0.50 +
Motor Industries	500.00	321.25	500.00	55.00 +
National Organic	410.00	240.00	407.50	52.50 +
Nirlon	55.00	37.75	46.00	1.00 +
Otis Elevator	156.00	87.00	156.00	17.00 +
Peico Electronics	88.00	38.40	79.50	6.50 –
Premier Auto	460.00	322.00	454.00	19.00 +
Ranbaxy	107.00	49.00	105.00	4.00 +
Raymond	104.00	59.00	104.00	18.50 +
Reckitt & Colman	79.00	57.00	76.00	4.00 +
Reliance Textiles	212.00	120.00	210.00	14.00 +
Sandoz	55.00	31.00	47.50	0.50 +
Shriram Fibres	50.00	34.00	37.00	6.50 +
SPIC	81.00	43.50	78.00	2.00 –
Tata Steel	657.00	381.00	653.00	40.00 +
Telco	660.00	409.00	653.00	67.00 +
Vulcan Laval	111.00	64.00	111.00	13.00 +
20th Century Leasing	79.00	31.50	77.00	7.00 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.7370	8.5466
Austria	Schilling	100	58.1417	57.5511
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.2535	32.6081
Bangladesh	Taka	100	48.6732	45.3219
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1640	9.0713
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1382	1.1271
Egypt	Pound	1	15.2439	15.1704
France	Franc	1	1.3384	1.3257
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6091	1.5941
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.1422	1.0501
Iran	Rial	100	13.6320	12.3915
Italy	Lira	100	0.6846	0.6303
Japan	Yen	100	5.0320	4.9855
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7940	0.7547
Kuwait	Dinar	1	41.5345	40.7114
Malaysia	Dollar	1	5.0857	5.0367
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.8109	0.7586
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6906	0.6856
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.6224	3.5887
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7932	0.7639
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.6470	5.5921
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0711	0.0695
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4649	0.4497
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4138	1.3995
Switzerland	Franc	1	4.8383	4.7871
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7201	0.7159
Thailand	Baht	100	46.2812	45.4603
UK	Pound	1	15.9134	15.7978
USA	Dollar	1	12.5950	12.4925
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4353	3.3126
USSR	Rouble	1	14.9635	14.4146
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.1500	4.0000

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd. New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 10.6.85.

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NATIONAL SECURITY BOARD

Doctrine for Danger

SARDAR Patel Bhawan on New Delhi's Parliament Street, one of the many bureaucratic beehives in the vicinity of the Central Secretariat, is humming with vigorous new activity after the moving in of the incipient secretariat of the National Security Board. But more than the formation of yet another government department, the excitement is about the kind of change this signifies in the country's security doctrine, perhaps the biggest since the 1962 war with China.

The board is an apex intelligence body, constituted more or less on the lines of the American National Security Council. It will be chaired by the prime minister and will include the heads of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), some key functionaries from home and defence ministries, chief ministers of two of the most sensitive states in the country—which in present context could only mean Punjab and Assam—and K. Subrahmanyam, director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis. Subrahmanyam is an IAS officer who once headed the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). Administratively, the board will be run by R.K. Khandelwal, a police officer who has been appointed member-secretary to the board. An intelligence veteran who rose to be a joint director in the IB and then an inspector general with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Khandelwal has been placed on level in the intelligence hierarchy with the directors of IB and RAW.

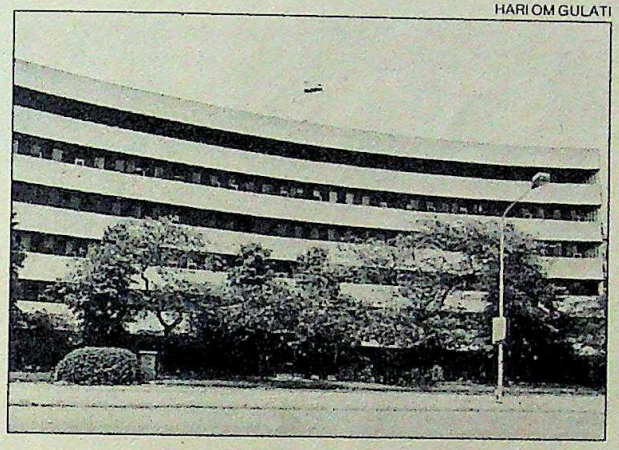
The new organisation is in a way meant to take over the role that the two JIC's, external and internal, were meant to play so far. That is, collating data and information sent in by all the intelligence agencies, their assessment and operational analysis. Based on these, the new agency will also identify and form threat perceptions and reshape the national strategic doctrine.

This is comparable with similar systems in the US where the National Security Council backs up all strategic decision-making at the White House and in UK where a JIC evaluates all reports sent in by security agencies and reports to the Cabinet. "In India," said a senior official, "this role was meant to be performed by the two JIC's. The current change stems from their failure to do so."

For this officials blame the way the JIC's, which may be scrapped now, were made to function. Intelligence agencies submit reports directly to the prime minister and user ministries while just marking copies to the JIC's. Consequently often the user ministries get the JIC assessments after they had already acted on the basis of the original reports.

Sardar Patel Bhawan

HARI OM GULATI



Since the National Security Board will include top functionaries of all security organisations and be headed by the prime minister, there will be more accountability.

The JIC's have also been marred by fundamental contradictions. Shortly after the 1962 war a JIC led by T.N. Kaul was formed to assess both internal and external intelligence. Later, with the growth in intelligence infrastructure it was split into two. But never along the decades was any JIC a body with teeth. It could neither question intelligence agencies nor make demands on them.

In fact, unhappiness with the functioning of the system has been put on record by more than one JIC chief. Says an officer: "In intelligence circles we always quote the old example where the JIC got worked up by a fresh, inexplicable Chinese troop build-up in the Aksai Chin area. But the noise the JIC made did not seem to affect the army the least. It was later found that the Chinese build-up was only a reaction to the Indian army advancing some of its units closer to the border. The army understood this all along but did not take into confidence an organisation believed to be of no consequence."

Some of this is going to change now. Since the National Security Board will include top functionaries of all security organisations and be headed by the prime minister, there will be more accountability. Further, integrating the assessment of external and internal intelligence could lead to better threat perceptions and operational planning. There is still a school of thought which wants the retention of an integrated JIC to feed the board. But with the kind of clout that the board is being given that will be more of an academic question.

The new body will also initiate a process of rethinking on the entire security and intelligence structure. The prime minister is believed to be upset with the ease with which Punjab terrorists have been able to hoodwink the IB. At least internally this job, which includes infiltrating extremist organisations and getting inside information, has so far been performed by the state police special branches. But now the IB is being increasingly asked to do so, particularly in Punjab. "One stumbling-block earlier was that law and order is a state subject and state governments would react adversely to such 'autonomous' activity," explained an officer. The co-opting of the chief ministers of troubled states is intended to counter this problem.

In spite of this optimism, however, the new agency's passage will be far from smooth. The first, and the biggest problem, officials say, will be to get the intelligence agencies to bring all they have before the board rather than rushing straight to the prime minister or home minister as in the past. More than anything else the functioning of Indian intelligence agencies has been marred by the element of mutual competition and the new change is meant to do away with this. If it could achieve even part of that it would mean change indeed.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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BHOPAL

An Area of Darkness

ON THE face of it, Bhopal looks perfectly normal. Six months after the leak of methyl isocyanate (MIC) from the Union Carbide factory that left more than 2,000 dead and many times that number affected, there is very little left to distinguish it from any other, more normal city: the markets are crowded, the cinema halls are full, the traffic as unruly as ever. Even the worst-hit areas look just as they did before the disaster. But last fortnight a demonstration by gas victims at the site of a film festival held in Bhopal, to protest against needless government expenditure at a time when the Government pleaded lack of funds showed that though Bhopal may seem healed on the outside, the tragedy remains a cause of bitterness for many.

It is the high number of people who visit clinics and hospitals that gives the real situation away. Six months after that awful night of December 2-3, 1984, the official figure of the dead is yet to be finalised and continues to climb. The first list had contained more than 1,400 names but well over a dozen inquest courts had been set up to check the claims of people who said that their family members had been killed. But the lethargic manner of the district administration has assured that the roughly 700 applications that have been received have yet to be totally sorted out. In effect, nearly 200 days after the disaster, the state Government still does not have a precise list of the people who died, let alone of those who have been affected. It may be months before the survey of the affected is entirely complete.

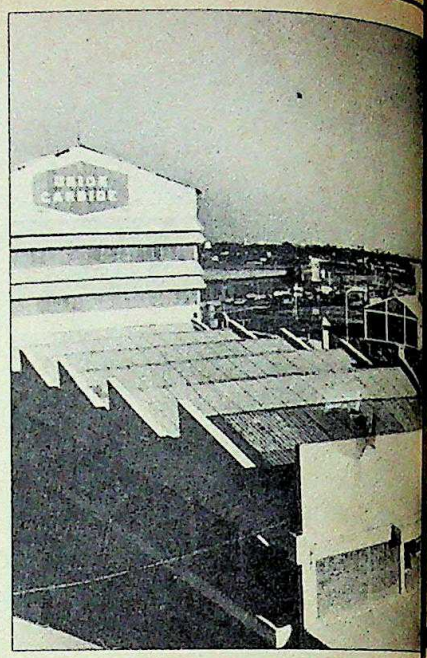
Soon after the tragedy occurred the then chief minister Arjun Singh had said that the answer to the vexed problem of sorting out the injured would be a door-to-door survey to be conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Bombay, assisted by other social work institutes. But it did not quite work out that way. In the first place TISS surveyed just over 25,000 families and was to return a few weeks later for the rest but TISS team leaders were disgusted by what they perceived as the state Government's indifference towards the exercise. They didn't return, and the 11,000 families that have been surveyed since have been mostly looked at by staff of the Census Department. The work is yet to be completed. What is more, the Government has still to complete the processing of the data collected.

The results of the survey are important because interim cash relief can be provided only after this is done. Families of the dead are to receive Rs 10,000 for every member lost but of the 1,762 certified as dead so far—the figure may rest at around 2,000 finally—only 848 of them have received the money. According to government sources, many of the remaining claims are unpaid either because the heirs are not available or because there is difficulty in the identification of the dead. Lethargy is the third, and final, explanation.

Six months after the tragedy of December 1984, the official figure of the dead is yet to be finalised and continues to climb.

Initially the Government had announced ex gratia payment of Rs 2,000 to the seriously affected and Rs 100 to Rs 1,000 to those slightly affected. But the Government has since changed that drastically. It now plans to give Rs 1,500 per affected family—not person, as before—which has a monthly income of less than Rs 500. For a community that has suffered in one way or another for six months running, the sum is grossly inadequate. And how the Government expects people earning just over Rs 500 per month to fend for themselves is also not clear. What is more, though about 18,000 families are expected to ultimately fall under the category prescribed, only about 9,500 have been identified so far and of these, only 4,000 have actually received payment.

Two basic questions have yet to be answered: what is the "affected area"? Who is an "affected person"? The Government has yet to answer these vital questions since it directly affects not only relief but also the questions of distributing compensation when that arises. A Directorate of Claims has now been set up to properly document claims of the injured as well as the claims of establishments, shops, and industries that were hit by the disaster. The state should have realised early that such an organisation would be necessary to deal with so stupendous a task but the directorate's setting up was announced only on April 27, nearly five months afterwards, and even today, the director is yet to be appointed. As time passes it is going to become harder to check the veracity of the claims from some 300,000 persons so far. According to Dr Ishwar Das, additional chief secretary and relief commissioner, a crucial officer who is overseeing all aspects of the tragedy, "Some 800 small-scale manufacturing units and some 18,000 to 20,000 shops and establishments have seen their business hit in the aftermath." There is a lot of money to be made and everyone in Bhopal knows it. Every false claim paid out from compensation received from Union Carbide can only be at the cost of a more deserving person.



The area of rehabilitation is one that continues to be a question mark. Several thousand of Bhopal's inhabitants are in no condition to go back to work due to their continued illness: what is to become of them? There are no easy answers. The Government has chosen to utilise existing schemes, the primary one being 'Step Up' a scheme for self employment. According to official sources, about 4,000 cases have been forwarded to the banks for loans but few people have so far actually received the money. How much active thinking has gone into the framing of these

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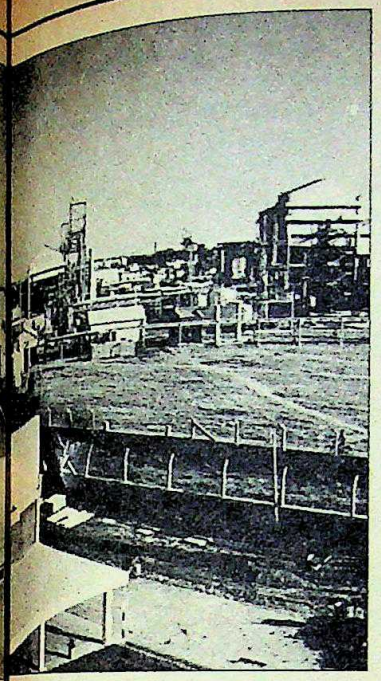

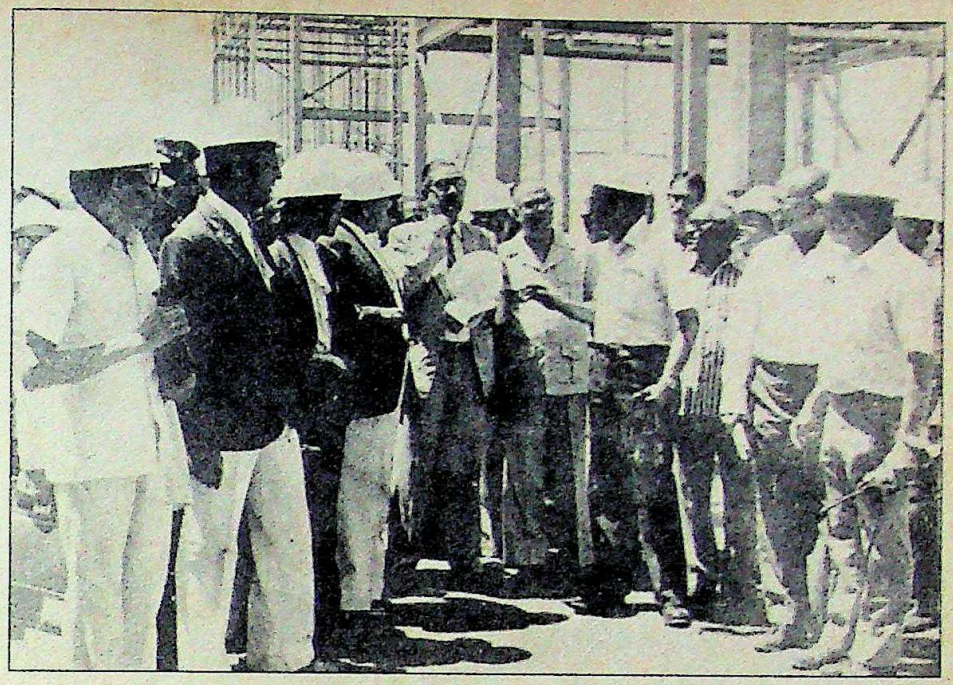

The Carbide plant in Bhopal (left) and Justice N.K. Singh (helmet in hand) inspecting the premises: slow probe

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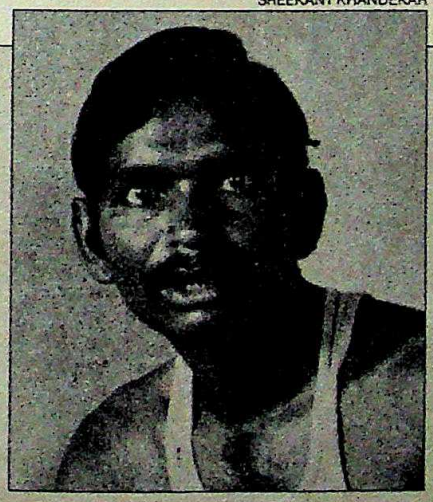
schemes will show only later for, it is easy enough to make a loan but working out the feasibility is quite another matter.

But if the payment of relief has been slow in getting off the ground the one area in which the people have been considerably benefited is in the supply of foodgrains worth more than Rs 10 crore. Four hundred and seventy tonnes of sugar, [illegible]00 litres of edible oil and 390,000 [illegible] of milk have been provided so far but have now been discontinued. Wheat (27,000 tonnes) and rice (8,100 tonnes), however, will continue to be supplied, according to Chief Minister Motilal Vora, though he refuses to specify for how long.

On another front, the closure of the Carbide plant has raised the issue of what is to happen to its 850 employees. Some officers are in the process of being transferred but the majority are not going to be so lucky. Arjun Singh had announced soon after the disaster that the plant would not be allowed to open, and Vora says he stands by that decision—he goes further to say that "Carbide won't be allowed to operate in Madhya Pradesh ever". This left Carbide no choice but to issue a notice of closure, which it did on April 10. R.K. Yadav, general secretary of the Union Carbide Karamchari Sangh, which claims to represent 450 of the 632 workers, says that neither government nor the management has seriously considered the workers' situation. "Granted that the Government does not want any toxic chemicals here," he says, "but why the use of the existing facilities and infrastructure of Carbide not even being considered? What will happen to us? Refusing to let the plant open in any form is an emotional response; it is no solution." Vora, on the other hand, says that attempts are being made to accommodate Carbide workers in government undertakings but that they unreasonably expect to be adjusted in Bhopal itself. Yadav retorts that so far no single worker has been placed in any government organisation. The union has now gone to the high court challenging the manner of the closure notice.

SREEKANT KHANDEKAR



"What will happen to us? Refusing to let the plant open in any form is an emotional response; it is no solution."

R.K. YADAV
general secretary, Union Carbide Karamchari Sangh

On the medical side, the greatest controversy has been generated over whether or not to administer sodium thiosulphate, a drug used for detoxification in cases of cyanide poisoning. Did a component of the cyanide pool enter the bloodstream of gas victims? That was the crucial question. In the hours following the disaster, a top Carbide medical expert, Dr B. Avashia, telexed Bhopal suggesting a certain treatment if cyanide posioning was suspected. But on arriving at Bhopal he retraced his steps saying that cyanide had nothing to do with MIC and there was no question of cyanide poisoning.

It is believed now that due to the high temperature and pressure generated due to a reaction in the tank at the time of the leak, and due to the presence of impurities, the MIC broke up into various gases, one of which probably was the lethal hydrogen cyanide (HCN). While it was said that MIC would affect only individual organs, cyanide would be carried in the patients' blood and have long-term repercussions. Administering of sodium thiosulphate would amount to admitting that cyanide in some form had entered the blood. The question being asked in Bhopal is: why was Carbide so keen on denying the cyanide presence? Why was an official circular sent earlier—after the tragedy—to doctors saying that sodium thiosulphate should not be used? Why have government officials consistently denied the presence of cyanide either in the air or blood?

Interestingly, pollution experts of the

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Central Government had taken air sample in Bhopal on December 5-6 to check if the area was safe. Though it was taken two to three days after the disaster, near the MIC storage tank, the air showed the presence of 4,533 micrograms of cyanide per cubic metre. Fifty metres from the tank, the cyanide reading was 2,533 micrograms per cubic metre. Just outside the plant premises, the reading was nil. This shows that more than 48 hours after the tragedy, a small leak was still taking place and the source was—or was close to—the MIC tank.

Confronted with this information, Ishwar Das said that the state Government had still not been provided any such information from New Delhi! It seems incredible that six months later, the state Government is still to be informed on a matter of such vital importance. From February onwards the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been backing the administering of sodium thiosulphate and in effect admitting cyanide presence. The certification came after a study of 180 patients which gave "an indication of amelioration of symptoms in a good proportion of cases. No serious adverse effects have been observed," to quote an ICMR release. Initially, ICMR felt that it was necessary to monitor the thiocyanate level in the urine after injecting the drug but faced with the state Government's argument that it would be difficult logistically to monitor several thousand patients, the ICMR dropped this clause. Doctors who believe in the drug complain that in spite of the ICMR's advice, sodium thiosulphate is still not being administered on the scale that it actually should be.

One of the most appalling aspects of the affair has been the utter lack of medical information forthcoming from Union Carbide, USA. Although Chairman Warren Anderson released a report on what their experts believed actually happened that fateful night, nowhere does the report say anything on the gases that were released in the tank: this, although the company claims to have carried out experiments in which they tried to re-enact conditions in the tank in the course of laboratory experiments. Says Ishwar Das: "Personally speaking, I find it hard to believe that considering their technological advancement, they have not done a lot of work on MIC. They have not provided us any information of the kind that will help doctors with treating the patients."

EVEN as 20 ICMR research projects are underway, several other studies have come up with significant findings:

▶ A fairly large number of people have suffered trauma on account of the disaster. In a polyclinic in the heart of the affected area, a team from the King George Medical College, Lucknow, found 168 mental cases, of whom the bulk suffered from either neurotic depression or anxiety neurosis. A survey of 855 patients in 10 government hospitals, 193 (or 22.6 per cent) were found to be suffering from mental ailments. A majority of the patients were women less than 45 years old.

▶ The news about newborn babies so far has been heartening. According to the ICMR, a survey of 500 babies born since the disaster, does not indicate that foetuses have been affected. However, according to government doctors in Bhopal, the real source of anxiety are the babies yet to come who were less than three months old in their mothers' womb on the night of December 2-3.

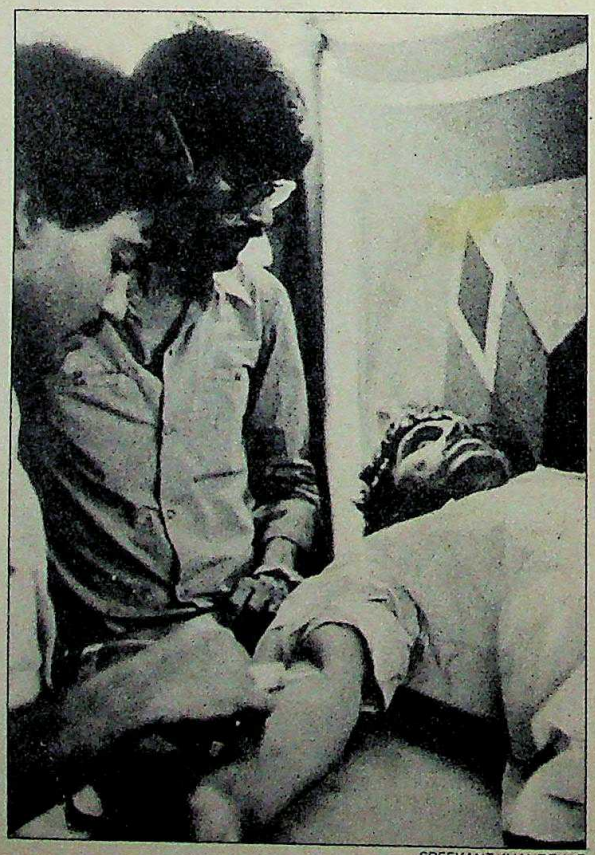
▶ Another important study is the one carried out be doctors of the Bombay Municipal Corporation which found that the thiocyanate level in the patients studied was three times higher than the average level found in Bombay: cyanide exists in the blood in the form of thiocyanate. A 100 days after exposure, it found that 79.7 per cent of adults had respiratory symptoms, 65.6 per cent had eye symptoms, 60.3 per cent had gastro-intestinal symptoms, 54.5 had neuro-muscular symptoms, 75.5 per cent had gynaecological symptoms, 67.7 per cent had persisting problems with their vision, and 70.2 per cent had pulmonary function abnormalities. The team had taken a control group eight kilometres from the factory with which the results of the group under observation had to be studied. It was later discovered that the control group had also been affected by the gas leak.

Meanwhile the enquiry commission appointed by the state Government and consisting of Justice N.K. Singh of the Madhya Pradesh High Court is also likely to take longer than was said earlier. Arjun Singh had said that it would submit its report within three months, but laxity on the part of the Government delayed its functioning. In fact, more than once Justice Singh expressed his anger at the way in which the administration chose to behave. The hearing is at the preliminary stage and the recording of evidence will begin only after a month.

A very disturbing aspect of the disaster has been the Government's failure to react urgently. What is more curious is that even people of the non-affected areas of Bhopal have shown a peculiar lack of interest with relation to the travails of the victims. Perhaps it can be explained by the fact that a majority of the population is not originally from Bhopal and therefore maintains a sense of detachment after years of living there. Or perhaps the truth is that the most affected were the poor migrants who have few relationships with the city's other inhabitants. Or perhaps it is the resigned acceptance to violence and death and part of a country wide immunisation to human misery.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Bhopal

Injecting a patient with sodium thiosulphate: fanning controversy



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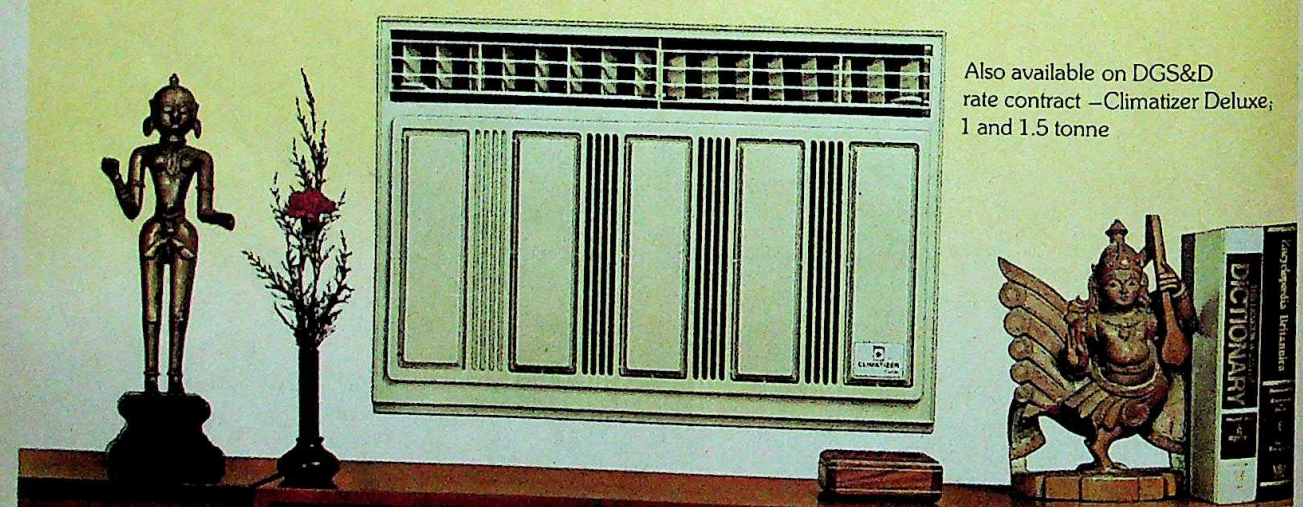

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GENETICS

Settling Issues

WHEN the study of genetics spawned the saying that maternity was a fact and paternity a belief, the male population quickly lapped it up as a happy truism. They were also often on the safer side of paternity suits. But they may not be much longer if the latest developments in the field of genetics research is any indication. Biochemists at the Forensic Science Department (FSD) of Tamil Nadu have, after intensive and sustained research, finally pitched on a hit of 10 genetic markers to determine the father of a child. Observed the emeritus Professor of Genetis M. Dharmarajan: "We have woken up to this not a day too soon."

Based mainly on properties of blood and saliva and taking into consideration certain physiological factors like the shape of the ear lobes and the hand grips of the alleged father, the mother and the child, the technique is believed to be the most reliable evolved in the country so far. And at Rs 500, the test augurs well for those who have almost always been at the wrong end of the law in the settling of paternity disputes—women and children. In fact, scientific experts and lawyers at a seminar in Madras convened last month by the Forensic Science Society of India, clamoured for a change in paternity law. The impetus for the seminar was provided when two cases were referred to the FSD. In the first, the paternity test proved to an executive, that the child born to his wife was his by noting common genetic markers in the child, the man, and his wife. In the second, now sub judice, a man has complained to a court in Tamil Nadu that his brother is making a false claim that the boy born to his wife was theirs in order to gain access to the property of the farming family. The FSD has sent its findings to court.

Most paternity disputes stem from a stake to inheritance, or due to reasons of status or lineage. Then there are false claims or cases of deliberate or mistaken identity. According to P. Chandrasekharan, director, FSD: "In all such situations, the courts have replied on the evidence of witnesses and on the basis of medical methods based on sterility, duration of pregnancy or physical resemblance. But these are no longer significant."

He points out that a blood test is essential to establish paternity and suggests that it be made mandatory by law. C. Damodaran, the assistant director of FSD and leader of the research team, explains that the test is based on the distinctive quality of these antigens, proteins and enzymes in the blood and the fact that they are inherited. These markers can be detected by starch, gel, electrophoresis and isoelectric focussing techniques used in laboratory analysis.

> **The technique is most reliable and augurs well for those who have almost always been at the wrong end of the law in the settling of paternity disputes—women and children.**

Although this test does not compare favourably with that employed in advanced countries—where as many as 64 markers have been identified—and although it fails in cases of consanguineous relations and inbreeding, this is the most comprehensive and reliable technique so far evolved in India. As Damodaran says: "Three of the 10 markers we look for are in saliva and this has not been attempted elsewhere. Some markers, depending on the genetic stock and race, are found in some parts of the world. Secretion of saliva is higher here and is therefore one of the specific factors we are looking into for salivary glycoproteins."

But the test does not offer the ultimate answer, as Damodaran himself admits. "We only indicate the likelihood of an alleged father being the real father or his exclusion," he explains. "Confirmation of paternity is more difficult to prove than exclusions unless the state-of-art in parentage testing improves. We present the common inherent factors and the physiological resemblances. Though it may be subjective, it makes it easier to detect the real father." With cytogenetics—the study of chromosomes in the cell—advancing rapidly, it could offer demonstrable evidence of inheritance and therefore real paternity.

But there is as yet no foolproof method. Dharmarajan points out that scientific evidence is not viewed seriously enough by the courts. A child born during the continuance of the marriage or within 280 days of the marriage is assumed to be the offspring of the man and woman concerned and no evidence that the child was born to someone other than the man to whom the mother is married will be allowed.

As Madras lawyer N.T. Vanamamalai observed: "It is quite likely that even if scientific evidence is forthcoming that the putative father was somebody else, the existing law may still stand in the way of proof that he is the father and if it is not proved that the husband could not have had access to the wife." Ironically, the Supreme Court in a decision in 1954 had held that "as the presumption of the legitimacy is highly favoured by law, it is necessary that proof of non-access must be clear and satisfactory". Besides, the existing law is interpreted to mean that scientific evidence is not substantive proof but only expert opinion—that too only in a criminal case.

In a world in which artifical conception and surrogate motherhood are fast catching on, the issue of paternity becomes even more complicated. Still, the new test facilities are a step forward to protect destitute women and their abandoned children. The Madras seminar recommended compulsory paternity testing and new rules to ensure the protection of children. The Government is looking into a proposal for the setting up of a family law commission: a sure indication of greater and more effective awareness.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

Damodaran examining a blood sample

SHYAM TEKWANI

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TERRORISTS

Dangerous Differences

KHALISTANI terrorism in Punjab is potentially more dangerous than the Naxalite insurgency we had in Calcutta and West Bengal in 1969-71 (one deliberately terms it Khalistani terror and not Sikh for the vast majority of this community is patriotic and their culture is not cowardly and terroristic.) The Naxalites borrowed their ideology originally from the Maoist doctrines and the far-eastern kind of insurgency. When, however, they shifted themselves to Calcutta and the industrial suburbs they adopted the organisational structure of the far-west (mainly Brazil and Uruguay). But while borrowing the elitist methods of the Tupamaro and Carlos Marighella they did not change their weaponry, suitable only for mass insurgency. (In communist thinking arms and ideology are often connected; Marshal Tukachevsky was liquidated for recommending and adopting Liddell Hart's concept of tanks and tri-dimensional battle). In Calcutta we usually encountered pipeguns and knives. Sophisticated weapons were a rarity, though we came across a time bomb in Metro cinema in 1970 and a booby trap in Nadia later. In contrast, the Khalistanis have highly sophisticated firearms and infernal devices like transistor bombs, a trend which will manifest itself increasingly in other forms.

On the other hand the Naxalites were stronger in number, they spearheaded the protest movement of a whole generation of students and intellectuals. The Khalistanis have far fewer sympathisers, and are themselves numerically much smaller. Further, they have given the police the additional advantage in that they have gone underground—for the intelligence organisations are much better equipped to penetrate a secret association than to handle a mass upsurge. Further, the gathering of intelligence should be much easier now; earlier we did not have the advantage of computers, various other electronic and sonar devices, and video equipment —which today are available and will be most useful to intelligence men.

There is another major difference between the Khalistanis and the Naxalites. We do not think the Naxalites received much foreign aid. There were a few foreign financial remittances to the Naxalite suspects, and one was from Manila. But so far as the Khalistanis are concerned, they are obviously getting a good deal of help and inspiration from abroad, perhaps even from foreign governments. There is no doubt that foreign intelligence organisations are very powerful in the capital; the recent cases of the enticement of a Soviet diplomat, and the murder of another diplomat suggest that very strongly.

> **The centre of Khalistani activism is more likely to be Delhi than Amritsar. The terrorists have to be isolated and put down very quickly. But any over-reaction against the Sikh community will be fatal.**

Punjab is a border state, as West Bengal is. But the Naxalites received no material aid from China and very little from the then East Pakistan. Rather, Chou En-lai clearly told Sourin Bose, a Naxalite theoretician, to lay off terror tactics in India (Bose had gone to see Chou through Albania for advice and help); the Chinese statesman reminded Bose how he and Li Li San had their noses bloodied in 1927, trying terrorism in Shanghai. But the Khalistanis undoubtedly receive much aid from our friendly neighbour. Here the style is different. The martial head has the voice of the turtle, while his subordinates use the smuggling routes, organised by the drug traffickers, to send arms, ideas, and perhaps men across the border.

The centre of Khalistani activism is more likely to be Delhi than Amritsar. Here, the task of the police force is clear. The terrorists have to be isolated from the people, and put down very quickly. Time is of essence; and isolation is a must. The police may have to take severe physical punishments, but any over-reaction against the Sikh community will be fatal. And the lack of speed will only help the Khalistanis underground to spread; for some Sikhs who can be faulted for being "macho" (often lauded by some of their own intellectuals) may be attracted by some armed activism.

In Delhi the police have another major problem: they have to keep looking up for advice all the time—and have endless conferences. This will interfere with their vital field work. In West Bengal in 1970-71 we did not have to ask Delhi—ever—as to what we should do, but we sought and received help. The local home department was sensible enough to keep out of our work. Perhaps the rulers in Delhi would see to proper balancing of supervision and allowing initiative. Perhaps they would also have the good sense to keep the army out of it all, determinedly requiring the police to maintain civil order. The army is mainly trained for open war: one of the world's most powerful armies were beaten by the guerrillas in Vietnam.

There is one area however where the army and the Border Security Force can be requisitioned for help to civil power. We need, without any delay whatsoever, expert foreign advice from Belfast, Beirut, or from the police squads which dealt with the Baader-Meinhof gang, to guide our police to anticipate new infernal devices, and take protective and preventive action against such dangers. In handling computers and electronic devices also, the Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh police may require training in depth. It may not be possible for the civil police to do their daily exacting chores, and also simultaneously train themselves in the new skills in the shortest desirable time. Here, it is worth repeating, army help will be most useful. This may involve, among other things, immediate induction of foreign experts, and organising training courses for the police without delay. The effective aid to the police from the army may range from training police dogs (they sniff out a lot more than one thinks) to training personnel in handling very sensitive electronic devices.

But as Winston Churchill once minuted: "Hurry, hurry, hurry."

RANJIT GUPTA headed the Calcutta Police when Naxalite terrorism was at its worst. He is widely credited with having masterminded the crackdown on the Naxalites movement.

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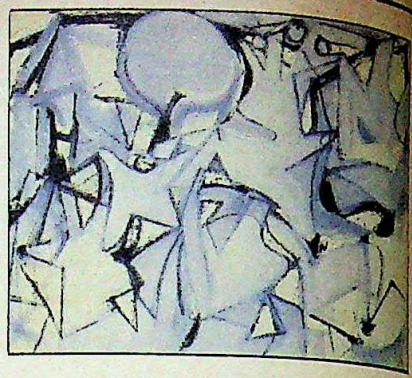


PAINTING

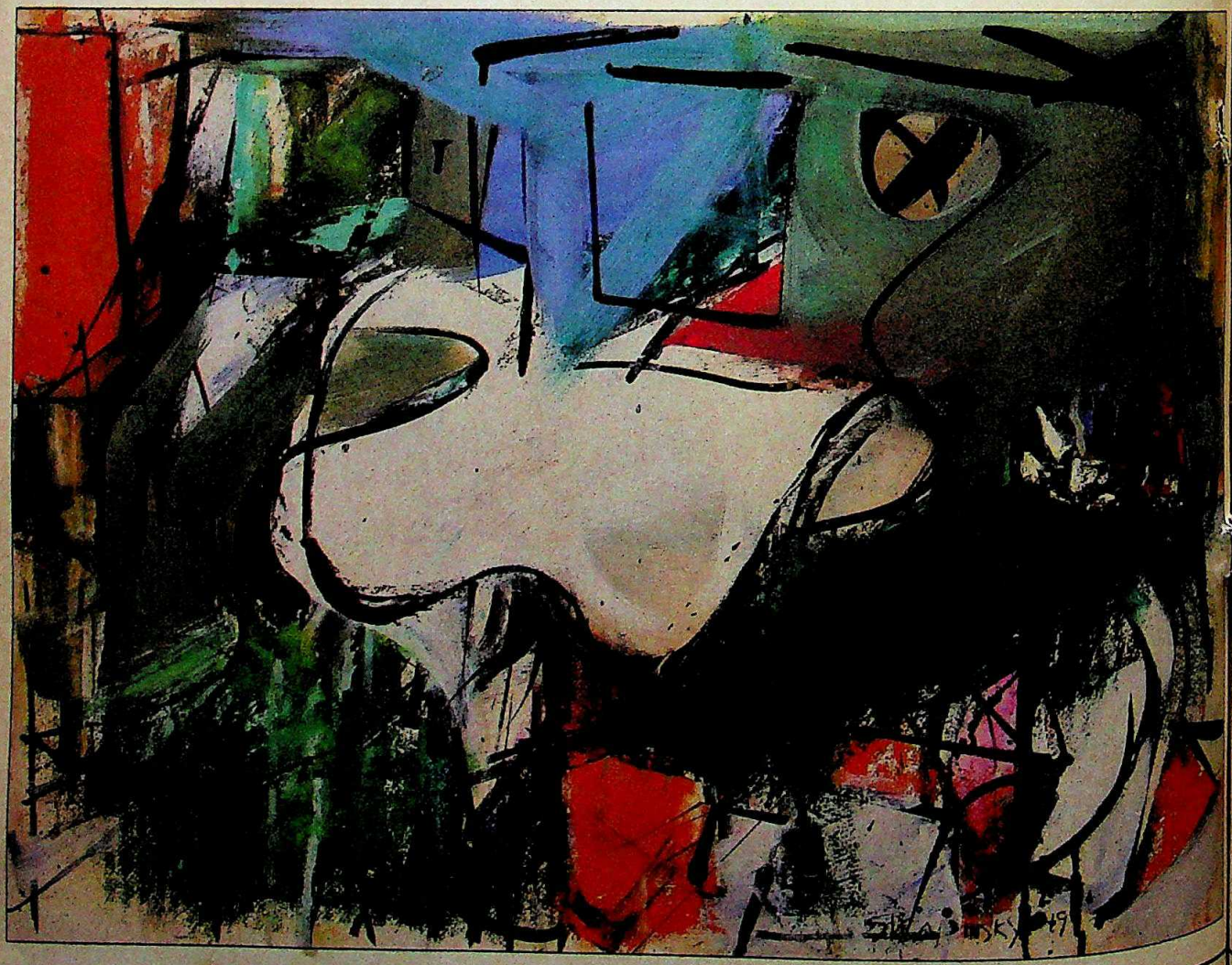
The Shapinsky Story

IS HAROLD Shapinsky really the great unknown genius of a genre of contemporary painting known as Abstract Expressionism? And was he actually retrieved from obscurity in Manhattan last year by an English teacher from Bangalore called Akumal Ramachander? Harold who? Akumal what?

The Shapinsky-Ramachander saga has already hit the headlines in the western media, already been the subject of a film on British television and is now provoking one of the liveliest debates in the world of contemporary art. Author Tariq Ali has compared it to a fairy-tale. Novelist Salman Rushdie thinks it is one of those happy instances in which the East has repaid the West by discovering something the West had mislaid. And art critic Waldemar Januszczak, of the widely-circulated British daily *The Guardian* has leapt into the fray by downing Ali and Rushdie's claims as "careless, ignorant, hype-ridden, opportunistic, manipulative and just plain silly".

It all started when Akumal Ramachander, now 35, who used to teach Engl-

A selection of Shapinsky's works, from 1947 to 1962: fairy-tale discovery



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ish at the University of Agricultural Studies in Bangalore was invited last year to lecture at the Kansas State University in the United States. Arriving in Chicago in September to visit the Indian poet A.K. Ramanujam he happened to meet a young man called David Shapinsky. David, impressed by Akumal's exuberance and apparent knowledge of a vast number of subjects from Polish cinema to Yakshagana, confessed that he had a father who painted in a studio in Manhattan but whose work was unknown. He showed Akumal some slides of his father's work. Akumal was enthused enough to borrow bus fare to New York and visit David's parents. Harold Shapinsky and his wife had lived in shabby gentility for years: Harold quietly painting away and Kate, his wife, supporting him by selling quilts and sweaters. Their apartment was minute and moth-eaten; Shapinsky had been so poor that, unable to afford large canvases, he restricted himself to painting on thick sheets of paper. Undeterred, Akumal was certain this was a genius. He promised Shapinsky a major exhibition in Europe within a year.

The Shapinsky-Ramachander saga has already hit the headlines in the western media, and is now provoking one of the liveliest debates in the world of contemporary art.

At first, he tried peddling slides of the Shapinsky paintings to a variety of Manhattan galleries. There was no response. Then, armed with the 54 slides that he had arranged to be made, he arrived in Europe and began making the rounds in London. As luck would have it, on an afternoon in December last, he managed to show the slides to Ronald Alley, the keeper of the Tate Gallery's modern collection, who remarked: "I was amazed that a real Abstract Expressionist of such quality should be unknown and asked how this could have happened." Alley contacted the Mayor Gallery in London; the Mayor Gallery opened a show on May 21 to coincide with Shapinsky's 60th birthday; authors Rushdie and Ali burst into print heralding a "Major Art Discovery" and "Art Sensation" in the *Observer* magazine and *Time Out* respectively; and Channel Four on British television screened an hour-long film which Rushdie narrated and Ali produced called *The Painter and the Pest*. Last fortnight, the amazing, trail-blazing, magical, fairy-tale-like story of the discovery of a "modern master" was all but consummated. There were some chords of dissent about the actual quality of Shapinsky's works but no one doubted their importance.

Ramachander and Shapinsky: the painter and the pest

Easy on the eye for their vibrant colours and febrile tension of form, Shapinsky's paintings can still tax the mind's eye: in recent weeks both the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Guardian* have been rapped on the knuckles for printing Shapinsky's work the wrong side up.

The Mayor Gallery had sold all but three of the 22 works on display at prices ranging between US $ 12,000 and $ 30,000. Shapinsky was said to be moving permanently from his cold apartment in New York to pastoral England. And Akumal Ramachander, the key figure in saga, was enthusiastically celebrating his new found status. An ebullient, short-statured, loquacious man he is given to flighty gesticulation and ceaseless name-dropping ("Angus Wilson thinks very highly of my writing"). Even Rushdie finds him "a bit of an operator". Akumal describes himself as "the pest" or "that crazy Indian from Bangalore" and proudly adds: "People say about me, 'God, this man would gatecrash anywhere'." Equally proudly he relates the story of how he was approached by a 34-year-old English art dealer in a silver Rolls Royce who "wanted to make a deal involving a couple of million pounds" to buy up all existing Shapinskys, sight unseen.

One thing about Akumal is clear: he is unlikely to return to his teaching job in Bangalore and will instead occupy himself making new "discoveries". "I have been discovering people for quite some time," he says. "I discovered the photographer Vaikuttil who took the Shapinsky photographs. He is a genius. Then I discovered a young writer called Samir Dayal, also a genius. People are my personal interest. My discovery of Shapinsky is the biggest art coup of the 20th century. I have since discovered a Dutch sculptor."

Blazing epigrams in chaste Urdu and endless hype about his discovery ("The Americans refuse to acknowledge Shapinsky because they feel snubbed very badly because this man from Bangalore has discovered this great artist.") Akumal is more the indefatigable gadfly buzzing around the art world rather than the erudite or careful scholar immersed in it. In Bangalore he made it a habit of fixing, escorting or introducing any visitor who wanted to be shown around. Jyothi

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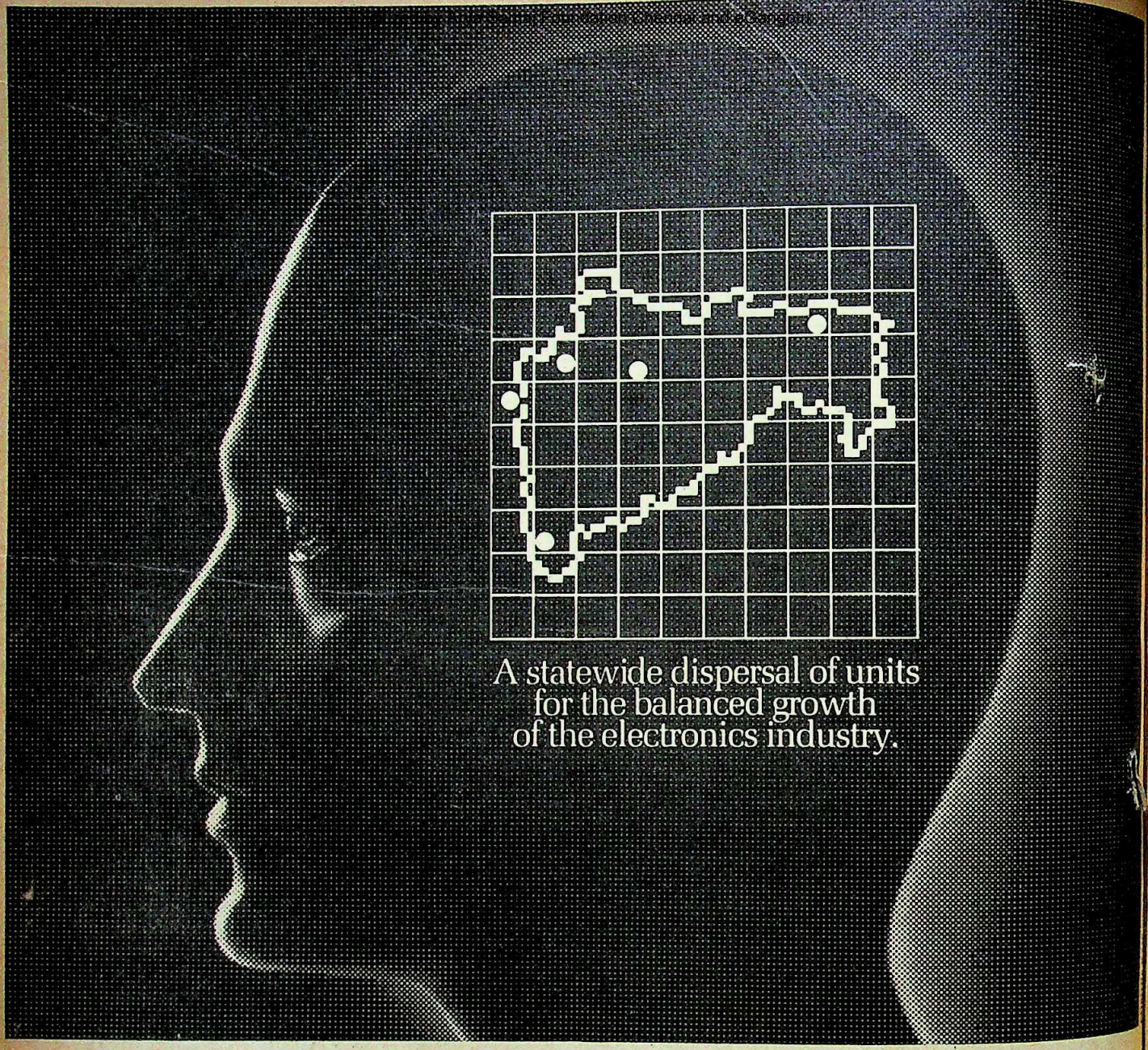

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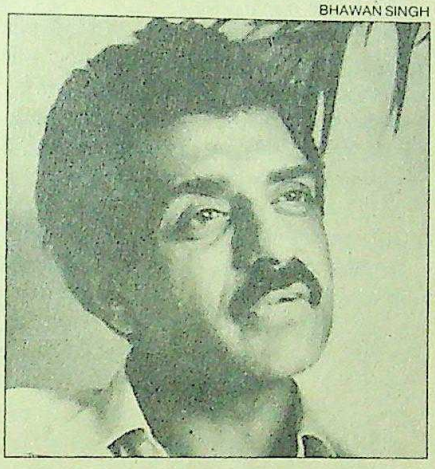
Baswan, publisher of a house magazine for Welcom group of hotels, remembers the pains he took when she arrived in Bangalore to prepare a special issue on the city. "I wanted to see a Yakshagana performance and he organised it, I wanted to meet young writers and musicians and he produced them. He was tireless—and tirelessly kind. He said to me as I left, in exquisite Urdu, 'I know I am like a jewel that has not found its jeweller'."

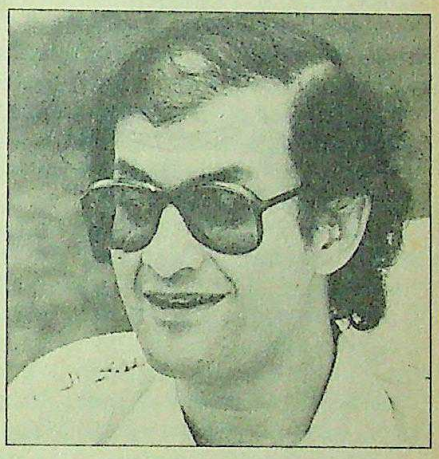
The Bombay-born Akumal was brought up all over India as his father was in the army. He took a Bachelor's degree in science and a Master's in English but, as Rushdie describes him, "he is an amateur in the real sense: a man of many passions... (and it) is impossible not to warm to his openness and affection for life, as well as his obviously genuine love of literature, art, cinema, and many other things, including butterflies." The film on the Shapinsky-Ramachander story has Ramachander saying in the end: "This is a triumph for innocence, that a person like me from Bangalore can break through the western art world and discover a genius." And Tariq Ali sees the event as a sample of the Third World discovering the First, an example of the warped social values of the western art world and the gallery establishment that suppress artists of true genius.

It is probably this kind of instant myth-making that has led some critics to taking a sceptical view of the Shapinsky discovery. While John Russell Taylor in *The Times* has hailed his work as that of "an extremely good and original abstract expressionist", Waldemar Januszczak of *The Guardian* in his blistering attack on the hype of the Rushdie-Ali combine which, he claims, is trying to "force" Shapinsky into prominence, calls Shapinsky a minor Abstract Expressionist who has worked diligently in timid isolation to produce "good but not great art".

Shapinsky's work has met with the approval of the European art establishment in general. But in the United States, the country where his art originated but was ignored, there is less acclaim. True, Shapinsky was encouraged by the founding father of Abstract Expressionism, Robert Motherwell, who awarded him a scholarship in his school in 1949 and later selected him for a new talent show in 1951. True also, that he studied with Mark Rothko at the famous "The Subjects of the Artist" school that gave reign to a host of brilliant painters

BHAWAN SINGH





Ali (left) and Rushdie: Shapinsky's protagonists and (above) *The Guardian's* view of their cause

who form the core of the Abstract Expressionist directory. And John Russell Taylor has gone further to suggest that Shapinsky's colours and the extraordinary interior energy of his work are reminiscent of the great American painter Arshile Gorky, properly discovered only after his tragic suicide. But does Shapinsky's work belong, as is being suggested, to the class of such masters of Abstract Expressionism as Wilhem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock? Will, as Salman Rushdie says, the history of Abstract Expressionism have to be rewritten?

Some critics find Shapinsky's work derivative, the portraits resembling Gorky's and the abstracts early or late de Koonings. What is also clear is that Shapinsky is not a first-generation Abstract Expressionist—and Ali and Rushdie may have to slightly hedge their bets. He was born 20 years after Gorky and 13 years after Pollock. In other words, it may be a while before Shapinsky's credentials are properly established. A discovery he is, certainly; how great a discovery is the question.

Such questions, however, are relative as art historians, critics and keen speculators on the art market sharpen their knives and go into battle. As the dissenting critic of *The Guardian* cynically points out "as the (art) market knows, genuine early de Koonings are now beginning to run out." How many museums and galleries and art establishments in the western market are queuing up or not to show Shapinsky's works is the question. How Shapinsky's prices escalate will determine his greatness. While Shapinsky will happily spend his last years in clover and Akumal will, at 10 per cent on sales, buy himself the "economic freedom" he speaks of, one important factor of the Shapinsky discovery by an Indian is that while the Third World may have discovered the First, in the end, only the First can consume it.

—SUNIL SETHI in New Delhi with BONNY MUKHERJEE in London

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BIHAR

The River of Sorrow

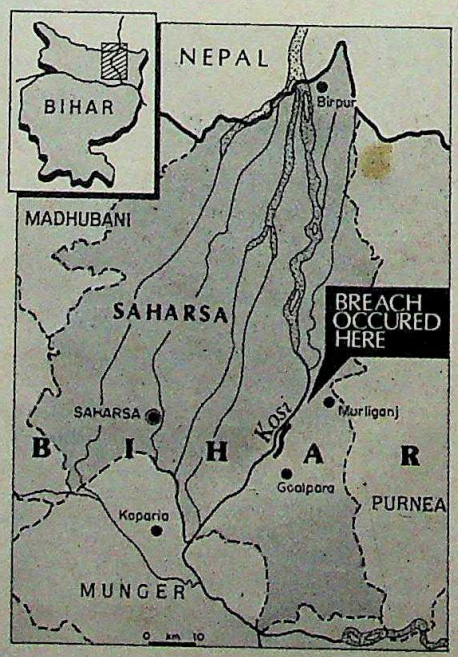
THE KOSI has very aptly been called Bihar's "river of sorrow." Nine months ago, when it breached its eastern embankment in Saharsa district, at least 200 lives were lost, 50,000 acres of crops destroyed and half a million people rendered homeless. The late Mrs Gandhi has suggested stern action against the engineers found guilty of negligence and thereby responsible for the tragedy and G.K. Arora, an official of the prime minister's secretariat had even suggested criminal prosecution of the guilty. But in spite of that it took a lethargic state government until January 14 to begin the breach closure work. On the face of it all went well after that, for the main plugging of the breach was completed 10 days ahead of schedule, on March 17, though much of the secondary work remains to be completed.

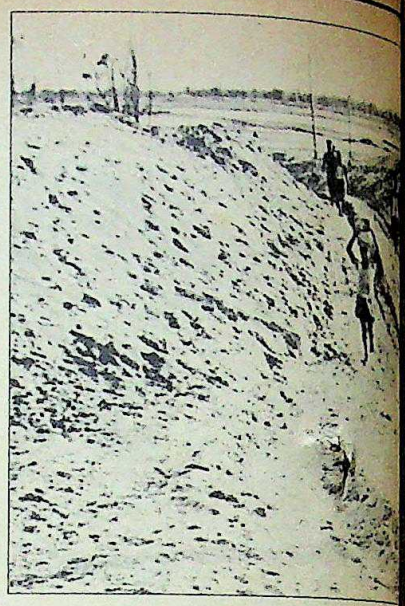
But last fortnight, with the monsoon just around the corner, things did not look so rosy. As the Kosi again began rising and eroding its banks the Government was fulfilling the demand of the villagers of the area that they be evacuated. Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey rushed to the area to inspect the work in progress and warned the engineers of grave consequences if the river breached the new embankment again. He also ordered that all the work must be completed by June 20—originally it was to have been completed by May 27. Dubey was far from satisfied with what he saw, and admitted that the people of the area had no confidence in the quality of the work. But there was now no cause for panic, he said as he had "personally supervised everything and this work had been speeded up."

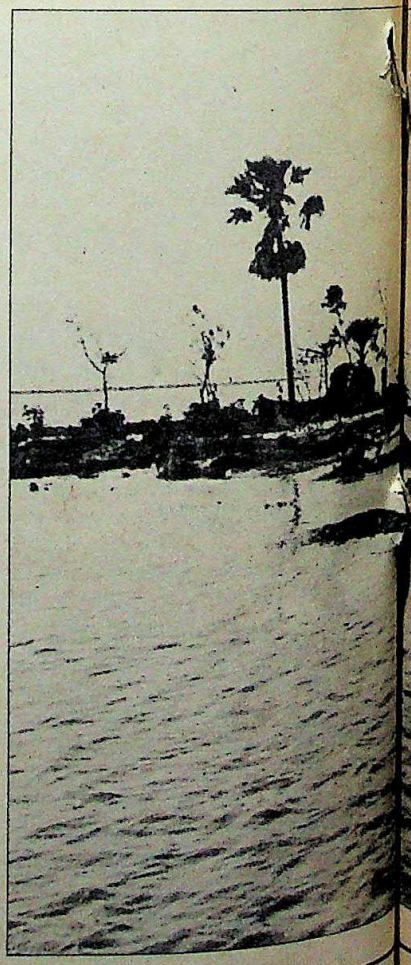
Dubey could do little but put a smiling face on what was actually a pretty grim situation. The chief minister, in the words of the *Indian Express*, was being "blackmailed" by the Bihar Engineering Services Association (BESA), which had threatened to go on strike if action was taken against some engineers held responsible for the tragedy last year. The BESA has warned that even those engineers working on the breach site would come under the purview of the strike. Thus Dubey's hands were tied; and the strike threat proved so effective that the Government hastily denied any engineer had been suspended. The suspensions had actually been announced earlier. Soft pedalling of the issue began soon after. Said Dubey: "The relief commissioner had held an enquiry and the minister concerned had recommended suspension of certain engineers but I felt the need for a technical committee to pinpoint responsibility and then plan to seek explanations."

But more disquieting still is the fact that the methods employed by the engineers to do the job on hand now do not inspire confidence. The 2.8 km-long breach had been filled up with sand enclosed in nylon bags and a five km-long semi-circular coffer dam has been constructed with eight spurs as a second line of defence. But people working on the site express doubts as to whether it can withstand any serious pressure. Dinesh Jha, an advocate in Saharsa said gloomily: "If the bund is breached this time everything will be washed away and then nobody would survive to narrate what happened."

Circle Superintending Engineer T. Nath, however, claims that he has performed an "engineering feat" by closing the breach much ahead of the deadline. And engineers at the site contend there is nothing wrong with the methods employed. The flatter hydraulic gradient was recommended by the high-level Kosi Technical Committee and was tested at the Pune Research Institute. Nath says the Kosi is known for the heavy sand content in its water and "our efforts to introduce boulders and other material have failed as the river did not accept this." He says that by adopting sand-based methods the engineers had saved Rs 40 lakh. His real success, says Nath, was not in constructing the coffer dam and filling the breach but in pushing the Kosi back 1.5 km to its original position, as it has







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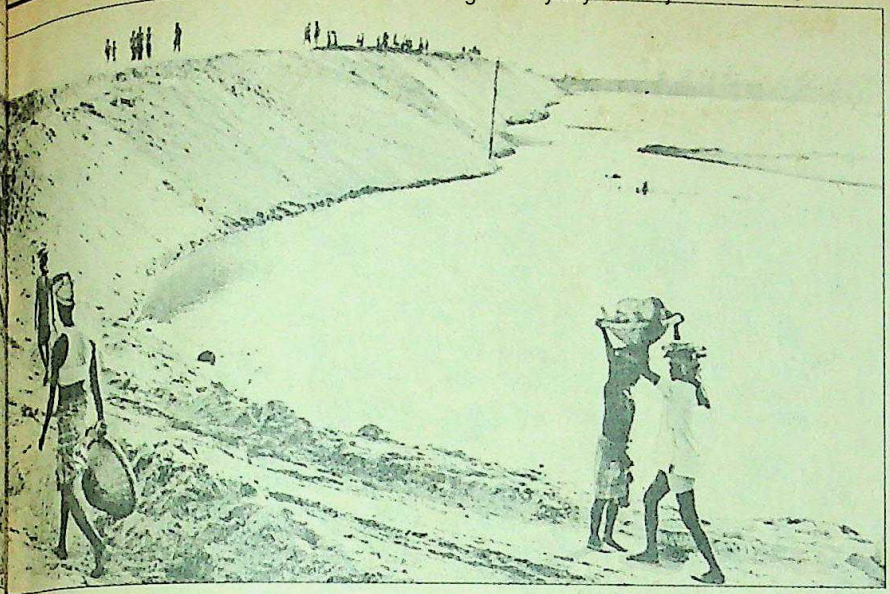


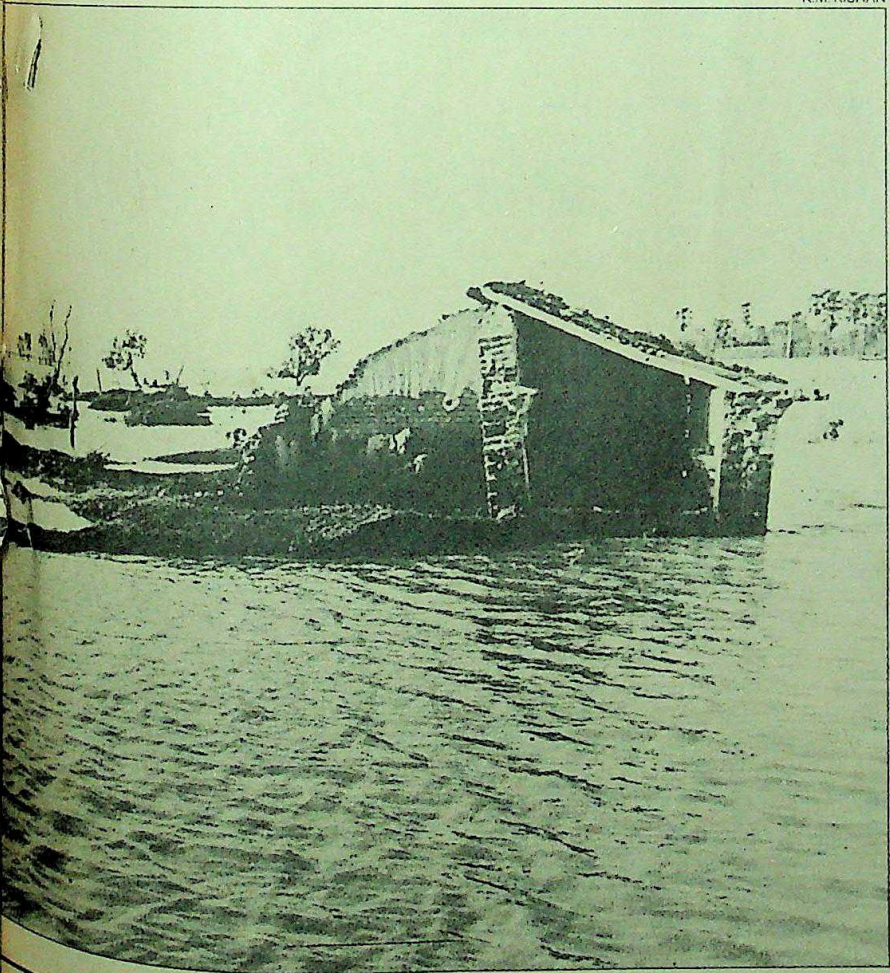
changed its course after the breach.

Engineers, however, say that Rs 8 crore was sanctioned for the entire work: closure of the breach, construction of the coffer dam and strengthening of the entire embankment. But the Dubey Government, despite its lofty claims to efficiency, released the funds only on May 12. Official sources in Patna agree that funds are released only after much bureaucratic delay. Funds were also delayed for the Ekra site, which was another danger point. Other claims of the BESA blaming the state Government include the allegations that the Kosi Committee, which inspects the river's course and makes recommendations for flood control protection, had not mentioned the breach site in its recommendation of December 1983. The Committee says the BESA had suggested that Rs 6 crore be granted for flood control measures, but the Government sanctioned only Rs 2 crore. Thus it was not possible to protect many vulnerable points.

Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey went to inspect the work in progress and warned the engineers of grave consequences if the river breached the new embankment again.

A flooded village: doubtful methods?

K.M. KISHAN



Meanwhile many of those most affected, the villagers whose land was washed away or buried under a heap of sand, are living a hand to mouth existence. Says P. Singh of Gorpara village who owned 25 bighas of land and a pucca house but is now landless: "Our village went under water when the Kosi rose, now it is buried under a heap of sand which is called the new protective bund." Thousands of others sit hungry and jobless in relief tents. Says Achmit Mullah: "Till last year I was a farmer owning land and orchards. Now I am a pauper and my family of 10 is starving. I don't know if any government or administration exists."

According to official sources, about 500 villages were inundated of, which 20 were washed away and five completely, wiped out. But the administration stopped distribution of free rations after March 31 and has now started distributing Rs 74 per head for house construction. Officials agreed that this was almost meaningless, but Dubey said in Patna that the state Government would distribute seeds and fertilisers at a 75 per cent subsidy. People in Saharsa find this a laughable state of affairs. They point out that unless efforts are made to reclaim the fields nothing will grow on the land for years. Taking all these aspects into account it seems that the travails of those who live by the Kosi are far from ended. —FARZAND AHMED

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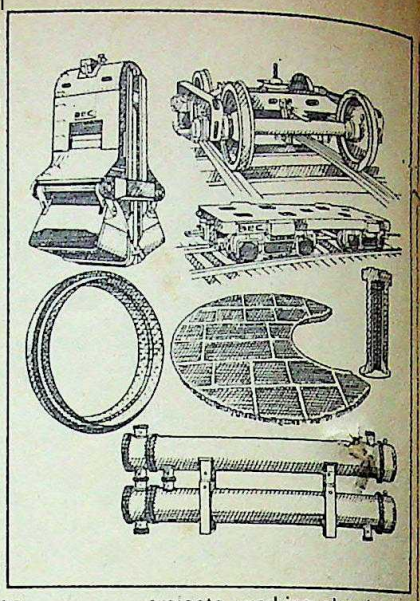

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BEC MEETING THE ENGINEERING CHALLENGES OF CORE INDUSTRIES

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The Growth Debate

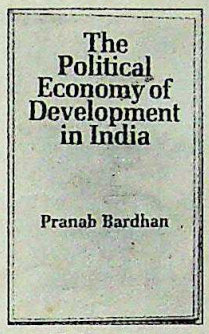
INDUSTRIAL GROWTH IN INDIA: Stagnation since the Mid-Sixties
By ISHER JUDGE AHLUWALIA
Oxford University Press
Price: Rs 120; Pages: 235

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA
By PRANAB BARDHAN
Oxford University Press
Price: Rs 60; Pages: 118

IS THE Indian economy speeding up or slowing down? The answer, if one turns to economists, is predictably unhelpful, with some arguing the first and others the second. Isher Judge Ahluwalia presents a mass of evidence in her well-argued book to justify its title, and Pranab Bardhan takes off from here to look at the reasons for the economy's unconvincing performance. Yet there are others who argue quite the opposite from Ahluwalia: K.N. Raj, for instance, has disagreed with her conclusions in an article published by *The Economic and Political Weekly*, and Yogendra Alagh in a recent Govind Ballabh Pant lecture has contended that the growth performance has, if anything, been improving.

There have, in the process, been disputes over the statistics which were used to measure economic performance, and over the periods studied (Ahluwalia argues, for instance, that growth has slowed down since the mid-'60s, but Alagh says growth has picked up since the mid-'70s).

Nevertheless, the debate has been instructive. Ahluwalia shows, for instance, that some of the common arguments put forward as explanations for the industrial slowdown since the mid-'60s have no validity. Using well-organised sets of statistics, she shows that the slowdown has nothing to do with rising poverty or a worsening pattern of income distribution. Similarly, the slowdown is not because of a wage goods constraint, for if this were the case the sectors to be affected would have been the employment-intensive ones. Instead, the real slowdown in the last two decades has been in the capital-intensive heavy industry sector. Finally, she dismisses the argument that the slackening of the import substitution drive since the mid-'60s caused industry



to slow down: import substitution has continued after that in heavy industry, which has grown slowly, while consumer durables have grown rather rapidly despite the absence of a similar import substitution drive.

If these are not the reasons, what is the real answer? Ahluwalia offers not one but many. To start with, she says, there has been a slowdown in public investment in key infrastructural sectors, leading to severe supply-side bottlenecks that have been compounded by the poor management of the infrastructure. Apart from these, the continued slow growth of agricultural incomes has meant that demand for goods has increased slowly. Finally, the framework of industrial policy has led to more regulation than promotion, avoidable delays in investment decisions, the absence of foreign competition and the curbing of domestic competition, the use of dated technologies, and the absence of any incentive to reduce costs, leading to a high-cost industrial superstructure.

Ahluwalia also argues that there has been an overall decline in the growth of productivity. She notes the steady increases in the capital-output ratios over time, and goes on to demolish the usual argument put forward as the explanation, which is that this results from the capital-intensive nature of the pattern of investment. Instead, she shows that there is evidence of growing inefficiencies in the use of the factors of production.

Ahluwalia's case is well argued, and it is difficult to fault her conclusions concerning the reasons for the industrial slowdown since the mid-'60s. But the fact remains that if the period from the mid-'60s to the mid-'80s is further broken up into two phases, before and after 1976, the statistics suggest that the picture could be different from the one drawn by Ahluwalia. But since she does not take note of this, she has no explanations to offer either.

Bardhan's readable offering is based on his Radhakrishnan Memorial Lectures, delivered at All Souls College, Oxford, and attempts something quite different from Ahluwalia. He focuses essentially on aspects of India's political economy in his search for the reasons for India's slow economic growth.

Sharing common ground with Ahluwalia in spotting the role played by insufficient public investment in the agricultural and industrial infrastructure, and of "public management of capital", Bardhan goes on to an illuminating discussion of the economic classes that dominate the Indian state.

He outlines three "proprietory classes" in Indian society: the industrial capitalist class, the rich farmers and the professionals. In one way or other, all three have tried to garner advantages for themselves. The first used the Government's import substitution and trade restriction policies to advantage while flouting other policies that went against their interests (e.g. licensing curbs), the farmers have got away with virtually no significant taxation of their incomes and wealth, while enjoying subsidies on power and irrigation, and the professionals have managed to direct educational investment away from the masses and thus "been able to protect their scarcity rent" while acquiring licence-giving powers in the bureaucracy.

There are, of course, conflicts between these classes, and it is Bardhan's thesis that, with none of the three dominant classes able to reign supreme, there is a loose and uneasy coalition, with each pulling in different directions. The result: a proliferation of subsidies to satisfy each class, and the consequent eating up of government revenue through the privatisation of public resources, leaving little behind for public capital formation. The final result of the plurality of proprietory classes is the 'soft state', and the absence of 'political will' for hard decisions. As a spillover, the "competitive politics of democracy" keeps the rival partners in the coalition on the defensive.

While this is certainly not a complete explanation it does point to a fundamental truth about the Indian system. In a different context, Ahluwalia has helped clarify the issues in the growth debate. Both offerings are valuable aids to understanding India's economic reality.

—T.N. NINAN

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◆ The Malayalam film world has recruited a new girl that should send its plethora of Tamil, Telugu and Punjabi sex bombs into a slow sizzle. Producers, fed up with those pounds of flesh, have discovered 19-year-old **Sunanda Nair**, who is everything that their present heroines are not—fresh, traditional, homely. After a long time, a conventional Malayali Nair girl—she's also a chartered accountancy student—has put a gingerly foot into the forbidden world of films. But

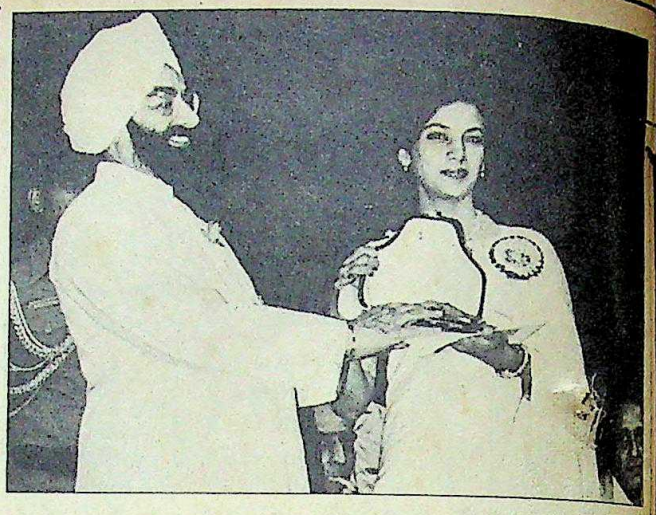
SUNIL GURUVAYOOR

Sunanda: traditional

now that she's there, nothing's going to stop Sunanda. She was reportedly paid the highest signing amount in south India for her maiden film *Manichepu Thuranappol*. "I tell you my daughter is a multi-faceted personality," beamed papa P.K.R. Nair, the controversial former director of ports. The offers are pouring in, but as Sunanda said: "No sex please, we are traditional." In other words: so Nair and yet so far.

◆ Once is obviously not enough for **Shabana Azmi**. For the third time in a row she picked up the National Award for the best actress of the year (for *Paar* in 1985) at a function held in New Delhi recently. One would think Shabana would have got used to awards by now. But no, she was in Assam when she heard the good news and stubbornly refused to believe it. It was only when she landed at Bombay airport and saw two dozen friends holding up placards that said, "Oh no, not again," that the actress *par* excellence let out a long sigh of relief. "It was too much," she gushed, "who could have thought?" Since then, it's been champagne, roses and partying all night long. Next year, the talented actress will get the chance to prove herself in another field—she plans to script and direct a film, "but I don't want to talk about it now or people will get sick hearing about it."

◆ There was no leisurely breakfast in bed for the new bride. The morning after he got married, 24-year-old tennis star **Ramesh Krishnan** flew off to England to play the Beckenham tennis tournament leaving his one-day-old bride **Priya Seshasayee** to catch up with him a few days later. "I hope marriage will bring me luck to win the Wimbledon," Ramesh was overheard saying soon after the wedding last fortnight. Priya has just completed her B.A. in English from the Stella Maris College, Madras, but it



Shabana receiving her award: gifted actress

looks like she'll have to switch her major to tennis. After Beckenham husband Ramesh will play the Queen's Club and then Wimbledon and then the Davis Cup. The honeymoon may be over, but the courtship, it seems, will continue for a long, long time.

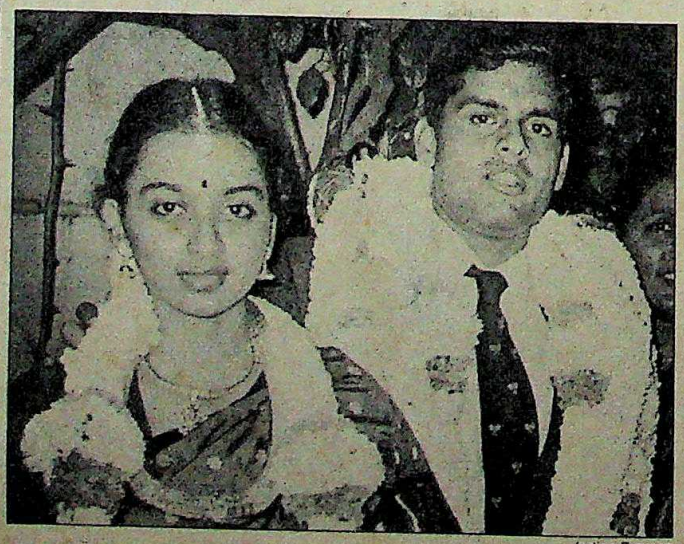
◆ When Judith de Paul announced a film on Indira Gandhi, starry aspirants across the world—including Anne Bancroft—raised their antennae. But a decade of doing "what's the good word?" for Doordarshan seems to have taught aspirant **Sabira Merchant** a trick or two. "I think I stand a very slim chance," said the high

Sabira: the silver streak

priestess of Bombay society while making all the right moves. She typed out her resume, picked out her best photographs for the casting director. And then Sabira went a daring step further—she streaked for the role. With the help of a professional make-up man, Sabira got her hair streaked white and husband Chhotu made a little video recording of the reincarnation—which has now been sent off to Rajiv Gandhi so that when Director de Paul discusses the script and cast with the royal family next month, she may get a... ah, the good word is "recommendation".

—Compiled by SIMRAN BHARGAVA

Priya and Ramesh: matchless



Indian Express

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New Money Spinner

With shares enjoying an unprecedented boom, new share issues evoking record responses from the public and the number of investors trebling in the last five years to 7 million, the stock market has now become the middle class Indian's financial El Dorado.

COVER STORY 78

Unravelling the Clues

Was it or was it not a bomb which caused the Air-India crash last month? The recovery of the black box has raised hopes of solving the mystery. Meanwhile Air-India is grappling with the problem of security that has acquired a new and worrying dimension.

CURRENT EVENTS 18

The Agony of Kalahandi

For 20 long years, there has been drought and famine in Kalahandi, a district of Orissa. Last month, when women began to abandon and sell their children out of desperation, the country was forced to sit up and notice how cruel both nature and the Government have been.

SPECIAL FEATURE 52

An Uncertain Legacy

Madhavsinh Solanki has finally bowed out as Gujarat chief minister but his successor, Amarsinh Chaudhuri, is hardly an inspiring choice. Whether he can curb the violence is to be seen. A report on the riot victims and an interview with the new chief minister.

SPECIAL REPORT 60

Gunfire on the Glacier

For over a year Indian and Pakistani troops have been waging a protracted war over the desolate Siachen glacier area in Kashmir. As fresh clashes occurred last fortnight there were signs that both armies were digging in for more action.

DEFENCE 132

Reviving the Battle

India's controversial family planning programme of the 1970s is getting a new look and shifting into high gear. From being a low-key, faceless issue, it is fast becoming priority number one under Rajiv Gandhi and several new strategies are being adopted.

HEALTH 136

CONTENTS

COMMENT 7
VOICES 10
INDIA NOTES 15
Air-India: Unravelling the Clues 18
Haryana: Bhajan at Bay 24
Punjab: Playing Safe 25
Uttar Pradesh: Transfer Row 31
NDA: Shaky Foundations 32
West Bengal: Unsettled Phase 34
Jammu & Kashmir: Prestige Price 39
Bombay: Shady Deal 40
Andhra Pradesh: Back to School 45
Rajasthan: Post-mortem 47
SPECIAL FEATURE
Orissa: The Agony of Kalahandi 52
SPECIAL REPORT
Gujarat: An Uncertain Legacy 60
INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT
Y.V. Chandrachud:
"We are not spineless" 74
COVER STORY
The Stock Market:
New Money Spinner 78
PERSPECTIVE
Afghanistan: Deadlocked War 91
GLOBE-TROTTING
Benjamin Netanyahu:
"Terrorism is a cancer" 92
NEIGHBOURS
Indo-Pak Relations: Painful Progress 94
Sri Lanka:
Search for a Solution 97
TRADE WINDS 105
BUSINESS
Rajendra Sethia:
The Twisted Trail 108
Revenue Department:
Tightening Up 111
Peico: Name Game 112
Pepsico: Losing Fizz 119
Kerala: Hotel Happy 121
The Economy Monitor 126
The Markets: Bullish Trends 129
DEFENCE
Jammu & Kashmir:
Gunfire on the Glacier 132
HEALTH
Family Planning:
Reviving the Battle 136
THE ARTS
The Mahabharata:
An Epic Endeavour 140
CRIME
Tamil Nadu: Fallen Hero 147
CINEMA
Hindi Films:
The Age of Insecurity 150
EYE-CATCHERS 156

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME X NUMBER 14
FOR THE FORTNIGHT JULY 16-31, 1985

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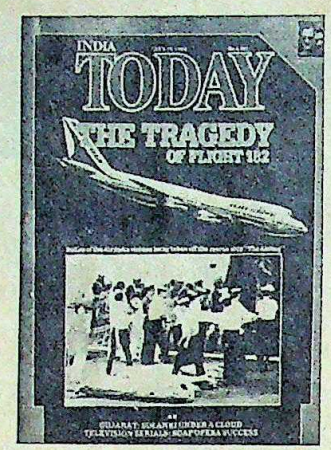

TRUE PICTURE

The cover story "Destination Disaster" (July 15) has presented a very true picture of the crash of flight 182 which has shocked people all over the world. Every civilised person will condemn the killing of innocent people. Two men had alighted midway, a practice which should be curbed immediately by the airlines all over the world, this would help in controlling the extremist activities of the terrorists. They are making selected airlines their targets in order to blackmail the respective governments for their own gain. Strong measures should be adopted for tightening security at all airports.

Jaipur — V. BALA KRISHAN

■ The acts of a few fanatical saboteurs should not be allowed to hinder the process of reconciliation in Punjab. The governments of Canada, the US and the UK should realise that pampering the Sikhs would be politically and diplomatically counter-productive.

Baroda — AMIT R. DHOLAKIA

■ Your cover story mentions the mercenary school in the US but one fails to understand why such a school has been allowed to run. As long as terrorists wanted by a country are welcomed, supported and trained by other countries, the fight against terrorism will prove futile.

Delhi — K.S. ROOPRAI

IMAGE BOOST

Your special feature on Indo-US relations (July 15) was vivid, informative and excellently reported. The photographs as well were superb. Judging by all accounts Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the US has been a tremendous success and has boosted India's image. This visit will definitely open a new chapter in Indo-US ties.

Calcutta — RAJVIR GREWAL

BACKING OUT?

Your article "Solanki Under a Cloud" (July 15) was timely. There is no doubt that the state Government has turned out to be incapable of handling the anti-reservation stir, now a caste war. While the continued reprisal of a particular segment of the society is not warranted, the politicians are, however, not beyond criticism for this chaos, because they have certain electoral promises to fulfil, and they cannot back out overnight.

Delhi — RAJIV HANDA

THE HUMANE FACTOR

Your cover story on Dhirubhai Ambani ("The Super Tycoon", June 30) made interesting reading. Your assessment and analysis of his style of management are excellent. But one aspect of the success of Dhirubhai has not been focused in proper perspective in your article, that is his down-to-earth human quality, which no other 'moghul' of the Indian industry possesses. Dhirubhai may have commercial skill, technical understanding, financial wizardry, managing the Government (or the environment as our current management jargon says), marketing innovations etc. But far above all these qualities is Dhirubhai's understanding of the common people which has helped him achieve his goal.

Bombay — SHALIL GHOSH

■ The media is mainly responsible for projecting Dhirubhai Ambani as the "super tycoon". Certain reports do show a tinge of jealousy, but Dhirubhai has done nothing wrong. As an enterprising businessman he has made his way to the top by virtue of his tactfulness, shrewdness and tremendous foresight.

Cuttack — ARTA MISHRA

IDENTITY CRISIS

Your report "Sikh Youth: Wounded Psyche" (June 30) investigates the circumstances in general, responsible for conversion of an ordinary man into a terrorist. Moreover, it also reveals the fact that how the police forces are harassing the innocent and non-violent Sikhs while the real terrorists are still out of custody. The article indicates that it is the frustration that converts one into a terrorist. To get rid of the frustration a young man can do anything, destructive or constructive. The economic conditions of the unemployed are also responsible for the turning point of their lives. But sadly these factors

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are often overlooked.

DIVYANSHU RAJAN
Darbhanga, Bihar

■ The article on the Sikh youth was really upsetting, but why don't the Sikhs understand that the purpose of the Operation Bluestar was merely against the anti-national Sikhs. The others still command the same respect as they did before the so-called alienation of the Sikhs.

SURESH THAKUR
Indore

■ The confessions of Virsa Singh Valtoha reveal the plot used by Sikh terrorists to lure innocent, young Sikhs to become militants by exploiting their religious sentiments and converting them into fanatics. The various incidents of murder, robbery and terrorism indicate the sinister designs of the terrorists to create disorder and drive the Government up the wall. When these activities took place before the Operation Bluestar, the Sikh intellectuals kept silent. Now we see a change in their outlook and many of them openly dissociate themselves from these terrorists. This feeling should make every young Sikh like Virsa Singh realise that terrorism is not the means and end to solve the Punjab problem. If only the Sikh high priests denounce the terrorism and excommunicate such individuals from the panth, it will pave the way for a healthy climate for solving the Punjab tangle.

GILBERT D'SOUZA
Vaiparai

■ Frustration seems to be taking the younger generation of Sikhs to a path of terrorism. There seem to be two distinct reasons that have pushed them over the brink. Firstly the Government's Fabian policy towards the Punjab issue, and secondly the arrogant behaviour of the police who are the so-called law-keepers. The police should definitely be made to understand that it is a handful of extremists that they have to fight and not the entire Sikh community.

C. SURYAM
Eluru, Andhra Pradesh

■ What does a kid like Gurbhej Singh know about religion that he speaks of protecting it. It only speaks of the one thought that lies in the minds of the Sikhs: Khalistan. They are upset by the Operation Bluestar but why don't they ask themselves the simple question: why did it ever happen? They themselves are to blame. In spite of repeated warnings by the army, Bhindranwale and his men refused to surrender.

In order to tackle such terrorism the Government should undertake more vigorous anti-terrorism drives. The Government would be naive to think that subsidies and concessions would help solve the Punjab crisis.

By giving Gurbhej Singh and others like him so much coverage in your magazine, you are bestowing a certain amount of respectability and transforming them into mini celebrities.

SANDEEP KUMAR
Ranchi

■ The opinion of some Sikhs that they are not treated as equals and they feel more alienated is a fallacy, considering the fact that some of the highest posts in our country are held by them.

Swaran Singh's query of whether India likes to have Sikhs staying in the country or not is absurd. The Government's acceptance of the major Akali demands and the Hindu community's rescue operations during the riots and also the absence of the Hindu backlash after the transistor bomb attacks by the terrorists are clear indications of Hindu-Sikh amity.

It is time the Akalis sort out their own differences and resumed talks with the Central Government and settle the issue amicably.

MANJULA KUMAR
Pune

BACHCHAN'S BLUNDER

The article "Amitabh Bachchan: Playing a Double Role" (June 30) was a candid and a truthful picture of the actor. It was one of the greatest blunders on the part of the actor to give up his flourishing career as a super star to make a profession in politics. In fact by doing so, he has done great injustice to his fans. He should have been able to judge for himself whether he was capable of fulfilling the duties of an MP or not. Instead of raising a new controversy now with his irresponsible statement in a press interview, it would be better for him to return to films where not only would many producers be waiting for him but also a lot of fans looking forward to see him on screen once again.

J.R. LAROIYA
NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh

■ It does seem that Amitabh Bachchan was a reluctant entrant into politics, whose prime function was to defeat a formidable opponent in the Lok Sabha elections. That he did, and very successfully, but beyond that one should not have expected anything very much from him. After all he is not Rajiv Gandhi to have taken to politics like a duckling to water. Amitabh should resign if he feels that politics is not his cup of tea.

S.E. MEERZA
Bombay

BLEAK HOUSE

On one side we have women like Maya ("House of Horror", June 30) who even after losing everything have the courage and hope to fight back. On the other side are the social workers like Swaroop Bakshi who can do something to help the needy women but are indifferent to the situation and refuse to accept the pitiable and unhygienic conditions prevailing in the protection homes. The callous and contemptuous attitude of such workers provide passive encouragement to the elements which harass the inmates of these homes. Such workers should be shunned by the society.

RAVI SANDHU
Sonepat

FESTIVAL FURORE

In the letters to the editor (June 30) the criticism rendered to the festivals being held in France and Washington is not justified. Furthermore, there is nothing inappropriate in their timing. On the contrary, the time is just right. Owing to various factors, both natural and unnatural, India has been in the limelight in recent times. People abroad are looking at it with interest and curiosity. The festivals only accentuate this interest and thus serve their purpose, and fairly well.

A vast country like India is always beset with some problem or the other. If one reschedules the festivals because of this, in all likelihood, they shall never be held. Moreover, the prime minister's visit abroad at a time when trouble was brewing within, was not to inaugurate the festivals but to improve bilateral relations. And it seemed right to coincide the opening with his visit. The festivals hope to increase trade, tourism and foreign investment in our country. Their effect should be considerable if the initial success is any indication. It is something we should wait and see instead of viewing the entire venture in a negative light.

SAMIR KHUSHALANI
New Delhi

■ That from all of America's riches, you should choose blue jeans over Adams, Bernstein, Graham etc prefer hamburgers to jambalaya, hoola hoops to basketball, blue suede shoes to beaded moccasins, bubble gum to baked beans, Donald Duck to Willie Loman....is a reflection on your society, not ours.

From you we don't want Hindi films. We want additions to an already vast and varied culture; we want your best...Satajit Ray, yoga, classical music, saris.

MARY ROY
Amherst NH, USA

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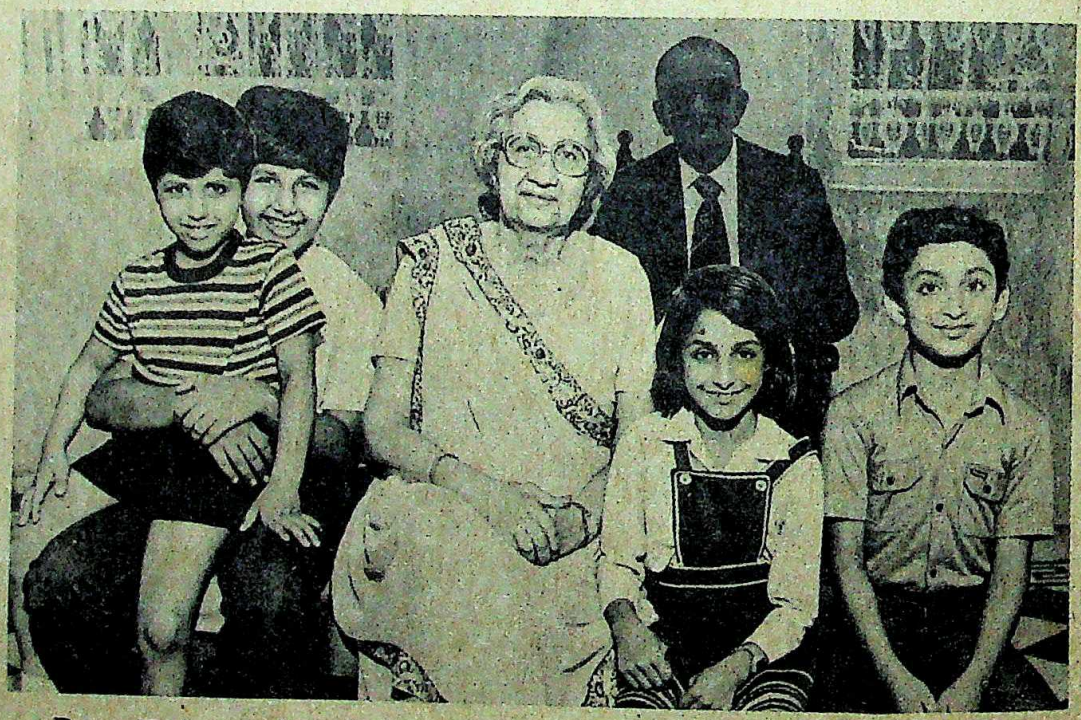
Whatever happened to Behram Uncle and a few important tips on how to use a flash.



Poor Behram Uncle. There he was, all ready for a shot with his grandchildren and the photographer did him in. If only the chap was a little closer, the light from his flash would've got Uncle Behram into the picture.

Actually, using a flash is easy, but the trick is in controlling it to get a good image. Here are a few tips on how to make your flash your camera's best friend.

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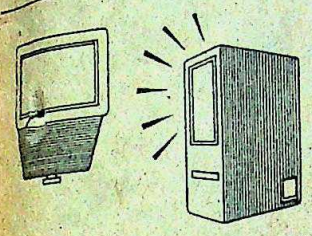
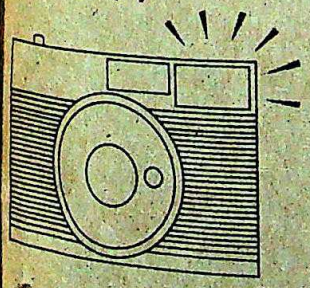
Understanding your flash



Your flashgun is your greatest asset when 'existing light' is too low – it provides your camera with almost the same light as daylight. Another advantage is that you can also use the flash in daylight to restore detail and pleasing colour rendition in backlit portraits or to achieve a better exposure when your subject is in the shade. A flash can also 'freeze' motion — good when you're shooting frisky kids. Knowing your flashgun and its abilities (whether it's a built-in flash or a separate equipment) could be one of the best things that happened to your photography.



Flash points

If you have a built-in flash, take care that the flash window is above the lens, not below. Ignore this rule and you end up with 'monstrous' pictures — shadows thrown upwards.

Give your flash enough time to recharge (a little indicator will tell you when it's ready) and it will give the same intensity of light as before. Always remember to carry fresh batteries.

Since the actual light thrown on the subject is impossible to gauge, the exposure has to be calculated on the basis of guide numbers.

Take care your fingers or the flap of your camera case remains clear of the flash window; if they block it, underexposure will result.

Some points to remember

If you're using a flash against a white wall or a reflective surface, look out for glare. If you can't change camera angle, put a handkerchief or facial tissue over the flash to cut down on glare. Remember to adjust your speed to the recommended number. (1/60 of a second is a safe bet — to avoid partly blackened exposures — generally experienced at higher speeds when flash-synchronization goes haywire).

If by chance you use a long exposure or leave the camera on auto and the auto has decided the situation needs a long exposure, you will get one of two effects. The first is an overexposed image, the second an interesting blurred picture plus a sharp image from the flash — a fascinating effect.

A built-in flash seldom can light subjects beyond 20 feet (6m). See the flash or camera instruction manual to find the distance range of your unit.

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The Media Message

SINGAPORE'S Prime Minister, Lee Kwan Yew, once said that there were only two professions in the world for which no training seemed to be required: politics and journalism. So it is perhaps only natural that practitioners of the two, who come in all shapes, sizes and qualities, should share a very marked degree of sensitivity of what one says about the other. This much was in evidence last fortnight at Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's first press conference in India when what ought to have been considered discussion concerning the shortcomings of the two professions seemed suddenly to take on confrontationist overtones to do with basic freedoms and responsibilities.

Just a month ago, talking to the National Press Club in Washington, the prime minister declared with pride that the press in India is free, and then appended an unguarded remark that "sometimes I think it is worse than yours." The Americans laughed it away for the joke wasn't on them. But at last fortnight's press conference Rajiv persisted. In answer to a question about allowing the government-controlled media autonomy he declared: "I do not think you have behaved responsibly at all. The way you people write and publish...if radio and TV behaved like the press there will be tremendous danger to democracy."

If he was being serious—and there is no reason to suppose that he wasn't—it was a sweeping, unfair indictment of the press betraying an unexpected distrust of the media. After all, the print media has never before been so approving of the policies and actions of a head of government as it has been with Rajiv these past few months. Praise and approval have been lavish; criticism, where it has been delivered, has been guarded. And yet the media is accused of irresponsibility!

There is, of course, no need to pretend that all journalists are hard-nosed professionals or that all newspapers and magazines committed to the integrity of the profession. Far from it. Like other countries with a free press, India too has its share of scandal sheets and yellow journalism, of planted stories and slander and libel. But then, as all countries who don't have a free press know, that is not such a high price to pay for the advantages of press freedom. Jawaharlal Nehru recognised this when he said: "I would rather have a free press with all its drawbacks then one shackled and unworthy of performing its basic role."

To be fair, the prime minister did go on to affirm that he was totally against government interference in the functioning of the press and that it was up to the press to police itself. While this is unexceptionable at first sight, it doesn't suggest the whole answer. Professional bodies should be charged with setting ethical and professional standards so that there is less and less irresponsible writing and publication, but it is ultimately the proper application of laws that will protect the interests of individuals—including politicians—and prevent slander and misrepresentation.

If the exchange at the press conference was merely a question of divergent perceptions on the Indian press, it could be left at that. Politicians and newsmen traditionally don't see eye to eye on so many issues; the role and responsibility of the media is just one. But the remarks were made in a particular context, that of allowing radio and television autonomy. And here, once again, basic issues are involved. Radio and television reach far, far more people than the print media can ever hope to, and in them the Government has an unsurpassable vehicle for its views and for propagating much needed social and cultural values. That said, however, it is necessary to recognise that autonomy does not amount to inviting the kind of irresponsible journalism that the prime minister seemed to have in mind at his press conference.

There are two issues here. One is the obvious need to make All India Radio and Doordarshan do their job better. This means more professionalism, better staff, an open system in which outsiders can contribute. It means liberalisation, more money, better equipment. It means commitment, effort and protection against interfering politicians and vested interests. All of this, in a word, spells greater autonomy.

The other issue is more vital because it has to do with credibility. The recent past is littered with the failure of official media to carry conviction—whether it had to do with the family planning programmes in the Emergency or the announcement of Mrs Gandhi's death, Operation Bluestar or the Gujarat agitation. The content of official domestic news programmes is laughable when it doesn't have to be. There seems to be some impression that credibility is simply criticism of the Government. It is not; it means projecting the facts, allowing debate and letting the cross currents of opinion flow on the air waves. Of late, there has been a perceptible improvement on Doordarshan, in the more liberal discussions such as on the Punjab problem and on *Janavani*, a programme in which citizens interrogate cabinet ministers. But these are only the beginnings and a long way remains to be travelled. And if the journey is not performed at a good clip, it is ultimately the Government that will suffer because just as the average Indian isn't willing to be taken for granted when it comes to elections, the average citizen is waking up to the information and communications revolutions and will demand to know, speedily, accurately and in the fullest detail.

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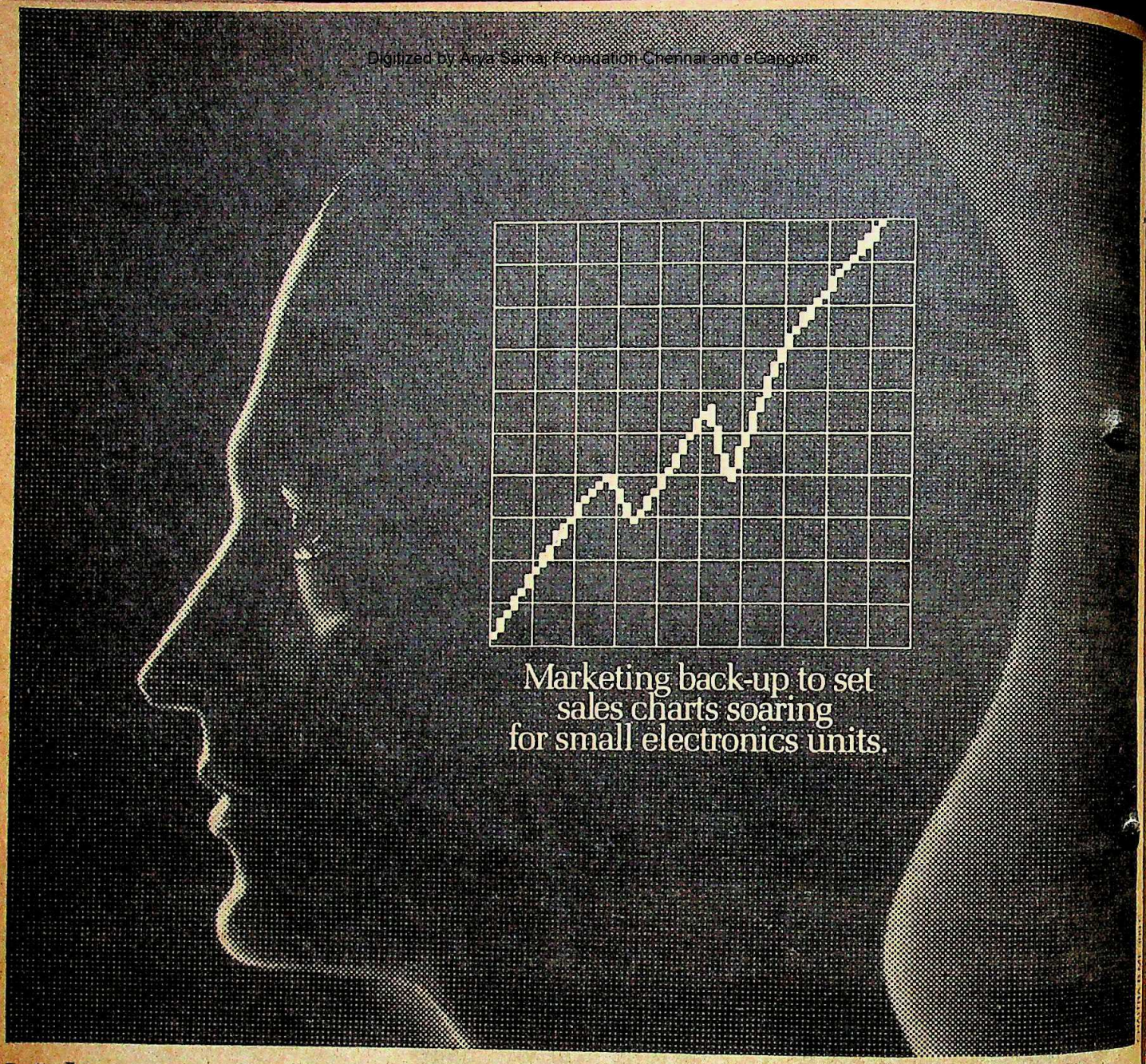

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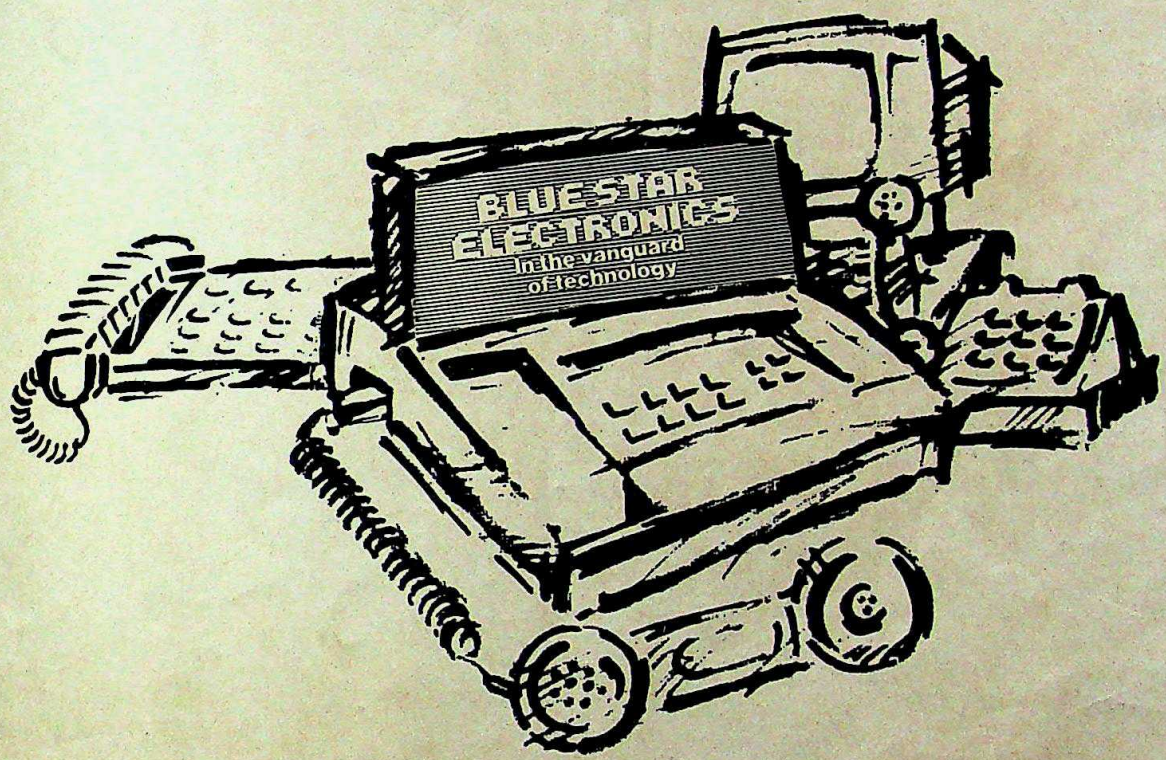

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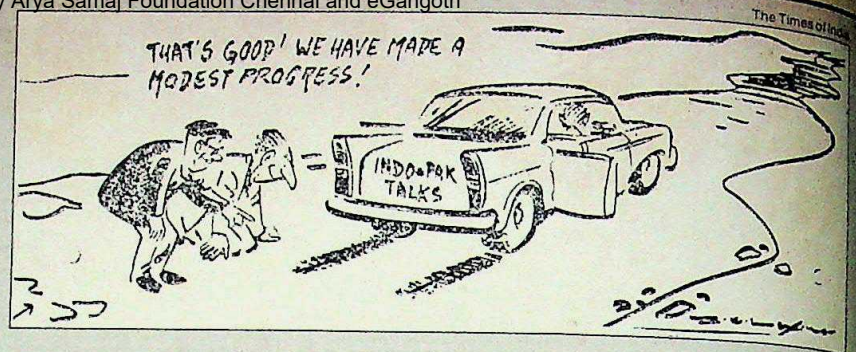

● *My government is the one that works faster.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI at his press conference in New Delhi

● *Obviously, the prime minister believes that a free press is an irresponsible press and so he is not willing to extend the freedom to the broadcasting media.*

■ L.K. ADVANI *commenting on the prime minister's statement at his press conference*

● *I have had everything in my career and now I am just indifferent to everything.*

■ KAMLAPATI TRIPATHI in *Newstime*

● *We politicians have no such code (of conduct), we seem to think we have the God-ordained duty to discipline everybody but ourselves.*

■ R.K. HEGDE during *The Telegraph's* third anniversary debate in Calcutta

● *A self-seeking boss seeks pliable administrators, for upright deputies are a hindrance in his system.*

■ RAMNATH GOENKA on Madhavsinh Solanki in *Indian Express*

● *I am with him (Pranab Mukherjee) and he should continue. We are with him and he should not feel frustrated.*

■ A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY in *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*

● *Today what happens is that they can make allegations that so and so is a communist or an RSS man. In the Janata regime they used to say 'Do not appoint him, he is a Congress(I) man'.*

■ Y.V. CHANDRACHUD on the appointment of judges in *Free Press Journal*

● *There was a certain kind of respectability about Bombay, a stamp of dignity, now it is a discourtesy, the higher the buildings the lower is the quality of human beings.*

■ A.F.S. TALYARKHAN in *Celebrity*

● *A dancer has her ego.... you cannot dance well with a deflated ego.*

■ YAMINI KRISHNAMURTY in *Femina*

● *Actors work together and not against each other. It is not a wrestling match—acting is the only game where both can win.*

■ NASEERUDDIN SHAH in *The Sunday Observer*

● *Whatever has happened in my life, the growth, the vitamins, the pep—everything comes from him (Amitabh Bachchan).*

■ REKHA Quoted *in Cine Blitz*

● *I have no personality at all. I seem to look different everyday.*

■ PRIYA TENDULKAR in *Bombay*

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The supremacy in modern technology of Maruti-Suzuki is indisputable. To maintain their technology lead, they will go to any length to get the right component to make the perfect product.

So now, when Suzuki are collaborating with Maruti, it cannot be just any battery for their car. It has to be specially designed to meet exacting performance standards in relation to weight, be failsafe, provide optimum starting performance and last the longest.

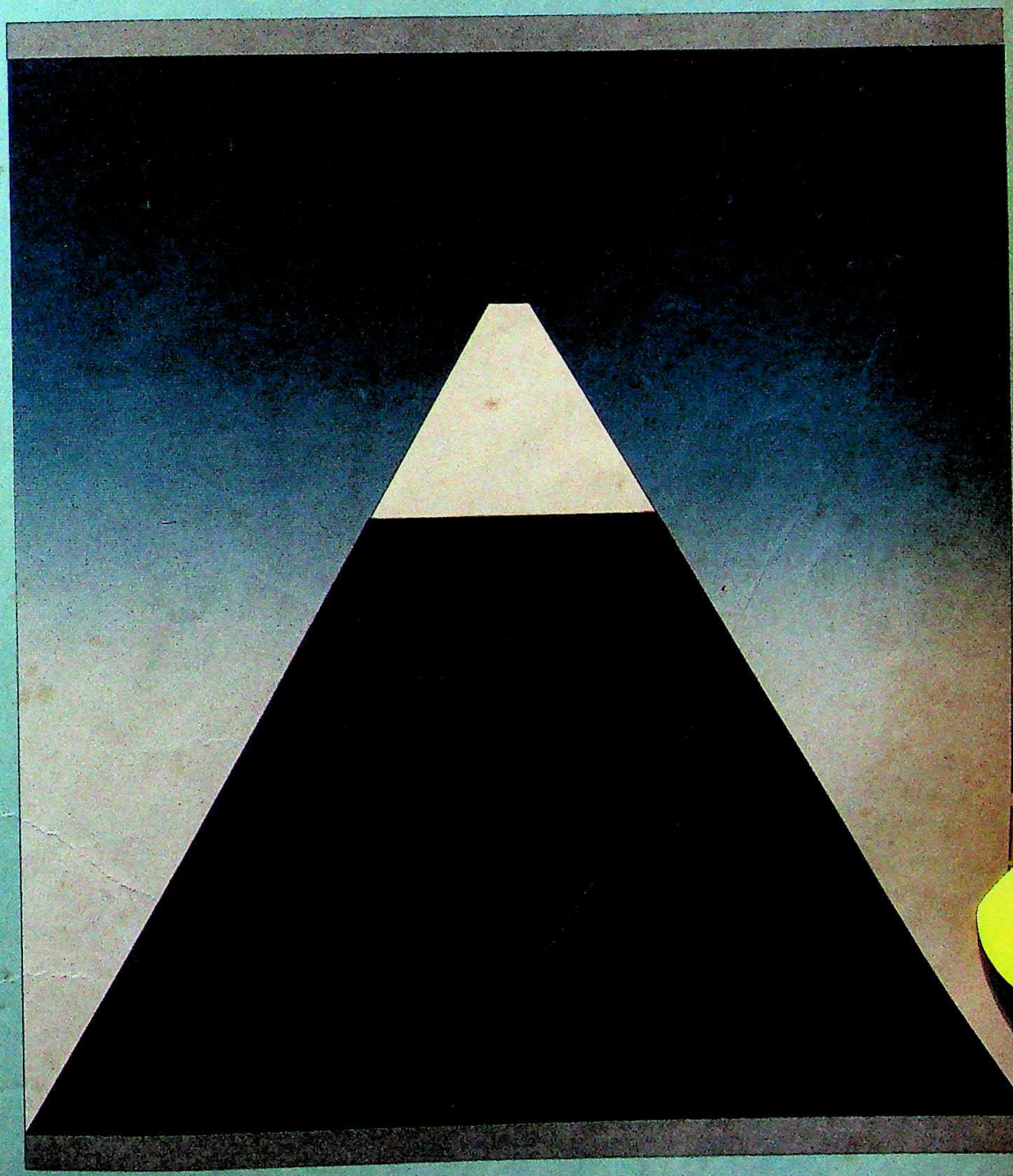
Exide is the only battery that comes through with flying colours. With their technical expertise backed by their experience of Indian conditions, Chloride, makers of Exide, have developed a special battery that not only matches exacting international standards, but also stands up to the tough operating conditions in India.

With the Maruti-Suzuki on the roads for over a year, Exide has justified the faith placed in it.

Soon others will follow suit. Such as DCM-Toyota, Swaraj-Mazda and Mahindra Peugeot, to name just a few. In every case they have specified Exide.

Ask them about Exide. They will tell you that Exide batteries are the best.

Mount Fujiyama, the highest peak in Japan, towers above all – a symbol of supremacy.



Exide. The best you can buy.
A product of Chloride India Ltd.

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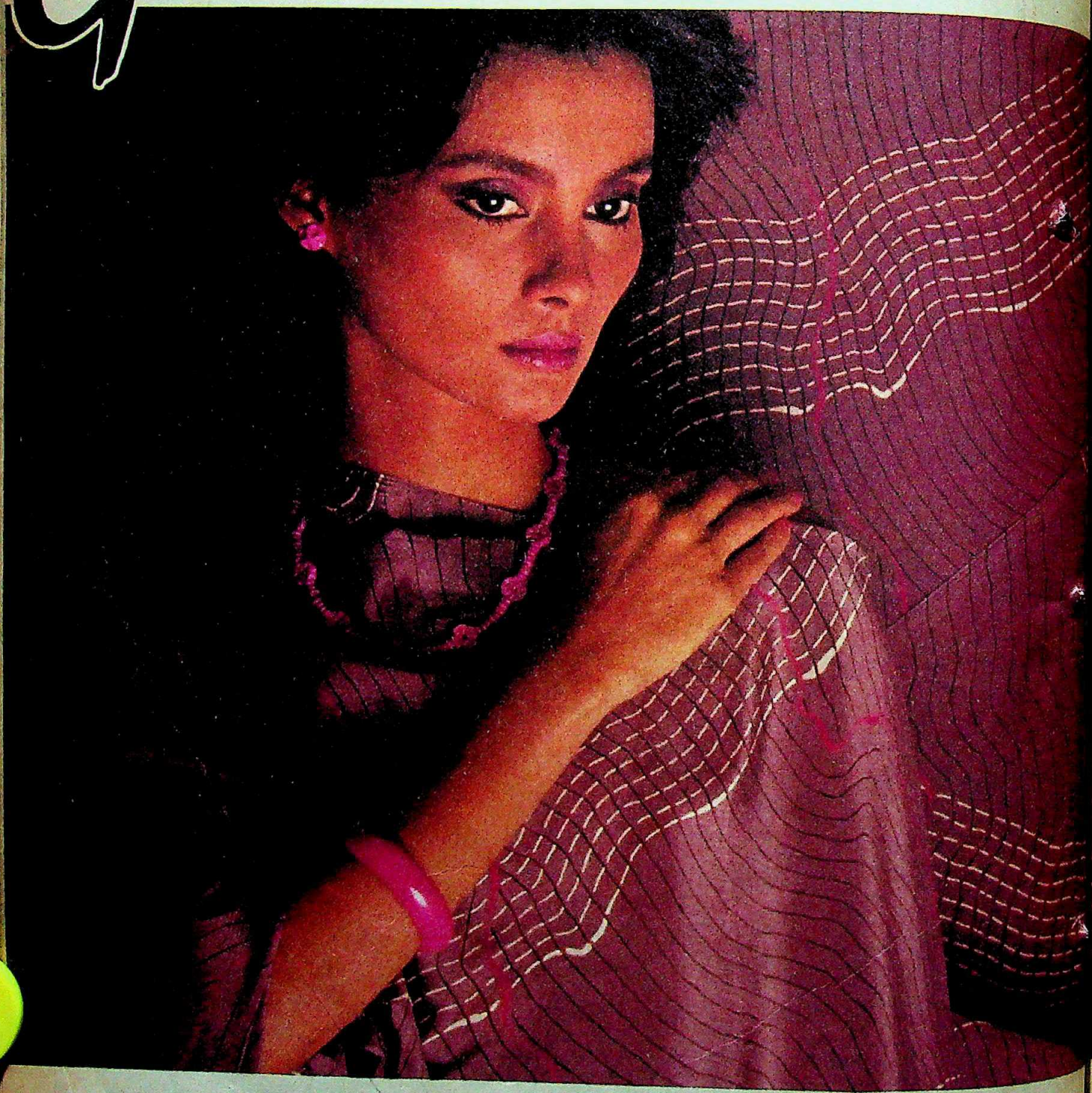
"Geometric designs have always been there. Right now they are on top."



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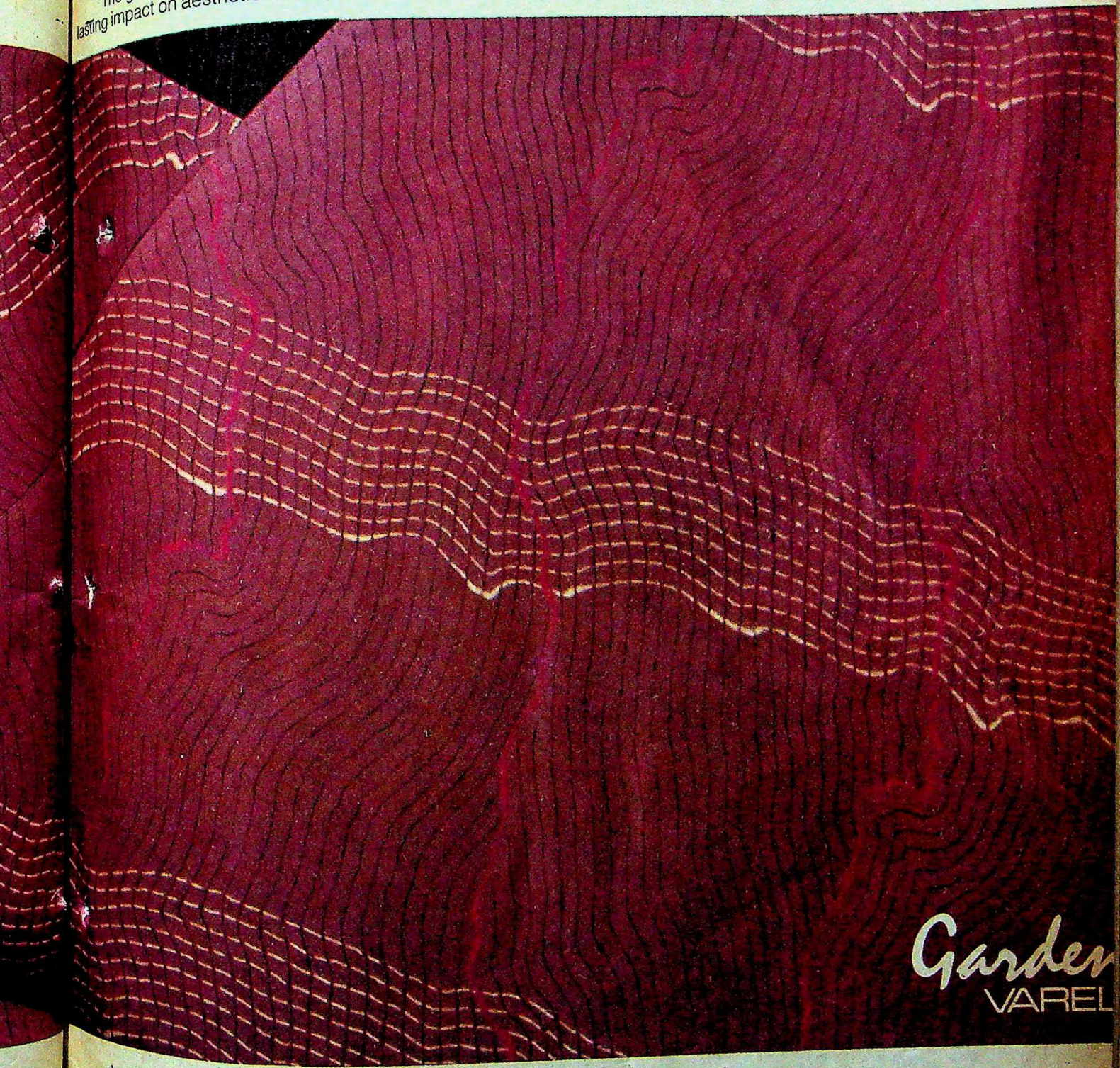
"The geometry factor in art, introduced by early Egyptian architects and artisans, has had a lasting impact on aesthetic concepts of today.



In fashion, the elements of geometry come as a liberating relief from the dominance of floral patterns. The geometric line becomes the fashionable stripe, the point and circle, a dot, the square, a check. Add to these the cube, zig-zag, diamond and arc and we have a panoply of shapes, simple yet permanent. Since these shapes are fundamental, they allow ground colours to have full play.

"Geometric" is the new story line for Garden-Vareli fabrics — trendy, futuristic...in keeping with the image of the modern woman as a liberated one."

Praful A. Shah, Managing Director, Garden Silk Mills Pvt. Ltd.; Chairman, Vareli Group.

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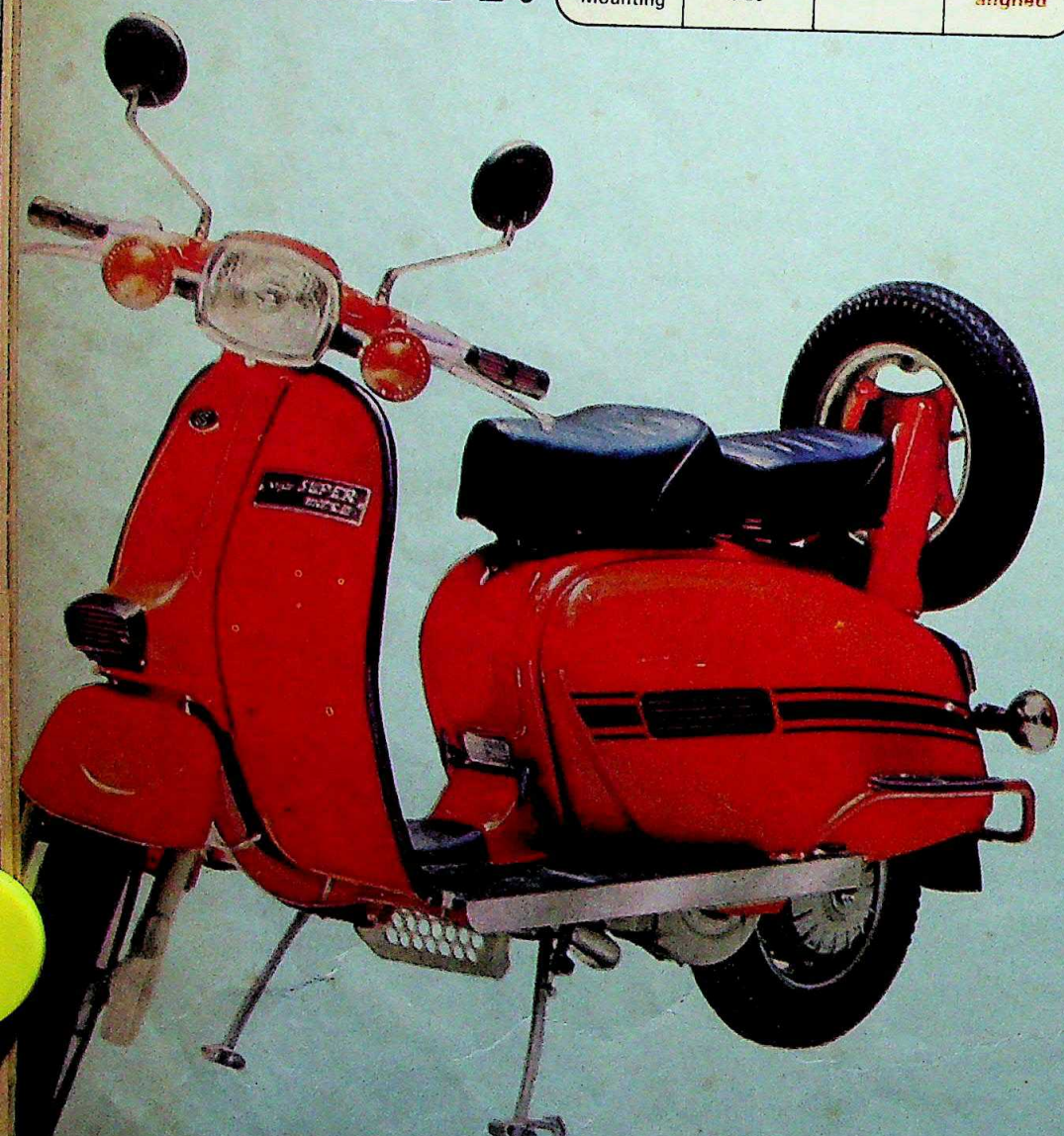
Vijai SUPER mark II

There's no 150 cc scooter to match it for ECONOMY POWER SAFETY.

FEATURES	Brand X	Brand Y	Vijai Super Mark-II
FUEL ECONOMY Kms/litres	40 ± 6	40	56 ± 6
POWER BHP	6.3	6.5	9.6
SAFETY Engine Mounting	Right hand side	Central	Centrally aligned



Vijai Super Mark-II. The latest mo from Scooters India Limited — successors to Innocenti of Italy. The winner at the Indian Grand P at Barrackpore and Sholavaram, it now incorporates a number of innovations for even greater economy, power, safety and durability.

SUPER ECONOMY: 56 ± 6 kms/lit The new variable venturi carburet based on Japanese technology provides the engine just the right amount of fuel at different speeds SAVING FUEL.

Improved cylinder design avoids turbulence and reversal of gas flow resulting in complete combustion gas.

Modified gear ratio reduces transmission loss, giving greater fu economy even at lower speeds.

SUPER POWER: 9.6 BHP
Vijai Super Mark-II is the most powerful scooter on the road, going from 0 to 60 kms in 12.75 seconds flat.

When the traffic light turns green, it is the first to take off.

SUPER SAFETY
The centrally mounted engine, low centre of gravity and wider wheel base offer greater stability while turning and braking — even at high speeds with load.

Its 35 watt rectangular headlamp provides a powerful wide beam making night riding safer.

SUPER DURABILITY
Modified material composition of cylinder, chrome plated piston rings and the use of solid lubricant significantly increases engine life.

With the new washable fibre filter based on American technology, the engine breathes freer and cleaner. That's why it carries a warranty of 1 months or 10,000 kms (whichever is earlier) — the longest on any two wheeler.

Vijay Super Mark-II is totally dependable, because it undergoes 1000 tough quality checks and is so and serviced through 225 outlets countrywide.

Made to exacting international standards, it is exported to many technologically advanced countries, including Italy — its birth place.

Vijai SUPER mark II

The best deal on wheels.

Scooters India Limited

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WOODED BLISS

■ Grow More Trees is all the cry: they are thought to be a panacea for all ills, environmental or otherwise. And of course, two trees are better than one, which explains the unusual ceremony celebrated with much pomp and circumstance in a Kerala town recently.

For some time a middle-class colony of the town had been plagued with an increasing number of accidents. The residents hit upon the idea of joining two trees in holy wedlock to propitiate whichever of the gods was playing with their lives and property. The female of the species was a graceful neem and her bridegroom a majestic aspen.

Most of the endearing aspects of a human wedding were present. The neem, already a very attractive bride, was made even more so by draping her in a colourful sari. The aspen had his masculinity enhanced by a dhoti. Superbly-embossed invitation letters were sent out to colony residents. It wasn't a very expensive affair too, and the Rs 7,000 that was spent on it came from well-wishers. It remains to be seen if the leafy wedding will keep away evil spirits.

LOVE RIDE

■ Trekkers come in various shapes and sizes: those who take a brisk walk to the bus-stop, those who stagger along mountain paths, and those who go for a constitutional along the length and breadth of India. Sudhakar Rao, a personable young man, was of the last category, and he arrived in Vijayawada one day limping and asking for food and shelter.

The bigwigs of the town fell in love with him: for a whole day Rao's life was one large round of parties thrown by the police and other officials who lauded his perseverance and the ingenuity of the Indian shoe industry. Rao's ambition, he said, was to walk 35,000 km.

It was with great reluctance that the town let him carry on. The police gave him some money and patted him on his way but one doubting sub-inspector sent a constable after him. Rao was spied having a few drinks at a bar, and then caught red-footed just as he was boarding a bus to his next destination. Brought to the police station, he sighed and explained that a fruitless love affair was the reason behind his taking the world for a ride. The next walker who comes to Vijayawada will have his blisters carefully examined before he gets anything.

SEX MIX

■ Women are sometimes at the receiving end of telephone calls which are not exactly *comme il faut*. The immediate reaction of most women to such harassment is to slam the phone down. So the romeo at one end of the line in Delhi was pleasantly surprised when the sweet voice at the other end responded to his cooings with passionate billings. The conversation went something like this:

"You have a beautiful voice!"
"I'm a very beautiful person!"
"I want to meet you."
"I want to meet you, too."
"Where?"
"There's a nice cosy restaurant near X market."
"I'll be there."
"Cootchie-Koo"

The romeo put on his flashiest polyester, high heeled boots, did up his hair and went. He found a sweet young thing sitting at a table and sat down next to her. A few whispered exchanges took place. Queerly, the young thing wasn't showing him her face and it was only after a lot of coaxing that she did only to reveal the delicate feature of a young man with an obvious predilection for the similar sex.

DRIVER'S ARK

■ It never rains but it pours —in Bombay, at least. On one day last fortnight, Bombay nearly drowned in a deluge which lasted only three hours but seemed for those three hours to have brought back the miserably wet days of the flood. One of the places which looked like the great Salt Lake was a road in Colaba which was in eight feet of water. The only vehicle which could make it through was the sturdy BEST double-decker bus.

One gentleman wanted to get to the other side of Colaba and couldn't. His car had vanished under water and he was not willing to get his clothes wet by wading—swimming rather—through the lake. Half an hour of fretting and waiting for a BEST bus went by and he got increasingly desperate—it appeared that he had to get to a religious ceremony somewhere—and could be seen bobbing in and out of his house window at 11 a.m. However, he exited in triumph and soggy waders-by grinned in acknowledgement of a masterstroke—he was curled up in a plastic tub, floated for 200 yards or so to (comparatively) dry land, when he handed the tub to a shopkeeper and went on his way, whistling.

Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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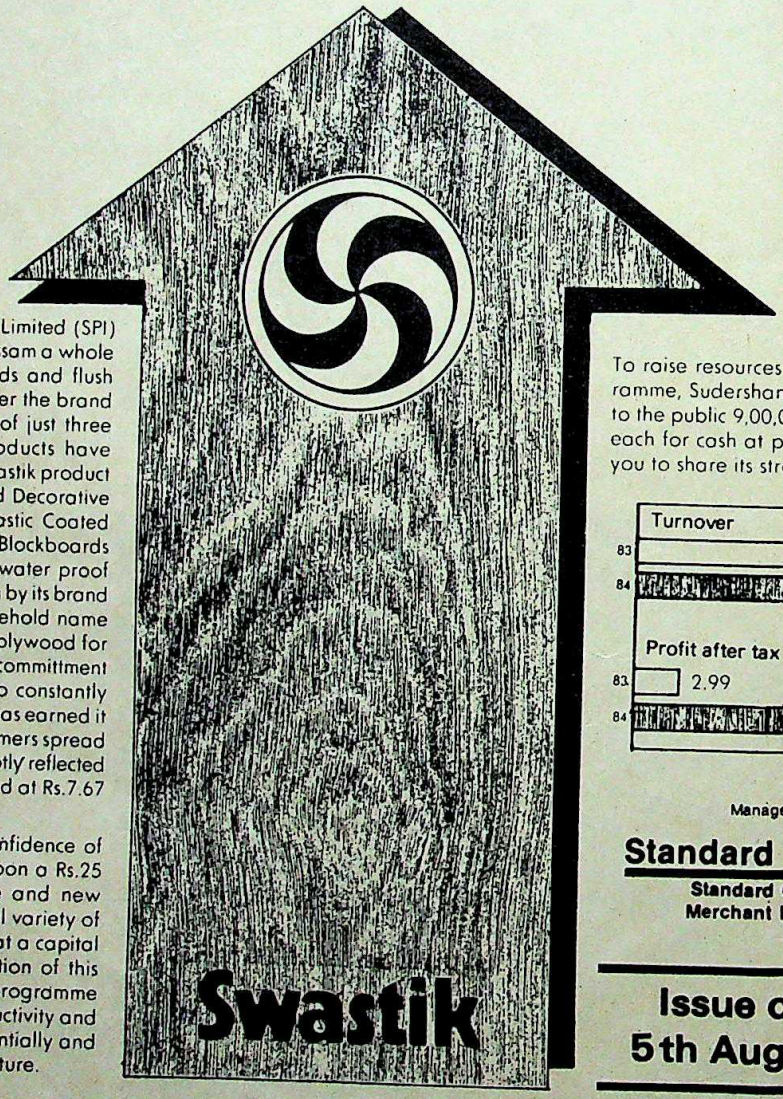
SUDERSHAN PLYWOOD

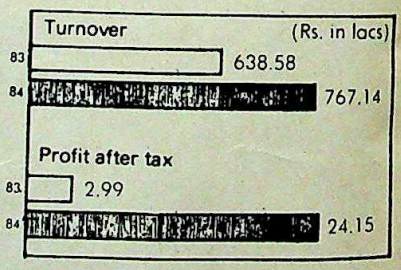
The profile of a market leader



Sudershan Plywood Industries Limited (SPI) manufactures at its factory in Assam a whole range of plywood, blockboards and flush doors which are marketed under the brand name of SWASTIK. In a span of just three years, SWASTIK Plywood products have emerged as market leaders. Swastik product range includes Commercial and Decorative Plywood, Marine Plywood, Plastic Coated Marine Plywood, Flush Doors, Blockboards etc. The marine grade boiling water proof plywood, more popularly known by its brand name **Swastik Kitply** is a household name today and is the largest selling plywood for furniture and panel inserts. SPI's committment to quality and an endeavour to constantly innovate new product features has earned it the trust and confidence of customers spread throughout the country. A fact aptly reflected in SPI's growing sales which stood at Rs.7.67 crores in 1984.

Encouraged by this supreme confidence of its customers SPI now embark upon a Rs.25 lac modernisation programme and new facilities to manufacture a special variety of plywood "**Compreg Plywood**" at a capital outlay of Rs.75 lacs. On completion of this modernisation and expansion programme in the next six months, SPI's productivity and profitability shall increase substantially and it is thus poised for an exciting future.

To raise resources for this investment programme, Sudershan Plywood will soon issue to the public 9,00,000 Equity Shares of Rs.10 each for cash at par — an opportunity for you to share its strong future.



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Standard Chartered

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Issue opens on 5th August, 1985

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Swastik — choice of millions

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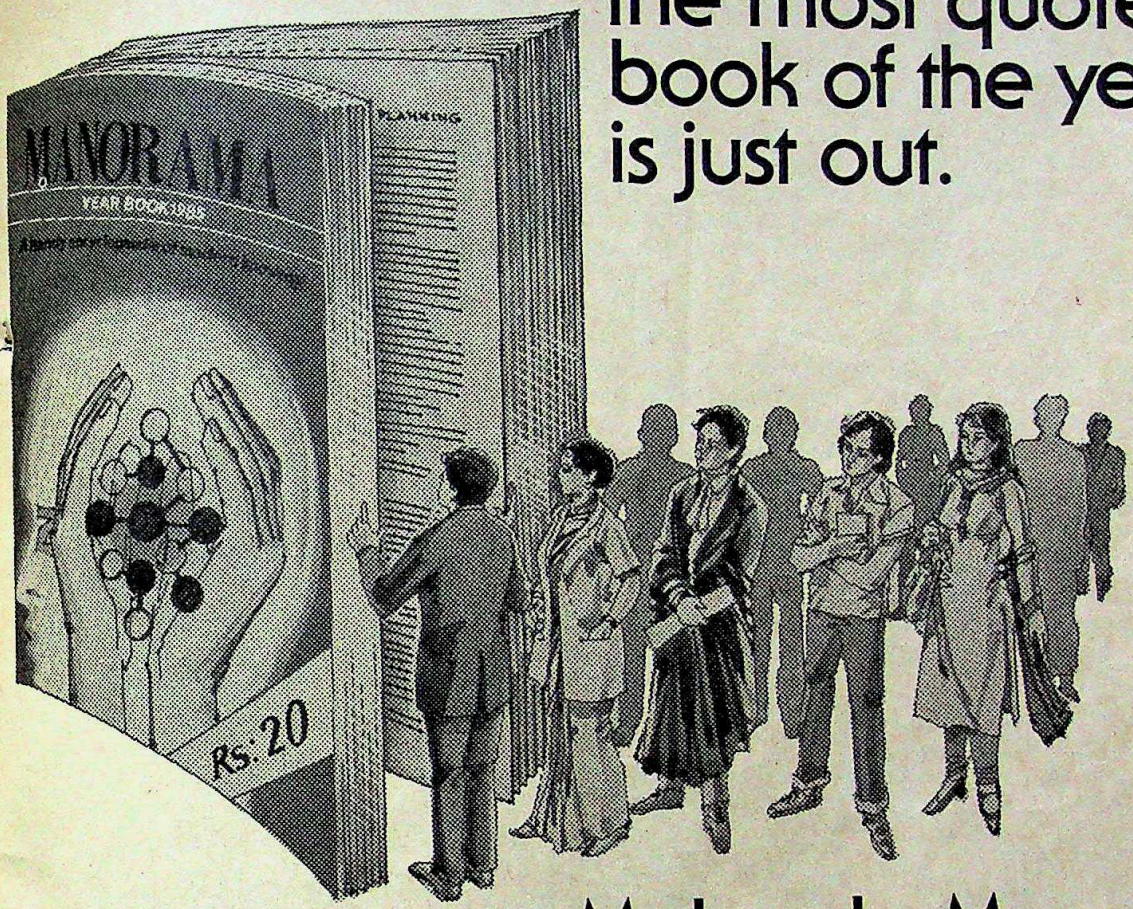
The most consulted, the most quoted book of the year is just out.



Malayala Manorama Year Book 1985.

Do you know that the Mein Yuch sacred tree in Taiwan is about to celebrate its 4129th birthday?

Or that the lowly banana packs twice as many calories as an apple?

Or that, in about 200 years from now, man would've burnt up the entire coal reserves of the world?

Into its 20th year of publication, Manorama Year Book 1985 brings you a world of information. 864 pages of information that's relevant, revealing, authentic — and sometimes, amusing.

On topics of national and international importance.

Like history, medicine, agriculture, energy, transportation, astronomy, banking, population, education, sports, ecology, wildlife. And many, many others.

An invaluable reference book for government and private organisations, libraries, students appearing for competitive exams, writers and professionals. In fact, for anyone who needs instant, up-to-date information.

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Malayala Manorama
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Malayala Manorama Year Book 1985. The book of the year you can't do without.

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AIR-INDIA

Unravelling the Clues

EVEN three weeks later, the images continued their haunting reminder of a tragedy that is still to be fully absorbed. At Bombay's Nariman Point, the famous hoarding fronting the Air-India headquarters was for once blank. But it was an emptiness more poignantly eloquent than a thousand words. Fringed with a black border, the hoarding spelled out the enormity of the disaster more starkly than a funeral flame. On the airline's subdued flights, crew members sported black bands as a symbol of mourning for not just their colleagues and the 329 passengers aboard the ill-fated *Emperor Kanishka* that had plunged into the Atlantic, but for an event that had sent reverberations of horror and outrage around the world.

And now, 6,000 ft under the choppy and freezing waters of the Atlantic off the Irish coast, the final moments of that tragedy were being played out as submersible robots finally succeeded last week in recovering what could provide the only clues as to what took place 31,000 ft above the sea when the giant 747 vanished from radar screens—the crucial black box or flight data recorder (FDR) and the cockpit voice recorder (CVR). The salvage operation, unprecedented in history in terms of the depth at which the recorders were recovered, climaxed an intensive preliminary investigation by the Government of India team which returned from Cork (Ireland) with what officials admit is a fair idea of the probable cause of the crash. But it appears a definitive verdict on the crash will have to await analysis of the tapes from the FDR (the virtually indestructible device known as the 'black box' though its actual colour is a phosphorescent orange), and the CVR. For nearly 20 days after the crash, all attention remained focused on the four-nation, five-ship operation to recover these recorders. Hopefully, once the black box and CVR tapes are decoded, Air-India will know what exactly happened at 0714 hours GMT on June 23 to make *Kanishka* suddenly disappear from the radar screens which were tracking the last leg of its flight from Montreal to London. The two devices were flown to Bombay as foreign experts doubted if they would reveal anything; a power failure would have put both recorders on the blink.

Even before the recovery of the recorders, the Government team which returned from Cork had, for all intents and purposes, ruled out structural failure and loss of engine power as probable causes of the crash. This is said to have been stated in the report submitted to the prime minister on the crash by Dr S.S. Sidhu, secretary of the Civil Aviation Ministry, who headed the team which included the director-general of civil aviation, explosives and anti-terrorism experts from the overseas intelligence agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), two doctors, one of whom specialises in aviation medicine, the air safety directors of the Civil Aviation Department, Air-India and Indian Airlines as well as some Indian Navy personnel.

Under ICAO rules when a plane crashes outside territorial waters, as happened in this case, the responsibility for conducting the preliminary inquiry devolves upon the country in which the plane was registered. This was the reason that the Sidhu team rushed to Cork. The team investigated three options. One, that the plane lost power in all its engines and ditched in the sea. Two, that there was massive structural failure such as a wing breaking off and this caused the 747 to tumble out of the sky and three, that a bomb explosion on board the aircraft or an unexplained pilot error brought *Kanishka* down. From the state of the wreckage recovered and the injuries on the bodies, the investigators appear to have ruled out the first two options. Said one of the investigators: "If either of this had happened it would still have given the cockpit crew enough time to give a May Day call to inform Shannon control tower that the plane was in trouble." An Air-India pilot endorsed this view saying, "Something went seriously wrong in the cockpit to prevent the two pilots from broadcasting a distress signal. Whatever happened, happened very fast." The tape recording of the Shannon airport control tower's efforts to raise *Kanishka* on the radio provides evidence that something had gone seriously wrong in the cockpit. The tape was sent for spectrum analysis to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough (England) which has reportedly given the opinion that the crackling sounds on the tape indicated things been flung around the cabin. There was also a human scream in the background. The radio telephone in the *Kanishka* cockpit had either been accidentally left on or was switched on and it broadcast these sounds to Shannon air traffic control. These sounds, the investigators are virtually certain, followed an explosion in the aircraft.

This apart, the injuries to the

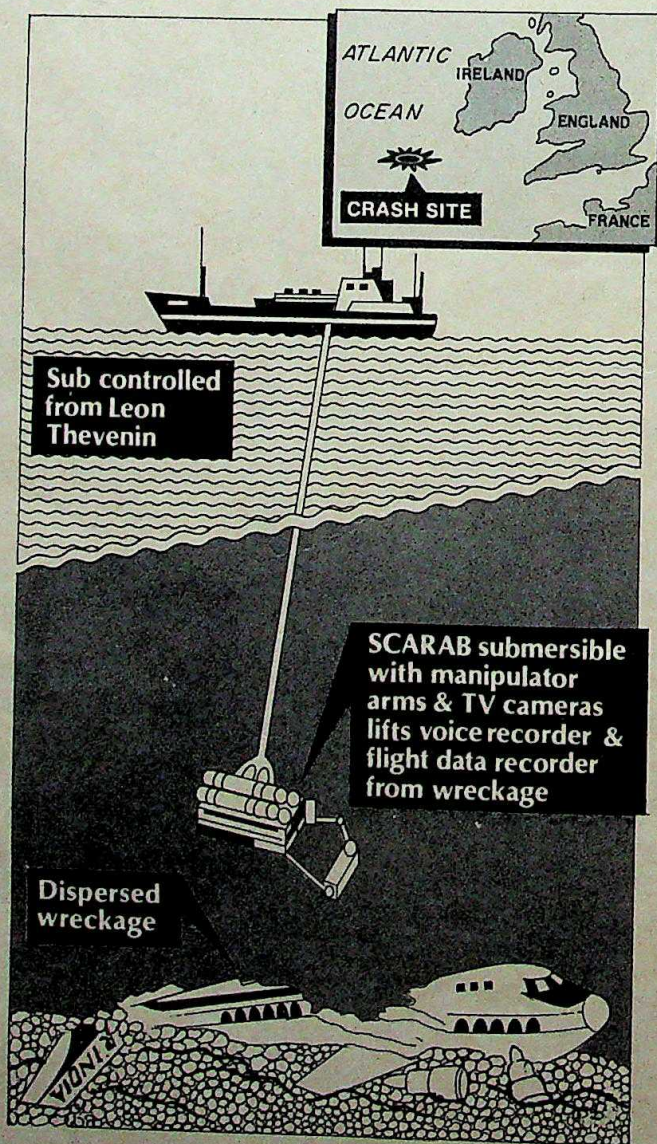

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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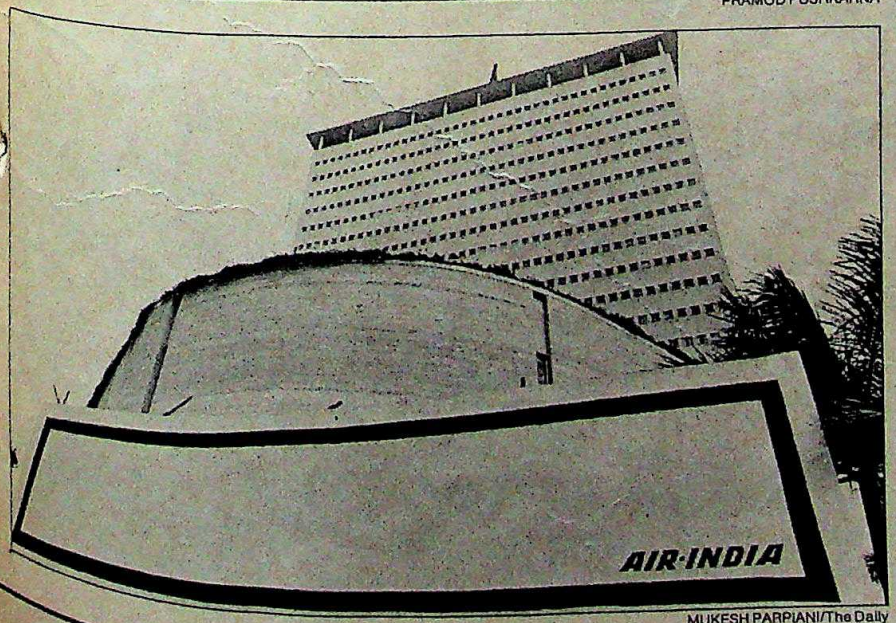
131 bodies recovered in the first 10 days indicated that the victims had died from the effects of decompression. If the plane had lost power and ditched in the sea the victims would have died of drowning. The post-mortem reports mention that some of the bodies had flailing injuries, which investigators said were caused by falling from a great height. Strangely, however, none of the recovered bodies had any burn marks and this initially led the team to question the bomb explosion theory. But then the alternate view was taken that the bodies found may not have been in the immediate vicinity of the explosion and hence escaped primary burn injuries. They had sustained the flailing injuries in the fall after the explosion.

The plane obviously did not break up at its cruising height of 31,000 ft as this would have dispersed the wreckage over a much larger area. In all probability the explosion-crippled 747 plunged out of control towards the sea and started breaking up only during the fall as a result of gravitational forces. This also explains the eyewitness report of the Panamanian ship captain who said he saw an explosion in the rear of the plane before it plunged into the sea. What the captain probably saw was the plane breaking up as it fell. The explosion had obviously occurred at 31,000 ft, the altitude transmitted to the Shannon control tower by the plane's transponder, a height at which no one at sea-level could possibly have seen an explosion.

The Air-India Managing Director Captain D. Bose, himself a 747 pilot, said: "There is a distinct possibility it was a bomb. From the analysis I have made it appears there was an explosion in the air so some of the bodies suffered from decompression injuries. I personally would like to discount structural failure. Human error too is ruled out. I cannot see how at 31,000 ft human error could cause a crash without (there being) any warning." Bose was the only one among senior Air-India and Civil Aviation Ministry officials to use the word 'bomb'. The others, including Minister Ashok Gehlot, would only say that there had been an explosion in the aircraft, with no way of knowing for sure what had caused the explosion. Gehlot said the salvage operation may not have met with such spectacular success had the Indian Government dithered about hiring the French ship 'Leon Thevenin' at $ 20,000 (Rs 2.5 lakh) a day to hunt for the black box. According to Gehlot the actual cost of chartering the ship was $ 50,000 (Rs 6.25 lakh) a day but the French had agreed to hire it out at operating cost for the black box salvage operation. Gehlot and Sidhu expressed India's thanks to the Irish, French and British authorities for their unstinting help after the crash.

Bhasin's colleagues paying tribute and (below) black-bordered hoarding

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



MUKESH PARPIANI/The Daily

Though the two recorders have been recovered, the salvage ships continue to haul up more wreckage. Reports from Cork said that one ship had located and photographed a large section of the plane fuselage, nine metres long with eight rows of seats. This section is from the middle part of the cabin. One large section of a wing and a section of the tail have also been recovered.

But the fuller story of what happened to the *Kanishka* will be told by the FDR, a tiny computer which monitors every system on the plane, the actions of the pilots and the response from the aircraft, the search for which has cost some $ 20,000 a day. The black box tapes will, for instance, tell investigators whether or not the *Kanishka's* engines were functioning at the time of the crash. The tapes will also reveal how, if at all, the pilots responded to whatever emergency occurred aboard the plane.

The CVR may also help provide clues about what really went wrong in the cockpit. Any comment or exclamation by one or more members of cockpit crew would have been recorded by the CVR along with all the other conversation in the cockpit in the final 30 minutes of flight 182. But if the pilots were knocked out or incapacitated in a flash—a distinct possibility since it is known they did not even send out a distress signal—then the CVR is unlikely to uncover the mystery of the sounds recorded at the Shannon air traffic control.

For Air-India this has proved a costly crash because of the loss of crucial personnel. The insurers, Lloyds of London, will

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have to pay out between $ 130 and $ 150 million (Rs 150 crore to 180 crore) to Air-India to replace the lost aircraft and in compensation to the next of kin of those who died. Captain Bose said the next of kin would get up to $ 50,000 (Rs 6 lakh) each, and the prospect of such large compensation has already created conflicting claims: the airline's Delhi office is confronted with at least two such cases already.

The process of identifying the bodies has been an agonising one. With only 131 bodies recovered, few of those who made the trip to Cork were able to identify the remains of their relatives. S.V. Rao, who accompanied his younger brother Dr Sankurathri to identify the bodies of Mrs Manjari Sankurathri and her two children, said the Irish authorities were very careful not to expose all relatives who reached Cork to the trauma of viewing the decomposed bodies fished out of the sea.

The Cork police first asked him and his brother to write out a complete description of the three crash victims: their physical features, distinguishing marks, deformities, clothes they were wearing and so on. Then they were shown facsimile photographs of the bodies recovered and told to pick out any which looked like their relatives. While they were doing this some local nuns sat with them and consoled them. The Indian ambassador to Ireland was present at the hospital with Air-India representatives on both the days they spent there. The police brought out the post-mortem reports of the bodies matching the photos they had selected. These reports gave the age, physical description and build of the victims and Rao discovered that the bodies recovered did

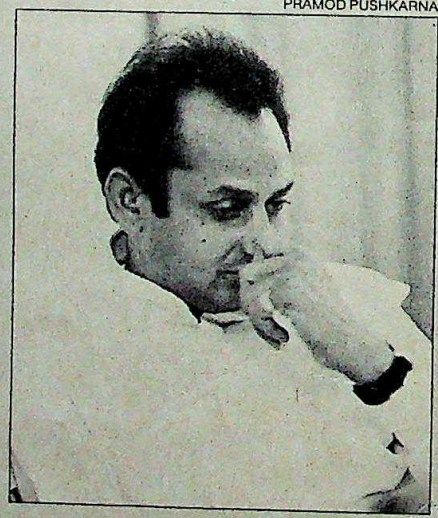
SECURITY

Check List

AFTER the *Kanishka* crash, Air-India and Indian Airlines have been pestered by bomb hoaxes, which have resulted in extensive bomb checks, off-loading of baggage and passengers and inevitable delays. On one day last fortnight, Indian Airlines reported three false bomb alarms on its Delhi-Srinagar flights and a Delhi-Bombay flight. Delhi airport alone has been getting over one bomb-on-board call a day. The airport authorities and the airlines are complaining, the former because of the work involved in clearing a full plane-load of passengers after a bomb call; on an average it takes four hours to check and clear a 747 passenger load after a bomb call. This means bringing the suspect aircraft back to the ground with the fire brigade and emergency services standing by, emptying it of passengers, towing the aircraft to a remote corner of the airport, and checking it for hidden explosives. All the baggage is also unloaded and checked for explosives. Only then are the baggage and passengers put back on the aircraft before it is cleared for take-off. The chaos at the already disorganised airports would be unimaginable if a couple of widebody 747's or airbuses are grounded simultaneously.

Adding to the problem is the carelessness of passengers who leave their baggage lying around unclaimed before or after check-in. When this happens the police cordons off the area, the army's bomb disposal squad arrives on the scene, the suspect bags are gingerly loaded onto a trolley, covered with sandbags and wheeled out to a corner of the airport called the "cooling pit". There the bomb disposal squad carefully opens and inspects the bags for hidden bombs; no bomb has as yet been found but the bomb squad has instructions to defuse or detonate any explosive discovered. In one instance in June, a bag lying unclaimed in the domestic lounge was taken to the cooling pit and the lock blown open. The moment this happened a fountain of 100-rupee currency notes erupted out of the bag and officials of the International Airports Authority of India (IAAI), Indian Airlines and the police had to spend several hours in the hot sun counting the notes. The bounty exceeded Rs 14 lakh.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Ashok Gehlot: promising strict security

Air-India Managing Director Captain D. Bose announced at a press conference last fortnight in Delhi that AI has reviewed its security procedures and reiterated instructions to all station managers and on-line stations to tighten up, get all transit baggage checked and identified by passengers. "We have stopped carrying any perishables," he said, even though this would mean substantial loss to an airline that earns a lot of money ferrying vegetables, fruit, meat and other perishables to the Gulf. But the biggest step was the order to check all transit baggage. Nobody knew what this meant till all baggage on an Air France jet transiting through Bombay was off-loaded and checked before being loaded on again. "If this is done with all flights passing through Indian airports there is going to be chaos. Every flight through India will be delayed," an airline official complained. A few days later, however, it became known that the checking of the transiting Air France flight was a misunderstanding on the part of the airport authorities or an over-reaction to the orders to check transit baggage. Transit baggage is the baggage of a passenger who is changing airlines but has booked his bags to his destination. It is automatically taken off the plane by the first airline and sent off to be loaded on to the second. Till recently, such baggage was not checked but now orders have been issued to put it through an X-ray scanner. This poses no problem at an airport like Delhi, which has X-ray machines to scan checked-in baggage. Bombay airport does not, and passengers are asked to open all the bags for a security inspection prior to check-in. These bags are then wheeled on to the tarmac where they have to be personally identified by the passengers before they are loaded on to the aircraft. These additional precautions are aimed at preventing passengers from checking in their suitcases and going home; but in effect they mean passengers have to report for flights even earlier than they used to.

So worried are the authorities about bomb attacks on domestic flights that the Civil Aviation Department has issued a notification prohibiting all non-

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not include Mrs Sankurathri and the two children.

"We asked to see the jewellery found on the bodies, in the hope that that might provide a clue. Since the jewellery they showed us did not tally with what my sister-in-law was wearing when she had boarded the flight, we realised that her body had not been recovered." But the authorities asked them to come back the next day and go through the photographs again in case they had any doubts. With no bodies to take back home, Rao and his brother drove to a little bay about 50 miles from Cork; this was the nearest point to the crash site. They offered flowers and brought back some of the water to pour into a holy river in India.

Not surprisingly, the destruction of the *Kanishka* with so many people on board has resulted in a spate of cancellations on Air-India flights, including some foreign tour groups who booked flights several months in advance. An Air-India official admitted that there had already been a 5 per cent fall in bookings. A major Air-India agent in London said he alone had refunded 120 tickets in the first week after the crash. Bookings from London to India were already down 30 per cent he said. But the airline doesn't expect this to be a long-term effect. Public memory is short and if the flight recorder and cockpit voice recorder show conclusively that the airline and its crew were not responsible, no stigma need attach to Air-India's reputation. Even so, if it is clear that the *Kanishka* went down because of a terrorist bomb, then Air-India will have its hands full in coping with this new menace for a long time to come.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

scheduled flights in north India without the department's prior permission. This means that all the chief ministers who used to keep flying in and out of the capital will now have to depend on regular Indian Airlines flights, unless they are willing to file flight plans with the Civil Aviation Department well in advance, every time they fly. This new restriction came to light when the doyen of Indian aviation, J.R.D. Tata, sought permission to land in Delhi in the Tata industries aircraft. He was informed that no unscheduled flight could land at Delhi without prior clearance from the Civil Aviation Department. These restrictions on non-scheduled air operations in North India may be an over-reaction but they are understandable in the immediate aftermath of the *Kanishka* tragedy.

That apart, all access by visitors to even the visitors' galleries of the domestic and international terminals has been stopped. Visitors have to crowd around the exit and jostle with other visitors to catch a glimpse of the passengers they have come to receive. Civil Aviation Minister Ashok Singh Gehlot said instructions had also been issued not to allow reception parties on to the tarmac to receive VIP's. Tarmac receptions would be permitted only for VVIP's. Gehlot said he had written to chief ministers of all states to cooperate in restricting access to the tarmac. "I also appeal to VIP's not to object when they are subjected to physical search and frisking at airports. How does the security staff at the airport know who is a VIP and who is not?" Gehlot also emphasised that security at the airports would not be allowed to suffer for want of funds.

The security cover of the main airports in India is said to be better today than it was four years ago, when saboteurs at Bombay's Santa Cruz airport succeeded in cutting the control cables of the Air-India Boeing 707 which was to take the then prime minister Indira Gandhi on an international tour. Subsequent investigations brought to light the miserable state of security at Bombay airport. The periphery wall was found to have been breached in several places by the nearby *jhuggi* dwellers, who use to troop in through the breached wall every day to use the grassy strip along the runway as a lavatory. Every time the airport authorities mended the wall, the *jhuggi* dwellers broke it down again, and, till the sabotage episode, the airport managers learned to live with this state of affairs. In fact one of these *jhuggi* women was lured into a parked Air-India plane and raped by two airline loaders. The woman later committed suicide.

IAAI has now posted armed sentries in pillboxes along the airport perimeter. A former senior official of the IAAI however complained that even though sentries had been posted at the pillboxes, they sat around playing cards with fire brigade personnel. "All the security steps you take are not going to work as long as you can bribe someone on the airport staff to plant a gun or bomb on board an aircraft," said a veteran pilot and aviation industry leader. And there are hundreds of low-paid persons at airports—loaders, catering staff, baggage handlers, sweepers and policemen—who are vulnerable to bribes. "As long as this possibility exists you cannot have foolproof security," the pilot scoffed. Moreover these loaders, cleaners and catering staff go in and out of the plane any number of times without anyone checking what they are bringing on board. AI pilots operating regularly to the Gulf say that every time a loader, cleaner or traffic assistant comes on board an aircraft at any major airport in the Gulf, he is checked at the foot of the stairs by airport security to see what he is bringing aboard. This happens irrespective of the number of trips the staff man makes. At Indian airports, on the other hand, this does not happen. Senior pilots operating a flight are physically frisked every time they come aboard, by airport security and additionally by the Air-India security staff, and they are not happy about it. A pilot said this meant that the airline was prepared to take the word of a security assistant with a year or two of experience compared to that of a pilot who had several years' experience flying aircraft worth crores of rupees. Gehlot too conceded that the new security measures would not amount to much unless all categories of staff at the airports realised their responsibility. He said this realisation had dawned after the *Kanishka* tragedy and the unions of airport workers had assured the managing directors of the two airlines of cooperation.

On their part, the cabin crew complain about the slackness of real security measures. In a letter to the Air-India management, the President of the Cabin Crew Association, Mohanbir Singh, has demanded adequate safety measures at some airports. He complained that even a week after the *Kanishka* crash, attempts were made to put unaccompanied baggage on board an Air-India flight at Bangkok and the flight was delayed for several hours after the cabin crew refused to accept the baggage. Air-India cabin crew were also threatened at Frankfurt and some bombs were found at the Heathrow Penta hotel were they were staying. This complaint only highlights the uncertainty and fear that crew members and passengers on Air-India and Indian Airlines flights will have to live with, as long as these flag carriers remain on the hit list of foreign-based or home-grown terrorists.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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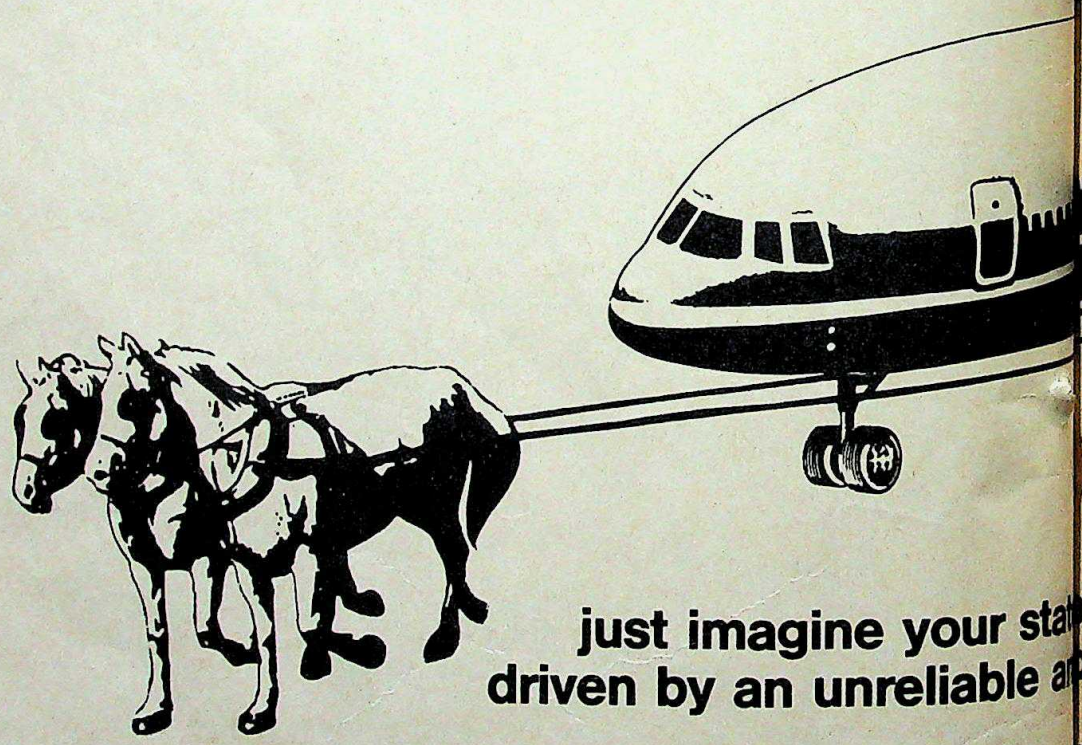

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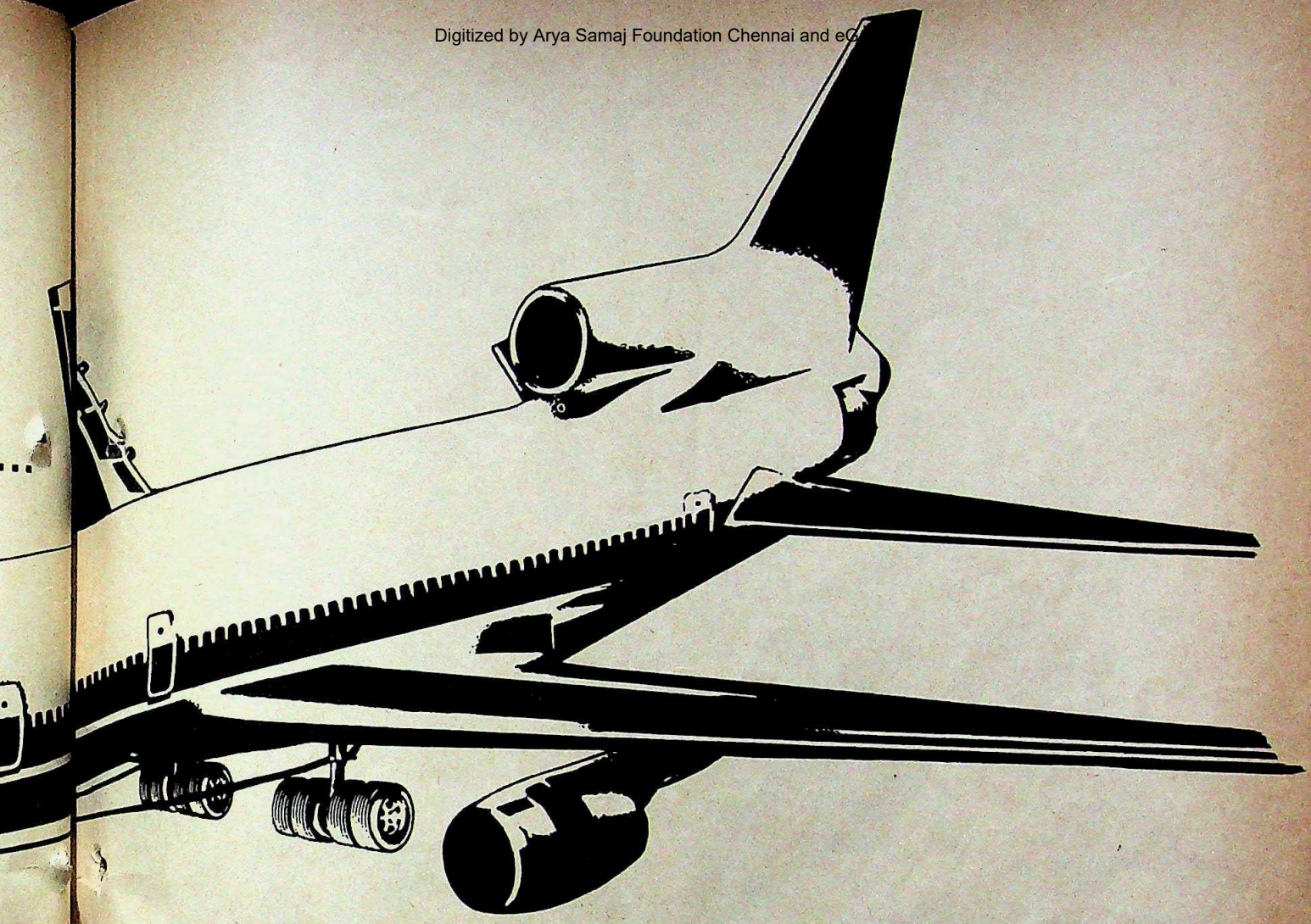

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HARYANA

Bhajan at Bay

AS GUJARAT'S Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki packed his bags last fortnight, all eyes turned to the Congress(I) chief minister who has lasted the longest—Haryana's unflappable Bhajan Lal. Ever since his infamous defection to the Congress(I) in 1979, the chief minister has successfully thwarted all efforts to remove him; even those attempted when Mrs Gandhi was alive. But Bhajan Lal, who has survived five assassination plots and countless other efforts by his political opponents to remove him, could have been anything but happy with the turn of events last week.

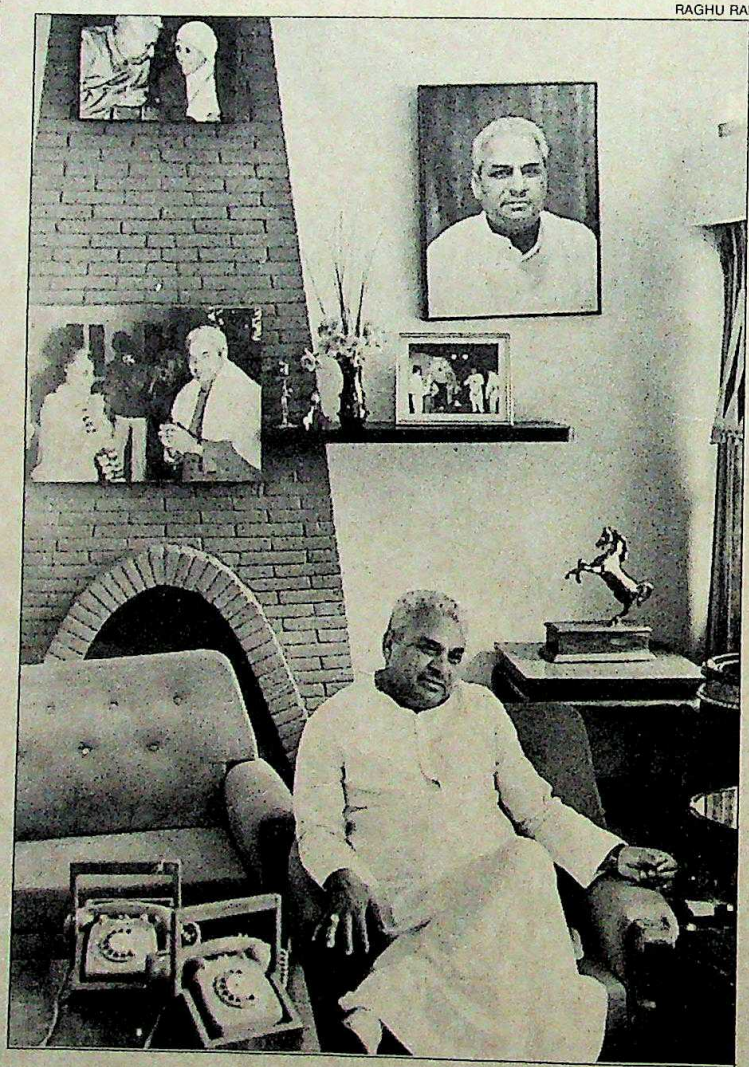
Shedding their mutual antagonism in a rare show of togetherness, the country's usually squabbling opposition groups came together to collectively present a memorandum to the prime minister containing specific allegations of corruption against the chief minister. The 45-page well-documented memorandum—drawn largely from an expose in *The Statesman*—specifically listed various acts of omission and commission of Bhajan Lal. The allegations acquired a respectability not so far gained by any of the countless allegations that Bhajan Lal has faced in the past when Rajiv Gandhi asked him to give his replies in writing. Rajiv's move was nothing revolutionary—asking for a reply is standard procedure for such allegations—but there was little doubt that his attitude to the memorandum was different from that of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

For one, he sent for a copy of the memo one day ahead of the meeting with the delegation of opposition leaders. When opposition leaders, led by Charan Singh, trooped in to meet him, the prime minister showed none of the impatience of Mrs Gandhi. So much so that even as staunch a critic as Lok Dal leader H.N. Bahuguna, who was in the delegation, expressed satisfaction, saying that although they would be required to substantiate their charges, "in any case, he told us he would meet us again before he took any decision on the matter."

The list of signatories to the memorandum was impressive: besides 20 sitting MLA's, it had been signed by Charan Singh and Bahuguna of the Lok Dal, L.K. Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party and leaders of the CPI, CPI(M), RSP and the National Conference. The opposition leaders made it abundantly clear that they were taking the memorandum seriously were not willing to wait indefinitely for the prime minister to act. Bahuguna told a press conference that they regarded this as a test case for the prime minister's much-vaunted 'Mr Clean' image. If no proceedings were initiated against him, the opposition leaders would proceed to take the case to court.

Opposition leaders point out that the Santhanam Committee has clearly laid down that specific allegations against a minister in the states or in the Centre should be looked into by an agency whose findings will command respect. Nor would the Opposition confine itself to taking legal recourse. Bahuguna flew to Chandigarh to address a meeting of opposition parties and plans were being drawn up for street agitations.

RAGHU RAI



Bhajan Lal: protesting innocence

The memorandum is in two parts. The first deals with the industrial 'empire' of Bhajan Lal's son-in-law Anoop Bishnoi and the second lists specific allegations against the chief minister himself. The first part gives specific details about the role of nationalised banks and financial institutions in helping Bhajan Lal's son-in-law prosper. Bishnoi's family, the memorandum points out, did not own any property or land in Haryana before Anoop married Bhajan Lal's daughter. Bhupinder Bishnoi, Anoop's father, had started two industries, both of which later folded up. But after marriage, business flourished and Anoop came to own more than 20 firms, most of them located in Hissar.

The memorandum alleges that public financial institutions played no small part in this about-turn of fortunes, by extending liberal credit and assistance. The Haryana State Industrial Development Corporation lent Rs 2.40 crore, the Haryana Financial Corporation Rs 1.52 crore in several stages (clearing one application the same day it was received), the Punjab and Sind Bank (PSB) Rs 1 crore, the New Bank of India Rs 25 lakh and Punjab National Bank Rs 65 lakh in three letters of credit.

Loans and credit facilities are, of course, routine, but the Opposition memorandum alleges that in making these adv-

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ances, the agencies concerned threw caution and rules to the winds. For instance, Bhanu Industries, the Bishnois' parent firm, purchased 92 kanals of land in Satrod Khan village on the Hissar-Delhi road (Registered sale deed number 1137 dated 27.5.81) for a sum of Rs 5.63 lakh. The land was mortgaged to the Haryana Financial Corporation on September 19, 1981, for a loan of Rs 30 lakh. Two years later, 32 kanals of the same plot of land was mortgaged by another Bishnoi firm, Bhanu Steels, for a loan of Rs 30 lakh from the same corporation.

Seemingly, even nationalised banks were pressurised into giving loans. The New Bank of India is said to have given loans of Rs 25 lakh to Bhanu Industries without mortgaging property and only on the basis of personal guarantees by some of the directors, who included Bhajan Lal's son-in-law and daughter. INDIA TODAY has also learnt that the PSB loan had violated two banking norms. A no-objection certificate had not been sought from the Punjab National Bank, their existing bankers. More important, the size of the loan was so big that it lowered the bank's statutory liquidity ratio below the stipulated minimum.

The second part of the memorandum, which deals with Bhajan Lal himself, refers to cases filed against him in the past: a criminal intimidation charge on August 28-1958, a charge of committing dacoity on May 5, 1969, a case of moral turpitude on November 3, 1962, and so on. Other charges include a reference to alleged land-grabbing by his nephew Ugar Sen (worth Rs 50 lakh) from the Fatehbad municipal committee and scandal of a bus-stop at Hissar (worth Rs 2 crore), among others.

Some of the allegations had been made on the floor of the Assembly and contemptuously dismissed by Bhajan Lal as unsubstantiated. He has filed a case against *The Statesman* and last fortnight he dismissed the memorandum as a "political conspiracy" to defame him because he had vanquished the opposition in the recent by-elections. A confident Bhajan Lal told INDIA TODAY: "These are old accusations that have been answered before. I have asked the Opposition to institute an inquiry headed by them to probe each and every one of the charges.." As for his son-in-law, Bhajan Lal clearly thinks that his educational background speaks for itself: management from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad; a degree from Delhi University's St. Stephen's College and, most important of all, schooling from the Doon School in Dehra Dun.

Politicians in Haryana point out that Bhajan Lal may find it easier to defend himself. As one said, politicians in Haryana are known to settle old scores by filing complaints at police stations which only pliant policemen ordinarily entertain. According to officials who enquire into such allegations, they first discreetly look for a prima facie case and then see if it can be proved in a court of law.

Bhajan Lal was quick to dispel the impression that Delhi had started the countdown immediately after Solanki's exit. But he was compelled to meet the prime minister a few days after the memorandum was submitted and the Bhajan Lal that met newsmen later at Delhi's Haryana Bhavan did not have his usual dismissive laugh for all slanderous accusations.

> **"The Opposition's memorandum acquired respectability when Rajiv Gandhi asked Bhajan Lal to give his replies in writing."**

Observers also point out that politically too the Congress(I) high command might seize this opportunity to cut Bhajan Lal down to size. Ever since he dramatically defected to the Congress(I) in 1979 his stock has been in the ascendant. In 1982 he again showed great—if opportunistic—skill in forming a government even though the Congress(I) won only 41 seats in the 90-member House. In the years since, he has consolidated his position even more. Dissidence has been contained by liberal perks: Haryana has 21 ministers, one chief parliamentary secretary, one parliamentary secretary and several chairmen of state corporations who thrive on government munificence.

The Opposition has been steadily demoralised, its most grevious blow coming in the Lok Sabha polls when all its stalwarts, including Devi Lal, were humbled. There are not many Congress(I) chief ministers who are politically as secure—and that too without much help from Delhi. On the contrary, it is Delhi which has used Bhajan Lal as an effective foil to the belligerence of the Akalis in Punjab. It would clearly be folly to underestimate the durable Lal, memorandum or no memorandum, though it will undoubtedly tax his wily skills should any of the dirt in the allegations manage to stick.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

PUNJAB

Playing Safe

THE APPOINTMENT of retired major-general Rajinder Singh Sparrow as president of the PCC(I) may have come as a surprise to most politicians in the state, but not because it was necessarily a shrewd move loaded with significance. On the contrary, Sparrow, 74, is a political lightweight, and in his first utterances indicated that he knew precisely why he was there. Said he: "I am a soldier and shall go by the orders of my commander."

He got the job when at least two others, former foreign minister Swaran Singh and former Lok Sabha speaker G.S. Dhillon, turned it down. Clearly, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who had just sacked Santokh Singh Randhawa from the job for alleged links with terrorists, wasn't too keen to get himself embroiled in any of the faction fighting that marks the state unit of the party. Sparrow belongs to no faction, and will be better placed to carry out Central directives and oversee some semblance of discipline in the party. With an experienced and astute governor in Arjun Singh, the high command obviously did not need a political heavyweight but a loyal implementor of the Centre's directives and policies. Said a senior Congress(I) leader: "Congress(I) issues are decided in the prime minister's house. What is a big leader needed for now? After the elections someone will emerge."

Sparrow, the fifth chief of the PCC(I) in quick succession, rode a crest of popularity in the aftermath of the 1965 war with Pakistan when he commanded a division in action in the western sector. He didn't join the Congress till 1970 and his tenure in the Lok Sabha, to which he was elected in 1980, has yet to match the glitter of his military career.

In New Delhi, many political observers were of the opinion Sparrow's selection meant that elections in Punjab were a long way away. Had elections been an immediate priority, the argument went, the man chosen to head the party's organisational unit would have been an experienced leader, not necessarily a conduit for the high command. That political acumen or seniority was not the main consideration in the selection of Sparrow was clear from the speeches made at his installation ceremony in

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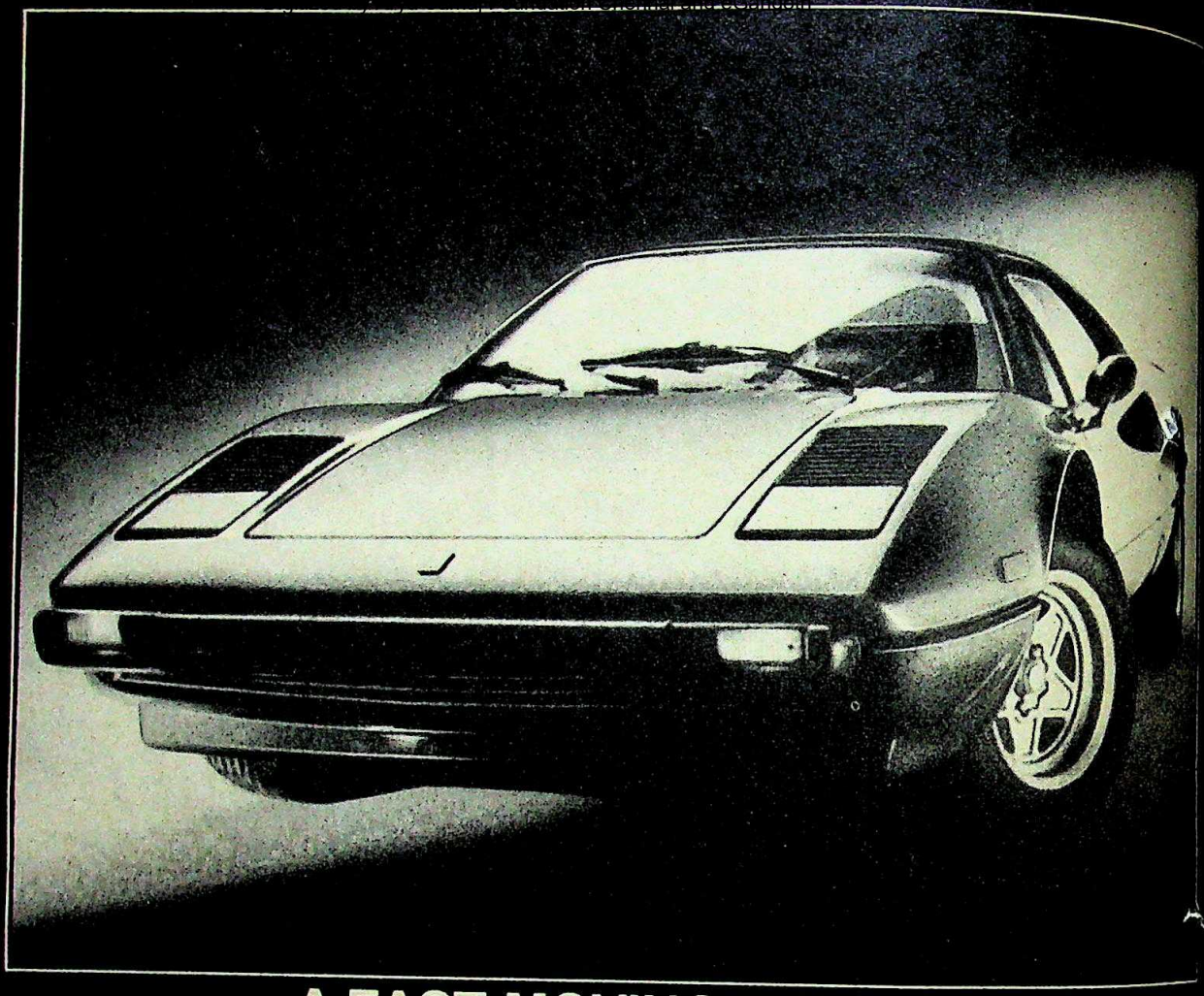

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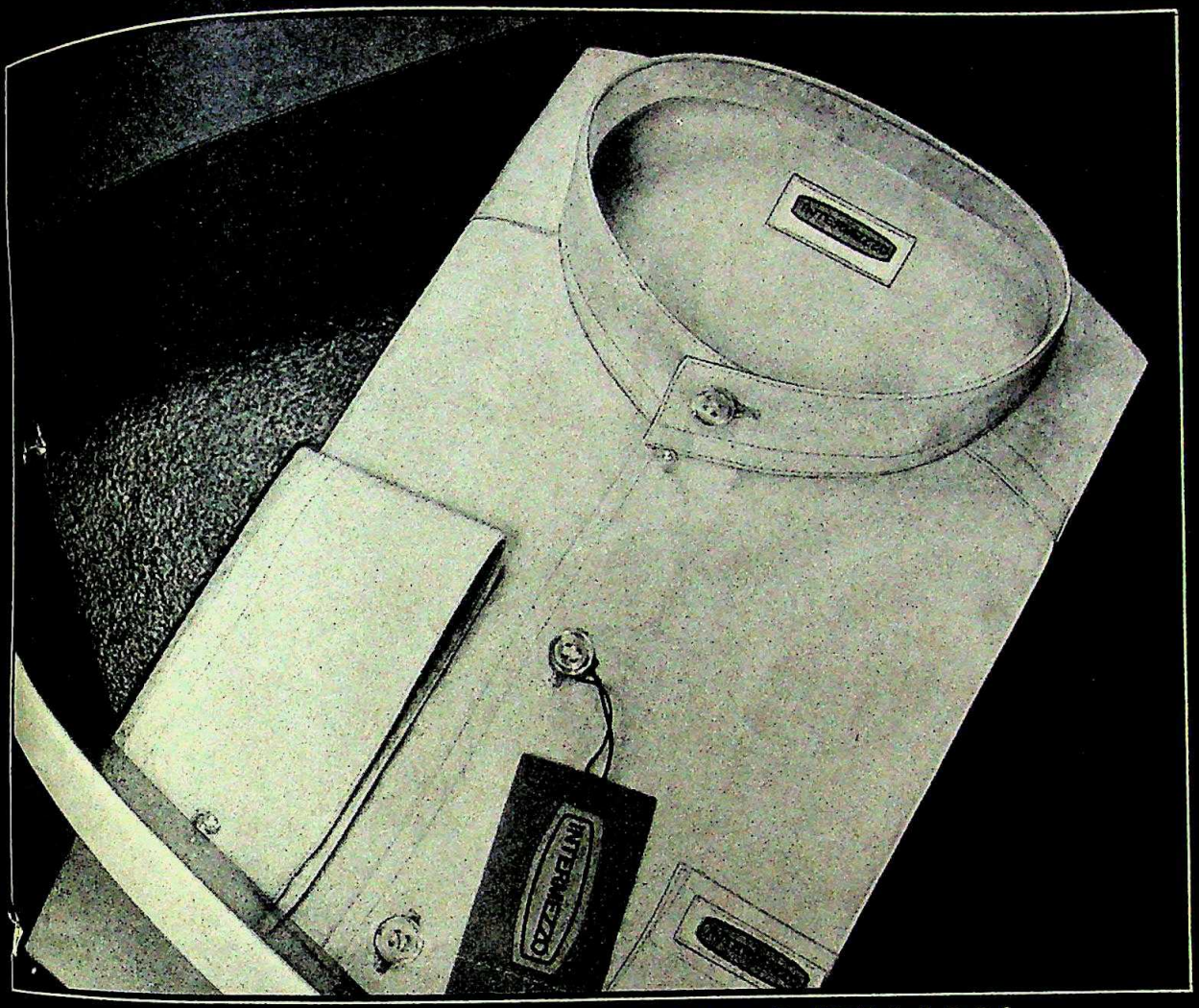

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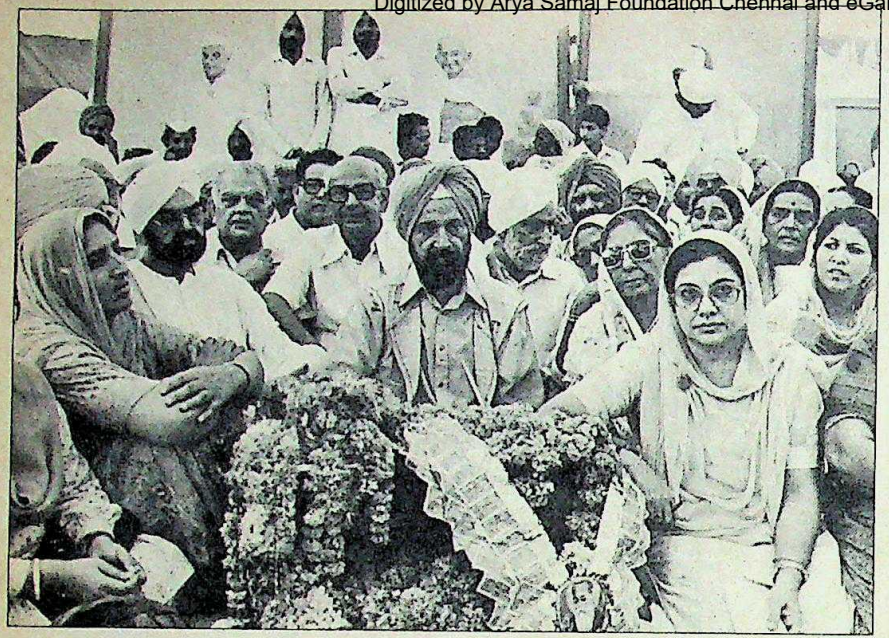

HARI OM GULATI

Sparrow (centre) at his installation and; (right) Longowal: guarded response

Chandigarh and his utterances at a news conference. Except for declaring that he was for a live and let live policy and that the Congress(I) would "take a conciliatory approach in dealing with any other political party" the rest, he said, would be decided by the party high command.

The usually loquacious and amiable Sparrow parried questions on the Anandpur Sahib resolution, the Akalis and other Punjab issues by saying: "All this has been chewed upon for so long. What comment can I make?" However, he did say Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal was on the right track.

But his task will by no means be easy. Even 10 days after his appointment he had not been able to choose his general secretaries or the PCC(I) executive. The party has not had any elections for the last six years. His predecessor Randhawa's rivals, Punjab Youth Congress president Partap Singh Bajwa and his father Satnam Singh Bajwa, who was removed from the Gurdaspur district presidentship, are not yet down and out, and choosing their successors will be a formidable job. Present indication are that Jagmeet Singh Brar, an able administrator who last fortnight quit his post as member of the Punjab State Electricity Board, might take over as Youth Congress president.

Punjab is moving towards normalcy at yet another level. The Centre has taken the decision to release a large number of arrested Sikhs and thus create a climate of conciliation in the state. Virtually every day, Governor Arjun Singh releases lists of those freed from the jails. By the end of last fortnight he had ordered freed 1,215 out of a total of around 4,000 detenus. Most newspapers have applauded his action. "It is a step, a definite step in the right direction but more such steps should follow to ease the situation and restore confidence among the Sikhs," said Brijinder Singh, editor of the leading Punjabi daily *Ajit*.

THE AKALI response was a bit more guarded. "The Government is making out it has done everything to create the atmosphere for negotiations but we consider it only a small step," said former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal. Longowal and SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra were skeptical. "We are yet to be convinced of the sincerity and honesty of Rajiv Gandhi's Government. All hurdles must be removed before we can start negotiations," said Longowal and went on to suggest that the Government could do this by scrapping the special courts, withdrawing all anti-terrorist laws, treating army deserters with compassion, releasing all Sikhs in detention and ordering a judicial inquiry into riots in the wake of Mrs Gandhi's assassination.

In spite of the discordant notes, the Government's measures are having the healing impact they were expected to. Indeed, privately, many Akalis concede as much, pointing specially to the removal of the ban on the All India Sikh Students Federation and economic concessions already announced such as the construction of the Thein dam.

The prime minister's conciliatory statement at his press conference in Delhi last fortnight that Longowal "had taken positive steps and deserves our congratulations" was reciprocated by Longowal when he told INDIA TODAY: "Let Rajiv come out with other positive steps. We shall not lack response as nobody is more serious than us to bring peace and honour back to Punjab."

Another positive sign is that Longowal has emerged stronger vis-a-vis the rival Akali Dal and in relation to Badal and Tohra in his own party. He was authorised to take action against six Badal supporters who had gone over to the rival Akali Dal, including former minister Atma Singh, Ujagar Singh Sekhon, P.S. Majitha and R.S. Brahmpura.

Expecting a further easing of the situation and more positive steps by the Government, the Akali Dal (Longowal) leadership has given the Centre some breathing space by postponing decisions on the next phase of its morcha to August 20. The present thaw in the situation could prove very valuable if properly utilised. Otherwise the terrorists might once again seek to dispel the hope that is now again becoming evident in the state. Last fortnight's attempt on the life of Ludhiana Senior Superintendent of Police A.P. Pandey was ominous. It was believed to have been masterminded by a known terrorist gang led by Sukhdev Singh "Babbar". Things may be looking up in Punjab but the spectre of terrorism casts a long shadow. —GOBIND THUKRAL

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UTTAR PRADESH

Transfer Row

POLITICAL meddling raises no eyebrows in Uttar Pradesh's corridors of power but this time there is a new twist to an old tale. State Director-General of Police(DGP) J.N. Chaturvedi has raised the hackles of his political and administrative bosses by directing his subordinates to ignore any transfer and posting orders not routed through him. His directive not only laid bare the blatant disregard of guidelines governing such transfers but also the selective basis on which it operates.

"No instructions regarding transfers and postings from above will be complied with without my prior clearance."

J.N. CHATURVEDI
director-general of police

Chaturvedi's demi-official circular dated February 14, 1985, would never have come to light but for a probe ordered by the state Government into the delay in implementation of transfer orders to officers of the rank of deputy inspector general and below. The officers had not moved to their new postings because of the DGP's circular. "It stated: "Instances have come to my notice in which instructions were reviewed directly by the officers at different levels in the office of the chief minister, state minister for home and the Home Department regarding transfers and postings ... These directions were complied with with no reference to this office. It is therefore laid down that no instruction of the above-mentioned type will be complied with without my prior clearance."

The circular created a flap. An angry Bhola Nath Tiwari, state home secretary, said: "He should not have issued such orders. After all we are functioning in a democratic set-up. We, the Government, have to look after the interest of several departments while the DGP is just in charge of one department." But the directive was indicative of Chaturvedi's concern over what he saw as encroachment on his powers. Time and again the Government had either ignored his recommendations for transfer or reversed them. For instance:

► Harbhajan Singh was posted as senior superintendent in the CID and later in the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) by the DGP but the state Government cancelled these orders and put him in charge of Ghazipur district;

► D.K. Singh, deputy superintendent of Ghaziabad, was, also moved to the CID but went back after some politicians intervened;

► Ram Ujagar Singh, station house officer, Gonda, got his transfer orders to the CID reversed by the chief minister's office;

► Vishnu Mishra, a junior inspector in a Lucknow police station, was sent to Jhansi by the DGP but the chief minister's office again intervened and stayed it;

► Hari Shankar Shukla, a senior inspector in Lucknow, had his transfer orders cancelled thrice by the chief minister's office.

It was obvious that politicians were behind these decisions but what irritated Chaturvedi was the fact that officers of the rank of deputy superintendent and below were being moved around like chess pieces while he helplessly looked on. The fact that over 2,500 of 3,000-odd transfers were in the police department alone was another measure of his desperation. And the justifications cited—"public interest" and "in the interest of the administration"—fooled no one.

Leaders of the ruling party admitted that it is only through police officers at the local level that they are able to influence voters, harass their opponents and collect donations for elections and party purposes. Said one Congress(I) MLA: "If a thana in charge is not with you, you cannot do any politics in your area. It is these officials on whom we depend for our political career and we have to protect them."

The manoeuvrings by politicians are also beginning to affect the officers of the Indian Police Service (IPS) cadre. Over 27 of the 52 SP's and SSP's were moved out in less than 18 months when the rules require them to serve a two to three-year term. DIG Ram Asrey, SSP I.P. Bhatnagar and SP Brijender Singh were transferred out of Gorakhpur district without even completing a year. The fact that officers were instrumental in curbing the eastern Uttar Pradesh mafia is a pointer to the reason behind their removal.

The axe also fell on officers in the dacoit-infested districts of Etah, Mainpuri, Etawah and Jalaun. It is a fact that only those who figure in the ruling clique's good books get their quota of transfers. This was illustrated in the case of S.K. Tripathi, SSP Deoria, who was charged with failing to handle the crime problem in his district by nine MLA's led by Raj Mangal Pandey, MP. The DGP transferred him on the basis of their evidence but his orders were stayed by the Home Department and Tripathi stayed put.

"We have to look after the interest of several departments while the DGP is just in charge of one department."

BHOLA NATH TIWARI
state home secretary

Said B.P. Bharati, MLA from Deoria: "We have met the DGP several times with all the facts against Tripathi but we know that so long as he has the protection of the Home Department he cannot be transferred. We are going to take up this matter at the highest level."

But, as a senior IPS officer says: "We go to a district, admit our children in schools and try to study the life of the land. But before we can do so, we are sent off to other districts. At present its impact is not visible but it will be known after few months."

That statement is warning enough of the folly behind such motivated transfers but then, to politicians only the immediate matters.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with S. PREMI in Lucknow

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DDA

Shaky Foundations

ONE OF the largest and most controversial monoliths in the capital, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), is currently in the throes of a shake-up of a kind it has rarely experienced in its last 20 tumultuous years. One of the organisation's chief engineers, R.A. Khemani, has been suspended and, in an unprecedented move, the Government has decided to institute a criminal case against him. The Lt-Governor of Delhi, M.M.K. Wali, is reportedly preparing a list of engineers in the organisation with a dubious record. The corridors of Vikas Minar, the DDA's high-rise headquarters, are thick with speculation that once Wali locates this 'deadwood', the engineers will be given a golden handshake and sent home. DDA's minister-in-charge, Union Works and Housing Minister Abdul Ghafoor, is determined that this time the organisation's Augean stables will be cleaned. As a determined-looking Ghafoor told INDIA TODAY: "This (corruption in the DDA) is an old malaise and it will take time to set things right."

The DDA, charged with the major responsibility of developing real estate in the capital, has—not without reason—long been the capital's favourite whipping boy. But, last fortnight, for the first time, it came under fire right from the top. Speaking at the first meeting of the National Capital Board, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched into an unexpected burst of criticism of the DDA. Addressing the Union minister directly, Rajiv said: "Ghafoorji, things cannot go on like this ....the DDA was building houses but forgot to lay the foundation....merely blaming the junior engineers will not solve the problem."

After this ticking-off in public, the minister had no choice but to wield the big axe. The result was Khemani's suspension—the first time in DDA's history that a chief engineer had been suspended. Officially, no reason was given for the drastic action and a shaken Khemani was still waiting for the formal charge sheet from the Government. But the reasons had already received enough publicity in the media: a remarkably shoddy piece of workmanship by DDA engineers who built 140 three-storeyed houses in Kishangarh without a foundation which could meet the safety norms.

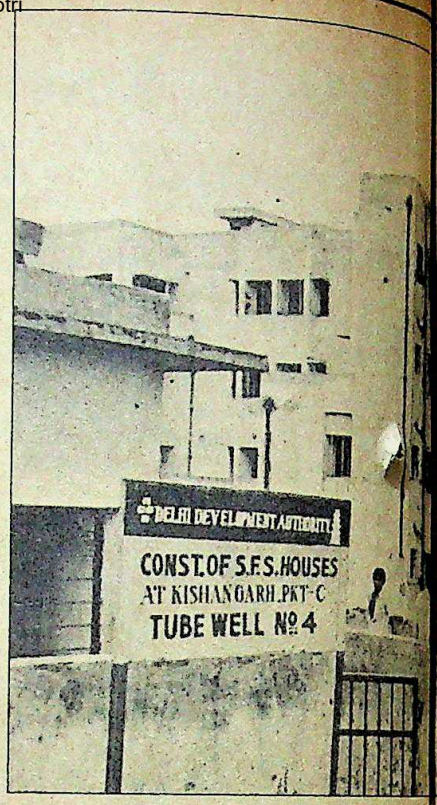
Ironically enough, the foundation scandal, which the prime minister seemed to have pulled out of his hat, had actually been uncovered by Khemani's own engineers one-and-a-half years earlier. And it was not as if nothing had happened subsequently. Khemani had recommended action against junior engineers involved and had also suggested that the concerned contractors be blacklisted. Meanwhile, discussions had been held with engineering dons from the Indian Institute of Technology on how to salvage the flats, which were never actually allotted. Remedial efforts were already underway when the prime minister suddenly raked up the controversy.

Not without reason. Typically, nobody in the DDA had yet been made to pay for the lapses. Khemani's file recommending disciplinary action had moved from one desultory official in the DDA to another and had finally landed on Ghafoor's table on May 23. DDA's Vice-Chairman Prem Kumar, who had come to know of this lapse last December, defends the lack of action against the defaulters by arguing that there was nothing to suggest that the chief engineer had recommended strong action.

RAGHU RAI

Abdul Ghafoor: forced to act

The dithering on the disciplinary action was typical of the way the DDA works. Admits Prem Kumar: "We have to evolve a new culture and we are working towards it." But clearly not everybody in the DDA is willing to be introspective. Many DDA officials argue that chief engineers cannot be held responsible for such lapses. Most DDA contracts are signed by executive engineers and, says Khemani, "superintending engineers and chief engineers are (merely) administrative officers."



While the suspension of Khemani may be technically questionable, there is no denying the fact that the DDA was in need of a "strong dose of bitter medicine," as one official puts it. Said Ghafoor: "If engineers can take commissions (we all know they do) they can't turn around and say they can't be held responsible for the lapses." The idea clearly is to throw a scare into officials who had their hands in the till. If so, it was rather long in coming. With a budget of around Rs 1 crore a day the DDA is a money-spinner for corrupt officials. It is believed that commissions for officials who manipulate contracts and housing allotments range from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000.

But it was not the size of the commissions alone which was shocking. In an exhaustive report in August 1984, Parliament's Estimates Committee noted that DDA officials accused of corruption and graft by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had been let off in an inexplicable manner. The CBI had investigated 21 cases of serious irregularities involving as many as 73 officials and departmental action had been recommended in four

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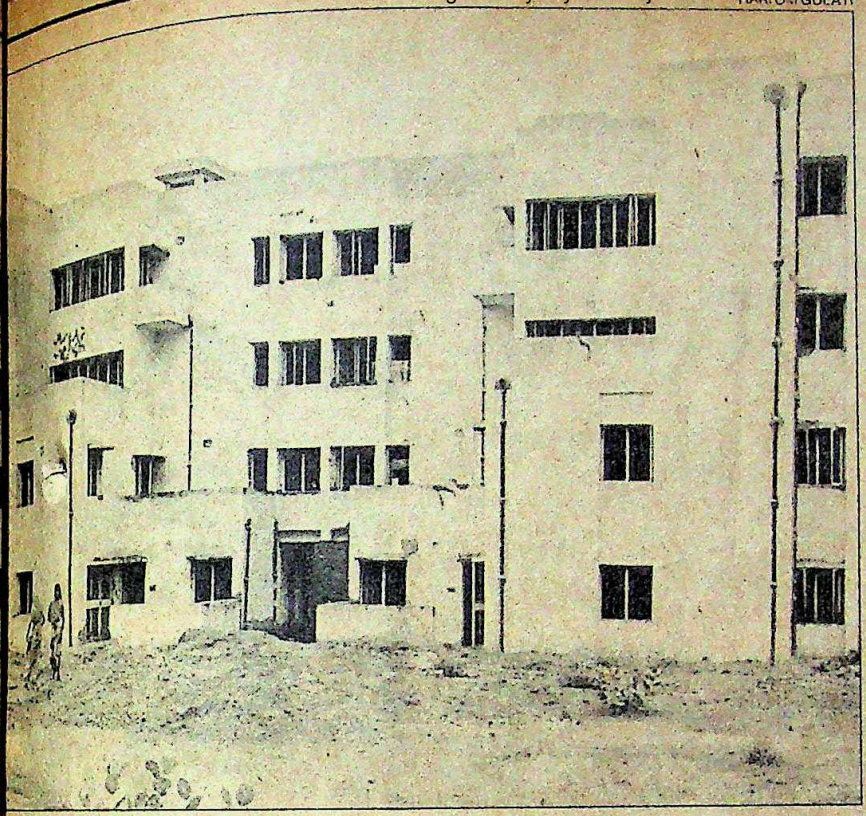

RAMESH GULATI

The Kishangarh colony: lethal lapses

cases involving 32 DDA officials. The lapses mainly pertained to making "bogus entries" of earth filling in the resettlement colony of Trilokpuri, home for thousands of lower class government employees. "Bogus certificates" for non-existent trips made by trucks had also found mention in the report.

To the utter surprise of the committee, the DDA—in consultation with the Vigilance Commission—had dropped all the cases. This action had prompted the parliamentarians to observe: "The committee is unable to appreciate why instead of taking deterrent action against erring officials the DDA dropped the cases. The fact that the Vigilance Commission too has acquiesced to this course is unfortunate.... If officials who after thorough investigation are found guilty and let off in this manner, it will encourage rather than contain corruption in the DDA."

The Estimates Committee, whose report has not received the attention it deserves, was constrained to quote the 'glaring example' of an Additional Chief Engineer, R.S. Jindal, whose suspension was revoked by the Central Government in December on the excuse that it was not clear who had suspended him, the vice-chairman or the Lt-Governor. Even the Vigilance Commission, had called for strong action against Jindal in a case involving the Delhi Municipal Corporation, but the DDA had sought closure of the case. Even after the commission threatened to include the case in its annual report, the DDA sat pat. "What is more amazing," said the report, "even after the Lt.-Governor had passed orders for major penalty proceedings against him, the DDA refused to do so pleading that the officer had represented against the proceedings."

BHAWAN SINGH

Prem Kumar: on the defensive

Such is the extent of corruption in the DDA that it is hardly surprising that competition is intense among engineers posted in the four different zones for allotment of housing construction contracts. Of course, the casualty in the process is the quality of construction which is unformly substandard. "Of the 60,000 houses built by the DDA in the past four years, 20,000 are substandard and 2,000 are unfit for occupation," alleged Madanlal Khurana, BJP leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Metropolitan Council.

While both Ghafoor and Prem Kumar have promised a thorough overhaul of the organisation, the fact is in the last six months that both have been at the helm, they did not initiate any house cleaning, till the prime minister spoke out. In fact, many doubt Kumar's credibility, considering that there are serious allegations that he had a hand in the out-of-turn allotment of houses when, in fact, he can do that only on compassionate grounds. Kumar has strongly denied any wrongdoing and has pointed out that he and the Lt-Governor have made only 145 out-of-turn "exchanges" where those already allotted accommodation wanted to shift elsewhere. As for another allegation, that VIP's like Arun Nehru, Union minister of state for power, was allowed to shift to a place of his choice, Kumar claimed this was simply because Nehru argued it would be difficult to live in a top-storey apartment block without a lift.

Kumar told INDIA TODAY: "I went with Mr Nehru to his house and realised that he had to pant to climb three floors." Other officials have also denied that residents of west Delhi DDA flats were allowed to shift to the more exclusive DDA colonies in south Delhi. But the very fact that allegations involving top officials were gaining currency was reason enough for Ghafoor to get things moving. He has invited the Tata Consultancy Service to suggest certain changes in the working of the DDA so that the organisation can hold senior officials responsible for their actions. "As things stand," says Ghafoor, "the DDA vice-chairman is responsible for everything. We will introduce decentralisation so that power is transferred to others. We also plan to introduce double entry system so that there is a separate entry of the contracts signed with the builder. This will ensure that venal engineers do not change contracts to suit the needs of their pockets. Also we want to take the help of chartered accountants in evolving a better accounting system."

While these measures are still in the pipeline, the response so far has not been very indicative of a change for the better in the DDA. Commenting on Ghafoor's corrective proposal, one engineer said tongue firmly in cheek: "These are twenty-first century solutions. What corrupt engineers need is the age-old eighteenth century medicine—a kick in the pants."

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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WEST BENGAL

Unsettled Phase

ARE ANY municipal elections so important that if the Congress(I) fails to win them, the PCC(I) chief should think it necessary to submit his resignation? If the city happens to be Calcutta, if the Congress(I) loses to the Left Front and if the the PCC(I) chief happens to be Pranab Mukherjee, then the answer can only be yes. And then a mere civic poll ceases to be of interest and relevance only to the citizens of that state, let alone the city; it grabs major headlines around the country as did the June 30 poll to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation.

The results themselves were dramatic enough: of 141 wards, the Left Front won 70 (the CPI-M getting 49), the Congress (I) 67, the Bharatiya Janata Party two and Independents two. As a matter of fact, the Left Front polled 18,469 votes less than the Congress(I) and to achieve a majority in the municipal council had to take the unprecedented step of admitting an independent councillor, Abdul Khaleque, who had contested against the official Left Front candidate.

The main focus, however, was on the Congress(I) which had hoped, with good reason, to win the elections. In the 1982 assembly elections it had snatched 12 out of 25 seats in the city; in last year's Lok Sabha elections it had won in 114 wards in the city. With this impressive record in a state otherwise dominated by the Marxists, it had this time round pulled out all stops. Apart from throwing political heavyweights, including the popular former Union railway minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury, into the campaign, it did a sharp turnabout and inducted former chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray into the campaign though Ray is not a member of the party. And yet it lost.

Recrimination within the party was not long in coming. Union Law Minister Asoke Sen, who had crossed swords with Mukherjee in the selection of candidates, called the defeat a "debacle" and commented: "Some young party leaders divided the city among themselves and gave nominations at will. Obviously the discerning voters of the city did not vote for those with a bad image. Our paper tigers can roar but cannot win elections." It was clear that Sen, who commands the loyalty of a small group of Congress(I) men led by Priya Ranjan Das Munshi but who has been not allowed much of a say in state politics since Mukherjee took over in April, felt that this was the moment to strike at his opponents within the party.

But Sen had underestimated Mukherjee's political acumen. The very next day, Mukherjee too called a press conference and handed out a four-line written statement. Taking full responsibility for the party's defeat, the statement announced his decision to resign "in conformity with the democratic traditions and culture of the Congress(I)".

Events thereafter moved fast and on predictable lines: his supporters in Calcutta issued statements criticising Sen and urging Mukherjee to take back his resignation; AICC(I) General Secretary in charge of West Bengal, Mrs Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, opined in Delhi that it was unlikely that the resignation would be accepted; and the issue was finally settled in a 22-minute meeting that Mukherjee had with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi where it is believed that he asked Mukherjee not to press his resignation.

Mukherjee had good reason to be satisfied with the turn of events. He is known to be not so keen about pursuing politics in West Bengal where he does not have a political base. For somebody who was once No. 2 in the Union Cabinet, state politics can only be worth his while if the chief ministership is the ultimate prize. With waning Left Front popularity in Bengal and paucity of local talent in the Congress(I), Mukherjee should fancy his chances of getting the pot at the end of the rainbow but for that he would first have to emerge as the number one in the state unit of the party.

With so much at stake, defeat in a crucial poll which the party was expected to win could have turned into a decidedly sticky situation for Mukherjee. But by his dramatic resignation he has clearly turned the situation around in his favour. Sources close to him maintain that he has been promised a free hand by the high command in constituting the district committees. Apart from Sen, all his other

Sen (above) and Mukherjee: trading charges

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Left Front workers celebrate victory: unexpected win

detractors within the party, were compelled to publicly appreciate his good work for the polls, ask him to withdraw his resignation and pledge their unstinted support to him. Said Ghani Khan Chowdhury: "The Congress(I) is not a regimented political party so it is difficult to pin responsibility, but there is little doubt that Pranab worked hard for victory." But perhaps the most intriguing was known Mukherjee supporter Subrata Mukherjee's statement that "it is against the Congress(I) culture for a PCC chief to resign because of an electoral reverse".

Mukherjee had emerged unscathed from the rubble of defeat but the party's image was badly sullied in the public mud-flinging that followed. Reacting to Sen's remarks on the wrong selection of candidates, Mukherjee confined himself to stating that the choice of candidates had "no bearing whatsoever on the results". In an obvious snipe at Sen, he added: "Responsible people should make responsible statements." Privately he was known to blame Sen's garrulousness to his age (74). Subrata Mukherjee was not as inhibited. "Who is Mr Asoke Sen?" he asked, "he was out of the country for the most part of the election." Somen Mitra added that it was "unwise and unethical on Asoke Sen's part to hold specific people responsible for the defeat and make his opinions public". As both Mukherjee and Mitra pointed out, most of the party's candidates labelled antisocials by the media—like Bomb Bishu, Gaalkata Neeloo and China—had won. Mitra feels that it is time that the party high command appreciated their efforts.

There was, similarly, great resentment in state party circles at the last-minute induction of Ray into the campaign. Mukherjee's followers are convinced that the move was aimed at undermining the PCC(I) chief's position. Mukherjee maintained he had decided to accept Ray's offer to help out because "anybody saying 'vote Congress' cannot harm the party". But clearly Mukherjee never entertained great hopes from Ray. "We must remember," he says, "that Ray was the chief minister when the municipal elections were last held and then the Congress had won only 22 seats out of 100." Mukherjee nevertheless arranged for Ray to address meetings but one person who refused to share a public platform with Ray was Ghani Khan Chowdhury. As Ghani Khan Chowdhury told INDIA TODAY: "We don't know who sent him. Pranab did not tell us anything. I thought this (any involvement with him) would cause a controversy so I decided to oppose him."

There was a point in Ghani Khan Chowdhury's complaint of the state unit having been kept in the dark. It was never really clear who had sent him. Mukherjee was quoted as saying that Makhan Lal Fotedar, political aide to the prime minister, had phoned him to accept Ray's offer but Mukherjee denies having said anything to the effect. Arun Nehru, Union minister of state for power and confidant of the prime minister, confounded confusion when he declared that Ray did not have Rajiv's sanction. "This mystery must be solved," said Subrata Mukherjee but there was no solution yet.

What leaders like Subrata Mukherjee, Somen Mitra and Prafulla Kanti Ghosh have been saying in so many words is that the era of *bhadralok* politics in West Bengal is over and the Congress(I) must rely on its grassroots muscle power for survival. Leaders like Sen and Ray to them are anachronisms, at best useless and at worst liabilities. "Why can't Ray do something about our supporters who are being attacked and killed all over the state?" asks Subrata Mukherjee, adding: "We are the only ones who can stand the Left Front's assaults." Pranab Mukherjee does not go quite as far admitted that "the Congress(I) has to be tough to protect itself in the state."

The Congress(I) has also to admit that it had been politically outsmarted by the Left Front. Five years ago, the state Government amended the Calcutta Municipality Act and brought in 41 more wards into the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. These wards—which embrace three assembly constituencies of Jadavpur, Behala and Garden Reach—have been the Front's vote pockets. Their inclusion contributed not a little to the Front's win: they took 29 of these 41 seats. The Congress(I) could derive little consolation from its victory in 56 of the original 100 wards.

There was other evidence as well that the Front would play it very tough. The preparations of the municipal poll voters' list was another case in point. From a 31-lakh-strong list for the Lok Sabha poll six months ago, the list was whittled down to 25 lakh, whereas, as Mukherjee pointed

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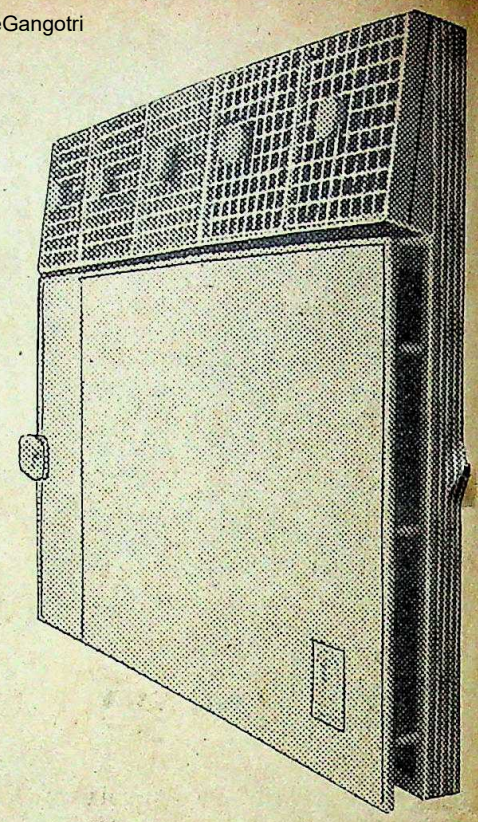

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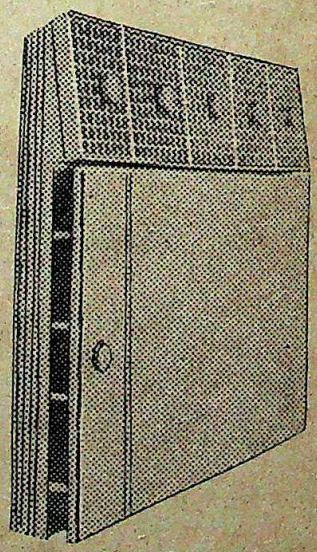

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out, there should have been a 3 per cent increase. Ghani Khan Chowdhury believes that striking off so many voters was the main reason for the party's defeat. How such a large number of names were struck off has not been satisfactorily explained by the Marxists, who are nevertheless secure as the municipal election does not come under the jurisdiction of the Central Election Commission.

Even so, Left Front Chairman Saroj Mukherjee could not but admit that they were "not happy" about the poll results. But just how much winning the polls mattered to the Leftists was demonstrated by their alacrity in admitting Khaleque. Forward Bloc leader Ashok Ghosh had to suffer the embarrassment of issuing a statement welcoming Khaleque's induction and explaining that this had been "done in the larger interests of the Front", which Mukherjee quickly dubbed as "pure political opportunism".

Khaleque's admission afforded the Forward Bloc an opportunity to demand that the post of deputy mayor should be rotated among the three Front constituents, the Communist Party of India, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc. Protracted negotiations followed, each constituent party seeking to maximise its share of key administrative posts in the municipality. A crisis was ultimately averted by the CPI(M)'s decision to allow the other three Front parties to appoint an alderman each, keeping the mayor's post for the Marxist nominee Kamal Bose and allowing the CPI to nominate Moni Sanyal for the deputy mayor's post.

Such wranglings have become so common in the Front that they now do not even cause much concern to the Front leadership. Political observers see points of concern in other areas. The equivocalness of the city vote, the infighting among Congress(I) men with the state unit headed by somebody fighting for his political survival, the increasing street warfare between the Congress(I) and the Front partners—all make for an unsettled phase in West Bengal politics. That is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of what would otherwise have been a routine municipal poll.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE with AJAY KUMAR

LEFT FRONT MINISTERS

Ban Voyage

IN THE days of the Raj, ritual vacation time for Bengal's rulers was summer, a time for retreating to the coolth of Darjeeling or Kalimpong. The state's present-day Marxist rulers, however, seem to prefer the monsoons: a grey, humid period of devastating waterlogging, for vacationing. This year, perhaps to compensate for the gruelling Calcutta civic poll campaign, a number of senior leaders have made a beeline for the temperate climates of Europe.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu left for the UK on July 9 for a three-week tour in the hope of getting, among other things, a bit of rest. On the official side, Basu said he would have to attend a cultural programme being organised by London's Bengali community with the help of the London Greater Council's cultural section.

What has proved galling for Chief Minister Basu is the Government regulation about ministers not being able to leave the country without clearance from New Delhi. Speaking to newsmen on the eve of his departure to the UK, Basu expostulated that Delhi was treating "them like slaves". Basu's own clearance had come just a day before his scheduled departure, while state Industry Minister Professor Nirmal Bose's application for visiting London during his European visit was turned down. "It seems the ministers are not free citizens," remarked an indignant Basu.

Professor Bose, who had included London in his European itinerary in order to hold talks with representatives of the India Investment Centre for prospective investment in West Bengal, was asked to restrict himself to travelling on the continent. "The Centre in its communication to the state Government argued that since

Basu: Centre's "slave"?

Chief Minister Basu was going to London there was no need for the industry minister to follow suit," said a state government official.

"There is nothing inequitous about New Delhi not clearing every minister's application for foreign travel considering that the Government pays for the air fare and daily allowance of approved trips," explained former Union minister Saugata Ray, referring to Bose's European tour, which was basically motivated for attending a conference on political systems in Paris. Professor Bose's connection with socialist bloc political theorists and academics apparently assures him regular visits to the Warsaw Pact countries.

Apart from the chief minister and Bose, the other Left Front ministers abroad last fortnight were the state Finance Minister Dr Ashok Mitra, Education Minister Sambhu Ghosh, and Transport Minister Rabin Mukherjee. Another delegation of Left Front leaders, including former Forward Bloc minister Bhakti Mondal, had left for China.

The departure of so many ministers, including Chief Minister Basu, who is officiating as finance minister, could not have come at a more inopportune time considering that the Centre has decided to stop overdrafts to the states. In the event of a major financial crunch it is not unlikely that the working of the state Government will come to a grinding halt. And it is strange that the critical job of state finances has been largely left to bureaucrats, a breed that the Left Front has never publicly trusted.

All the same, Left Front leaders feel that they might not get another opportunity in the near future to go on a vacation. For, as a leader of the West Bengal Socialist Party pointed out, the CPI(M)'s party congress will be held later this year to flag off an intensive campaign for revamping the party's organisation, image and increase membership. The idea is to shore up front support in preparation for the next assembly polls. Before the really busy months begin, remarked the Socialist Party leader, "some front leaders are doing what Central ministers have always done".

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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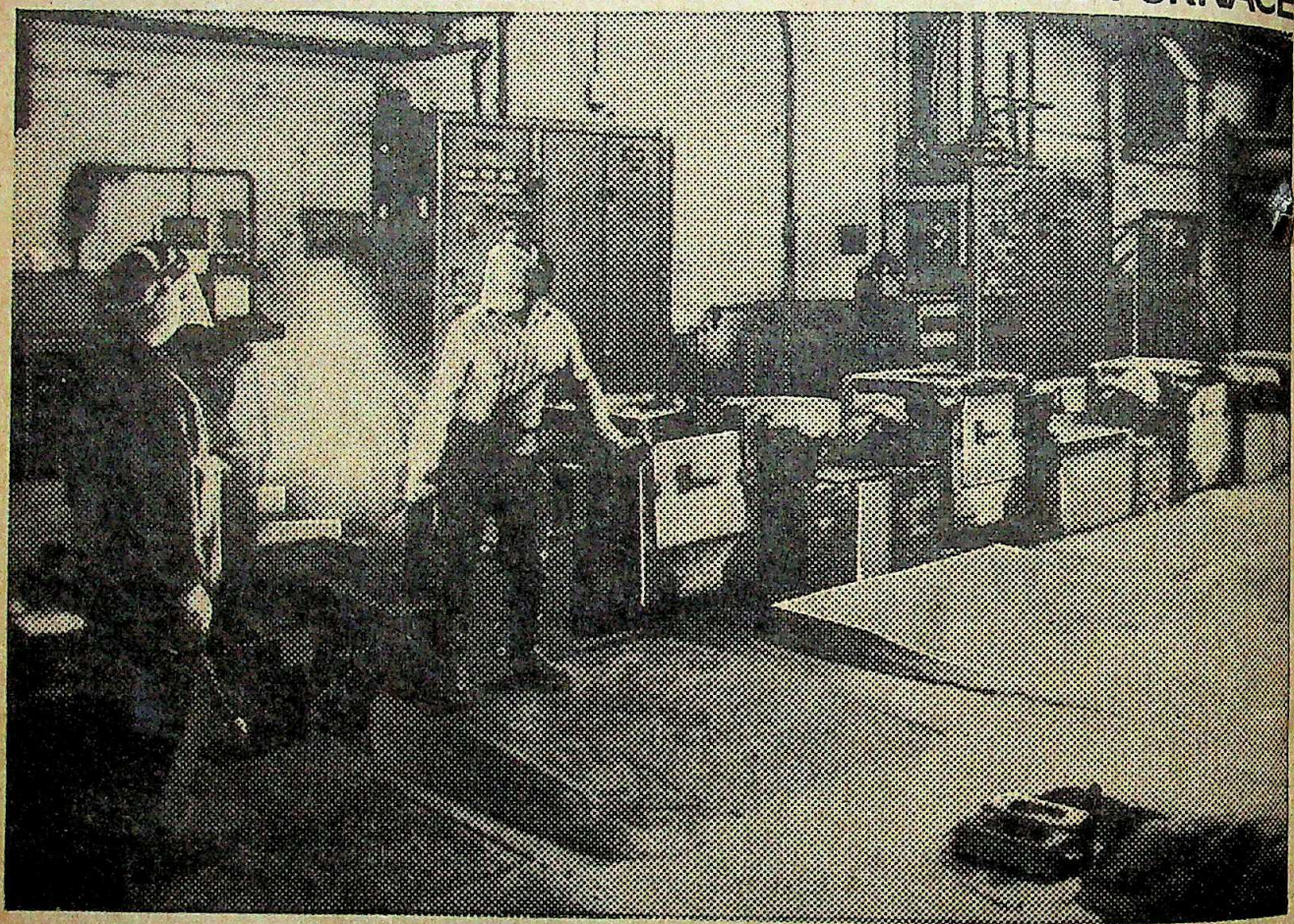

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Prestige Price

When Ghulam Mohammed Shah completed a year in office as chief minister Jammu & Kashmir, the occasion was celebrated with the usual pomp last fortnight. But the festivities may yet prove a bit premature. The Congress(I), which was responsible for putting Shah in power in the first place, has been reviewing its decision to support a government which had faced ten bandhs in as many months and had failed to give the state a stable, effective government. Nor has Shah fulfilled his promise that he would contain Farooq Abdullah's agitations and erode his base in the valley. Farooq has held his flock together and poses a major threat to both Begum Khalida Shah's National Conference (NC-K) and the Congress(I). Admitted a Congress(I) leader: "Shah has not delivered."

The Congress(I)'s decision to review its support for Shah was prompted by the massive response to an opposition-sponsored bandh on July 2, the day of the anniversary. But annoyance with the Shah Government had been reflected earlier at a Congress(I) workers' convention in the valley last month, attended by some 400 participants, where at least 50 members made vitriolic speeches against Shah in the presence of Union Health Minister Mohsina Kidwai and AICC(I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai. Afterwards, state Congress(I) President Mufti Mohammad Sayeed disclosed that the Congress(I) would formally request Shah to take it into confidence on all important policy matters.

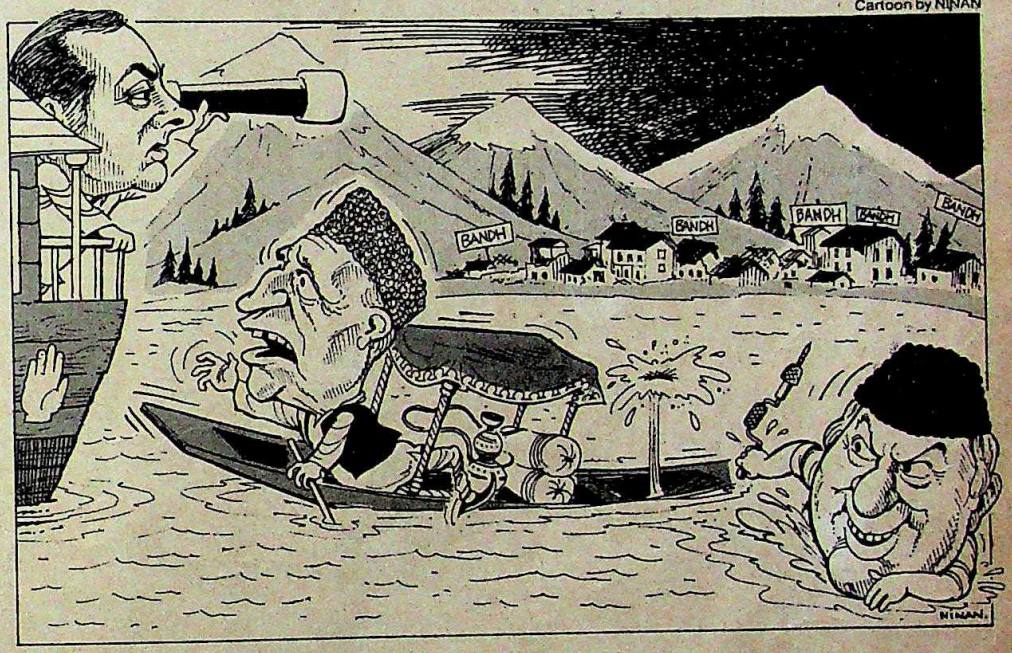
This turn of events was significant, coming as it did not long after the formation of a 12-member coordinating committee of the NC(K) and Congress(I) to sort out problems between the two parties. The Congress(I)'s decision to take an active interest in the state Government came close on the heels of Union Minister of State for Power and party strongman Arun Nehru's visit to the state in the first week of June. An NC(K)-Congress(I) coalition would have created more problems for the Congress(I) than it solved due to basic differences of approach to various policy matters and the sharing of power as well as bring on the stigma of joining a defectors' government. The Congress(I) therefore decided to run the state Government without participating in it directly.

It was soon after Kidwai and Bajpai returned to Delhi that the high command decided to revise its attitude towards the Shah Government. A section of the Central leadership had even earlier proposed a strategy of rapprochement with Farooq because it was felt that political uncertainty in Kashmir could not end without Farooq's involvement. And during the last six months various Central leaders, including the prime minister have met Farooq or his emissaries to try and arrive at some agreement, but to no avail. The Congress(I) is willing to drop Shah and install a new interim chief minister pending elections to the Assembly, but Farooq is not agreeable to this.

Says Farooq: "My top priority is to get this defectors' government out of office. And how can I agree to yet another defector forming a government? Let there be a spell of governor's rule followed by assembly elections. We should follow well established democratic norms." But the Congress(I) is hesitant to grant Farooq's terms, for it is not in a position to dislodge Farooq from the valley where he holds undisputed sway. Moreover by restoring Farooq to the chief ministership it would be admitting its mistake in propping up Shah.

Farooq meanwhile has kept his promise that he would fight the Shah Government only through peaceful means. But last fortnight it seemed his patience was wearing thin when he threatened that a situation similar to that in Punjab and Gujarat could arise in Kashmir as well. "If they continuously go on denying democracy to the people of this state, I am afraid it would lead to a Punjab-like situation. Then there will be no turning point, I fear." Added Sheikh Nazir, NC(F) general secretary: "This drama of a puppet government cannot go on for too long. The voice of the people will ultimately prevail and the Centre will have to bow before it. And we will not rest till this government is thrown out."

Cartoon by NINAN



With Farooq flexing his muscles and the Congress(I) reviewing its strategy, Shah could sense he was on a sticky wicket. He has made overtures to his brother-in-law for some sort of agreement, and influential friends of the family have tried to intervene on his behalf. But his efforts were doomed to failure as he was not prepared to quit in Farooq's favour, his supporters instead mooting the idea that Farooq's mother Begum Abdullah be installed as chief minister for the time being. But NC(F) insiders claim Begum Abdullah is more hostile towards Shah than even Farooq, who must have been echoing his mother when he said derisively: "I will not pray at his(Shah's) grave even when he is dead. They should not think we are weak. We can make their life miserable." That was an ominous message for both Shah and the Congress(I).

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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BOMBAY

Shady Deal

EVERY scandal in bursting Bombay seems to be connected with land. Even so, the *affaire* that unfolded last fortnight was startling. In central Bombay, 23,000 sq m of land, part of it meant for the rehabilitation of slum dwellers had been coolly sold off to a single builder by no less a personage than the Government of Maharashtra itself in unseemly haste. As Ram Nayak, the Bharatiya Janata Party MLA who broke the scandal in the Assembly, said: "This out-Antulay's Antulay."

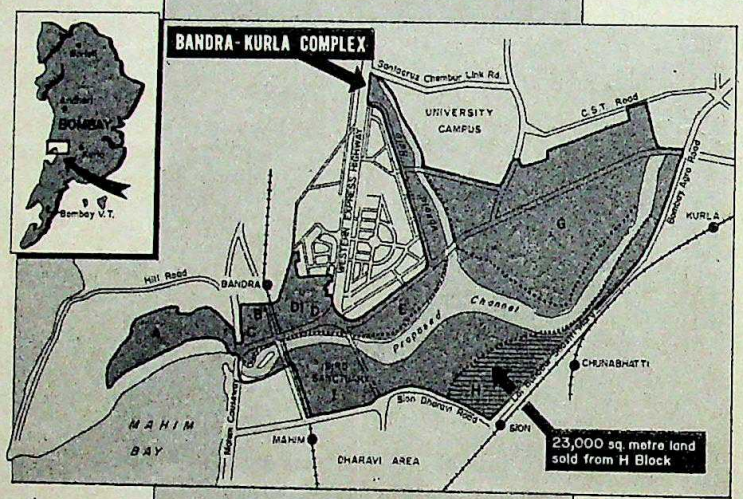
The patch in question is part of a 1,262-hectare stretch of largely undeveloped and undrained land between Bandra and Kurla near the infamous Dharavi slum. The Bombay Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (BMRDA) has an ambitious plan for the area: nature parks, commercial complexes, residential colonies, even a bird sanctuary, covering 370 hectares.

The area has been divided into blocks from 'A' to 'I' and the current storm is raging around 'H' block and the 17.93 hectares of its 88 hectares which are supposed to be built up—four hectares of commercial construction with a floor space index (FSI) of two; 4.5 hectares of residential and 9.43 hectares earmarked for the rehabilitation of Dharavi slum dwellers of 1.5 FSI. What the state Government has done is to go ahead and sell off 23 hectares (1 hectare = 10,000 sq m) for Rs 10.73 crore to a single builder for commercial construction and housing.

Only the BMRDA can authorise a change of land use and it is in fact the state Government's rather lame contention that the BMRDA is the villain of the piece. The BMRDA Commissioner, A.N. Batbyal, has been transferred to Aurangabad. However, a careful reading of the events which led up to the sale makes it clear that the top brass of the Government—and they include the then chief minister Vasantrao Patil—seemed to have okayed the deal.

The story begins with an advertisement in *he Times of India* dated March 2, 1985, inviting tenders for 23,000 sq m of land. By a curious coincidence, March 2 was one of Maharashtra's busy days for that was when the city and part of the state went to the polls for the assembly elections. Four bids were received and the hammer went down in favour of the highest bidder two months later on May 10. The Government has been coy about revealing just who this builder is, but Ram Manohar Tripathi, urban development minister, said in a reply to an insistent questioner that it was Kaveri Construction, although he did not divulge the names of the owners or partners of the concern. Subsequent inquiries have revealed that the firm is owned by the powerful Rahejas.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



> "In central Bombay, 23,000 sq m of land, had been sold off to a single builder by the Government of Maharashtra in unseemly haste."

The Government says that it was the BMRDA which authorised the change of land use but that is only part of the story. The BMRDA is run by a committee of 17 persons with its ex-officio chairman as the chief minister, in this case Vasantrao Patil. The others present, besides Batbyal and Tripathi, on May 10, the day the decision to accept the bid was taken, were Housing Minister V. Subramaniam, Chief Secretary B.D. Deshmukh, Urban Development Secretary N.R. Ranganathan, N.S. Tinaikar, housing Secretary, Ram Mahadik, chairman of the City and Industrial Development Corporation and Bombay Municipal Commissioner J.M. Kanga. In other words, as many as eight committee members were not party to the decision.

Mayor Chhagan Bhujbal, elected a few days earlier, wasn't invited. The chairman of the Bombay Municipal Corporation's standing committee had not been elected, neither had the three municipal councillors, the two Bombay MLA's or the single MLC. In effect, it was entirely an administrative decision and taken in an unusual way: by a memo. According to informed sources there was no meeting at all! A note was merely passed around that it had been decided to allot the land to Kaveri Construction and that was that. Although none of the persons involved in the affair is talking, INDIA TODAY learns that the officials were reluctant to initial the order and the strongest opposition came from Deshmukh and Tinaikar. Kanga even said that the chief minister had no business to permit such a change in the plot use without consulting the corporation even though the BMRDA had exclusive jurisdiction over the land.

Taking all things into account, the deal, if it goes through, is a very good one for the builder, who stands to make a Rs-6 crore profit. "What is worse," says Nayak, "is that selling off one portion of an area marked for planned development could lead to a situation where we get a chain reaction and another Nariman Point." There is considerable opposition within the Congress(I) to the deal and last fortnight, Bombay MP Gurudas Kamat—who belongs to the anti-Vasantdada faction—came out with a demand for a judicial enquiry.

Meanwhile, Tripathi argued in the Assembly that all the criticism was premature as the sale had not yet been complete. That could be only a technicality, as the builder has already paid the deposit. However, the minister did say that until an independent enquiry established what was what, the status quo would be maintained. It does seem though that this is one case where the Government is not going to get its way.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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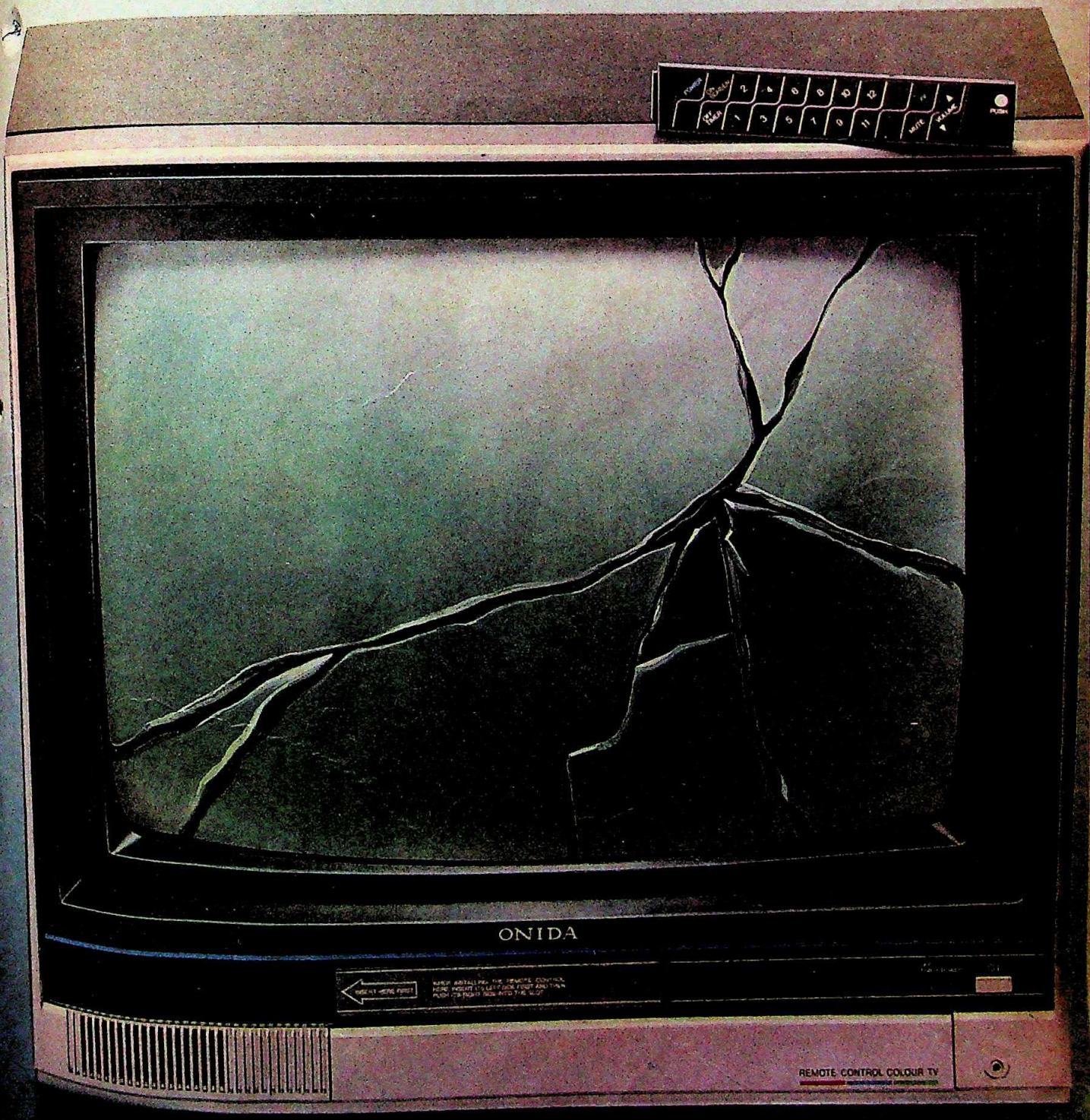

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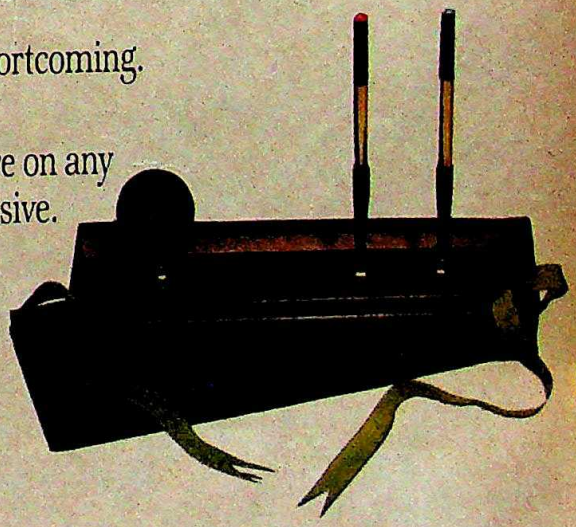

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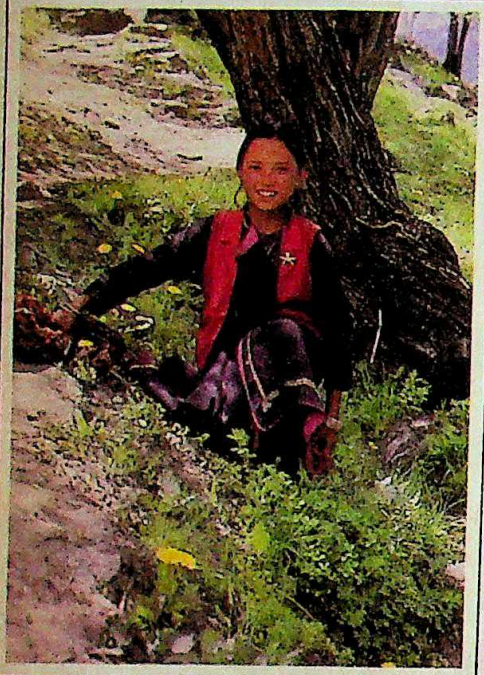
HIMACHAL

It's spring time in Lahaul



Once you have crossed the Rohtang pass, having made Manali your starting point, everything is lush and green with flowery meadows flanking your drive on either side. A real visual feast. And if you care to stop and take a look, you will come across some rare varieties also.

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Tankha in Khardang Gompa

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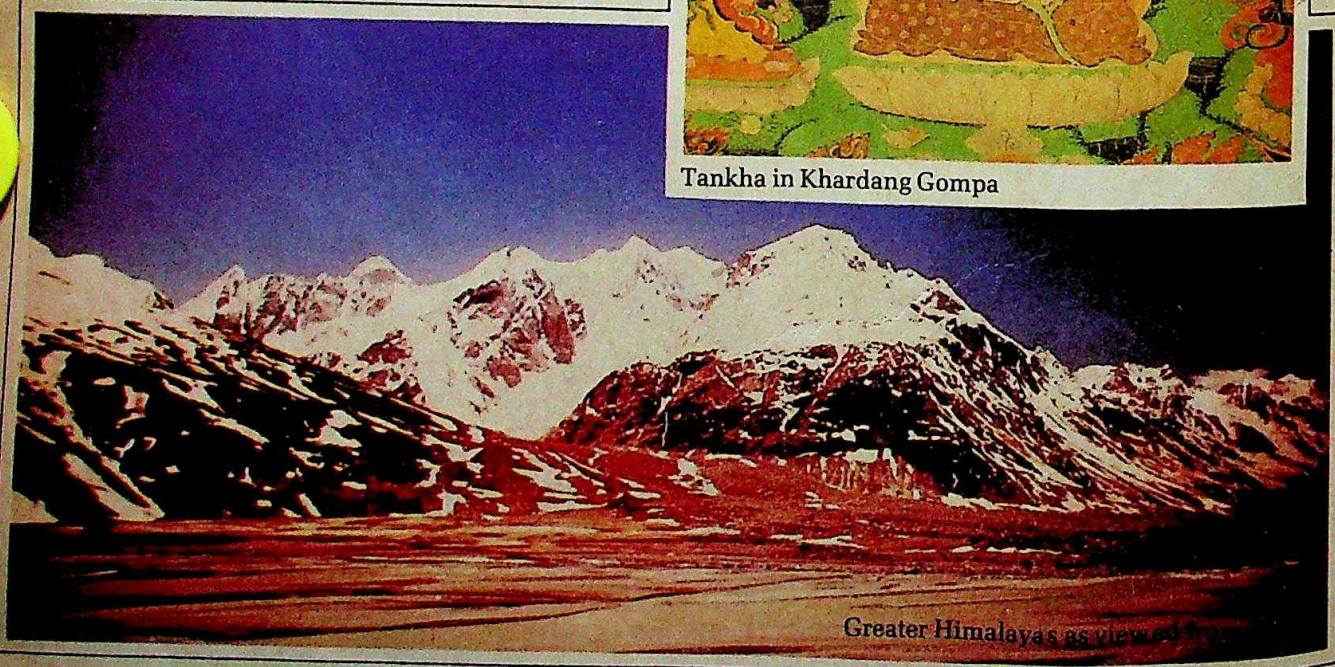

Greater Himalayas as viewed from

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HIMACHAL TOURISM

ASTIKA

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Back to School

LIFE begins rather early in the morning at N.T.Rama Rao's Shanti Kuteeram. The scene in the ashram's backyard, the Telugu Desam headquarters, is very much like a boarding-school with party MLA's standing in neat little rows for a flag salute, followed by a march to their 'classrooms', where they respond to the 'roll-call' with a resounding "Jai Telugu Desam", chanted with a raised right fist. Once in the classrooms, the trainees go through a day-long gruel of lectures, debates and discussions in which they are educated on the three-and-a-half-year-old party's birth, history and relevance, the Andhra culture and the Telugu ethos and the mechanics of running an effective party machinery.

The curriculum includes newspaper-reading sessions at the end of which the trainees are told to draft rejoinders and letters to the editors explaining the party's stand. For the week or so of their training, the legislators, in batches of 100, have to stay in corrugated-roof sheds, wear badges carrying NTR's picture, watch his films at night and refer to him only as "Annagaru". Also, they cannot leave the campus without the batch coordinator's permission, not even for a smoke, which is taboo there anyway.

For the party legislators, it is not back to school for nothing. Their exercise is only the latest in a series of such training camps held for 400 new entrants since the March assembly elections. Devised by NTR's son-in-law and the party's virtual second-in-command, N. Chandrababu Naidu, its ostensible aim is to raise obedient and orderly party ranks which would give the Telugu Desam a more reliable base than just NTR's charisma. Declares Naidu: "All this training is for loyal, determined and disciplined cadres to purify the country's politics. The country needs value-based politics and we want other parties to learn from us and improve on what we have done to introduce fresh and clean politics."

Naidu's words, however, are just so much high-sounding prose. Evidently the entire exercise is aimed at preparing grassroots public relations workers for NTR to keep the people on his side. The material given to the trainees itself testifies to this. In the seven-page document listing the duties of a party worker, for instance, is a comparison of NTR with Mahatma Gandhi. Says the directive: "Annagaru should be revered as Gandhi was respected during the freedom struggle. We have to learn from him." It was NTR himself who had first made this comparison during a conversation with journalists. "If the Congress can survive after Gandhi, the Telugu Desam can live after NTR," he had declared. Whether or not NTR wants to be referred to as the "Andhra Gandhi", he has made sure that all literature given to the trainees mentions him only as "Annagaru", a name coined ironically at the time of the party's formation by Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, who broke away from NTR last August.

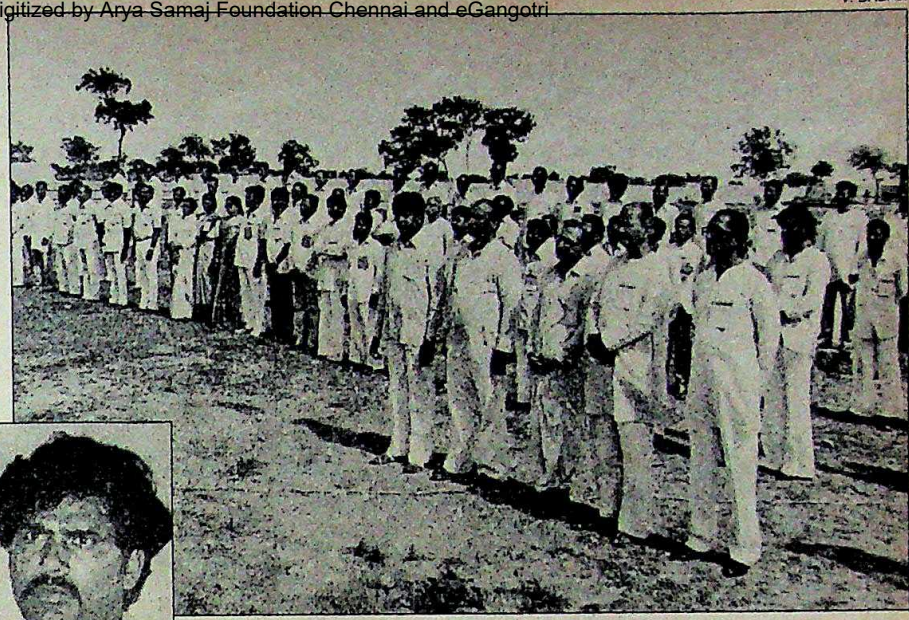
The do's and don'ts for active members include wearing saffron shirts and saris on special occasions, displaying the party flag atop houses and vehicles and generally "giving the impression that all work they do is a public service in the name of the party". An example given is of the inauguration of a well by a local MLA or some prominent party leader. The party members, the directive says, should invite the local party leader and "ask him to give the first pitcher of water to the people and extol Anna's programmes". Another curious directive is to reserve a prominent wall space in the area by whitewashing it to display the party candidate's name when it is announced.

Clearly these orders are directed towards the next elections to the panchayat mandals which will replace the panchayat samitis in the state's new system of rural administration. Since the panchayat samitis term does not expire until next year, the directives are perhaps also an indication of early mandal elections.

All the same, the training programme is not clear on what is described as the party ideology. NTR is characteristically vague on the issue: "You cannot get any ideology from the dusty books in a library. If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, you can discover our ideology in the hungry faces of the poor. Our ideology is to work for providing food, shelter and clothing to the country's poor." Tummalla Choudhary, an ex-Lok Dal activist and now a member of Telugu Desam's Central Election Committee, who is also one of the instructors at the training camp, is equally vague and high-flown: "We have specific views on different issues. We do not believe society will change in a particular way but accept suitable doctrines. Both capitalism and Marxism are unacceptable to us." Minte Padmanabham, another instructor at the training camp, perhaps comes a little close to the point when he says, "NTR's speeches, resolutions adopted at party conventions and election manifestos add up to form the party ideology."

The muddled thinking about the party's goals is due to the absence of a proper think-tank and NTR's whims about personal propaganda. Naidu is assisted by a coterie of former Lok Dal activists like Choudhary and Padmanab-

V. BABAJI



The flag salute for party workers and (inset) Naidu: discipline drive

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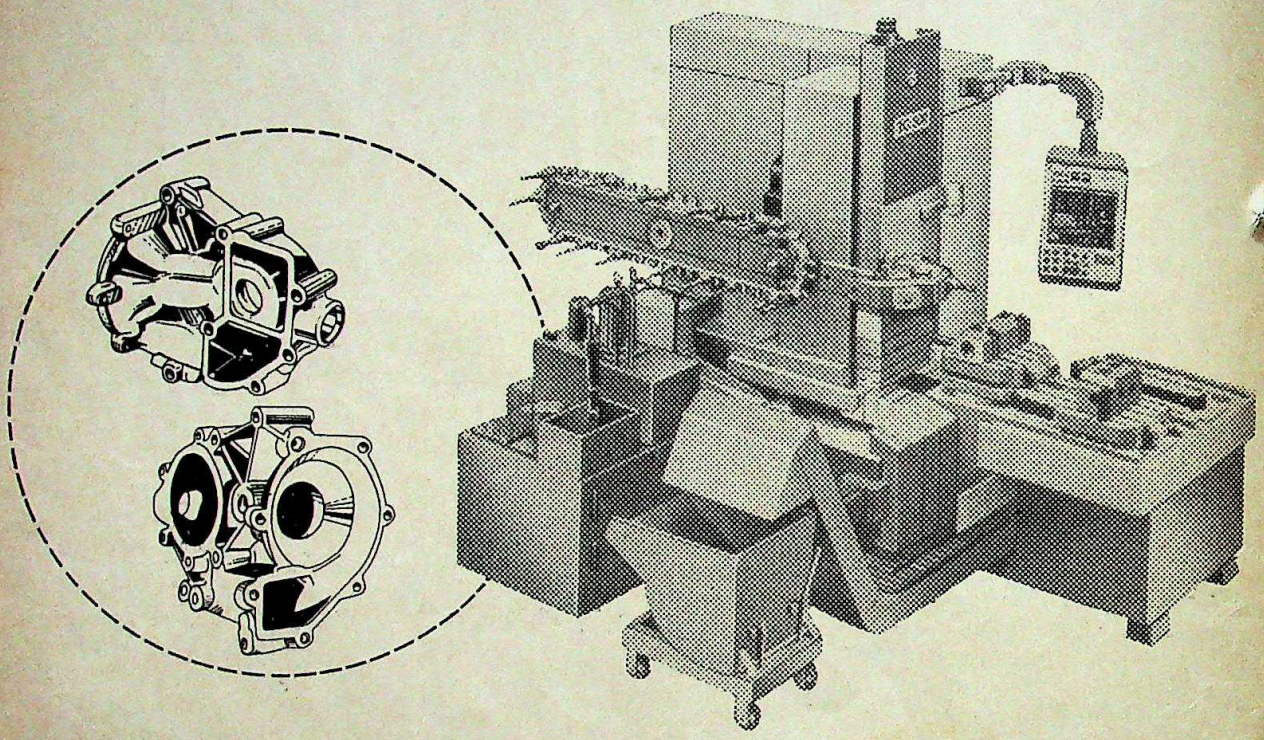
Complete machining of complex parts



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ham who supervise the effective personal publicity of NTR through badges and film screenings at the training camp. It is a measure of the party's confusion on basics that the new members seem to be as uncertain about their reasons for joining the party as they are about the party's policies and programmes. Said Nirmala Sumathi Reddy, a young activist from Adilabad: "I joined the party because Annagaru has shown many ways to help the poor in the villages." Satyavathi Rathod, a Lambada tribal from Warangal, also voiced similar hero-worship: "He has taken up many programmes for the poor. It is not his fault if those in charge of implementing them are inefficient or corrupt."

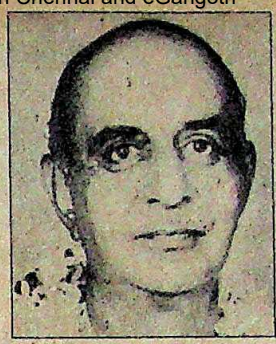
Naidu, or "Babugaru" as he is known, himself sits in at most of the training sessions and calls each trainee by name. Evidently he is spending his time at these camps to develop a personal rapport with organised tiers of district and local-level party leadership as many of the trained activists are likely to be in the running for the mandal elections. Though primary membership to the party was formally closed on June 30, with Naidu claiming a more than 30 lakh enrolment, another special drive is being launched to induct more women members. Considering the muddle-headedness of the new members, the training camps can prove useful for only one thing: to organise bands of NTR loyalists who are convinced he can never go wrong. And in that, both "Annagaru" and "Babugaru" have so far been successful.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

RAJASTHAN

Post-mortem

THE GHOST of the late Man Singh, independent MLA from Deeg and scion of the erstwhile ruling family of the state, continues to haunt the Congress(I). Last fortnight the entire Opposition walked out of the Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha in protest against what it called the state Government's attempts to shield the two main accused in the case: Deputy Superintendent of police Kansingh Bhati and Deeg Station House Officer Veerendra Singh. The Opposition was miffed because bail was granted to the two policemen, when the usual procedure in cases of this nature is to keep the accused in custody lest they try and influence witnesses. The state Government and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) added to the uproar by accusing each other of botching up the case.



Man Singh: ghost haunts

Under the law, Bhati and Singh could have been held in custody for only 90 days pending the CBI investigations. The agency's failure to file a challan in court by the end of this period, which ended on July 4, automatically entitled the two police officers to get bail. The investigation report was actually handed over to the state Government on June 29, five days before the expiry of the 90-day deadline. What was needed was the Government's sanction to prosecute; Section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code lays down that no government employee accused of committing a crime in the course of his official duties may be prosecuted without the sanction of the Government. The clause exists to protect government employees from harassment for doing their duty.

AMOLAK PATNI

Bhati: bailed out

The CBI alleges that the Government deliberately delayed giving sanction for prosecution so that Bhati and Singh would be free on bail. Says a source in the organisation: "If the state Government was serious about giving sanction to prosecute on time, they could have easily done it. But instead of hastening the process by talking it out across the table, they chose to start a written correspondence deliberately. The state Government's attitude is undoubtedly fishy." After coming under attack in the Vidhan Sabha, the Government said it sent a letter to the CBI on July 3 saying it was unable to grant permission unless all the necessary papers were submitted to it. Though it received a written reply the same day, the Government claims several of its queries remained unanswered.

"I cannot understand why the CBI and the state Government officials could not sit down together and sort out their problems. Why the matter was left till the last moment is not clear," says Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, leader of the Opposition. Adds Lok Dal state unit President Nathuram Mirdha: "It is unfortunate that greater caution was not exercised in the handling of a case as sensitive as this one." The Government sticks to its stand that it will grant sanction to prosecute only after all the documents it has asked for are received. And that is where the matter rests for the time being.

The CBI had originally come into the picture following opposition charges that high-ups in the state Government were involved in Man Singh's killing. Apparently following provocation from Congress(I) workers, Man Singh had smashed a podium erected for a ruling party meeting and then dashed his jeep against a helicopter used by the then chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur for his election campaign. A police party led by Bhati which had gone to Deeg to arrest Man Singh on February 21 had ended up killing him and two of his supporters in the gun-fight that allegedly ensued. The police version had been that Man Singh had tried to escape, while the general belief was that he was shot in cold blood. Coming as it did so close before the assembly elections, the incident so embarrassed the ruling party that Mathur ended up handing in his resignation to appease an enraged and shocked electorate.

Man Singh's son-in-law, Vijai Singh had filed a private complaint that his father-in-law had been killed as a result of a criminal conspiracy which involved senior people in the Government. The CBI investigated this allegation and at one stage the state capital of Jaipur was agog with rumours that some big names might be implicated in the killing. But Vijai Singh's allegation could not be established and the charge has been dropped. None of the accused is high up in the Government, either. After investigations lasting 85 days, the CBI finally sought the state Government's permission to prosecute 18 police personnel for murder, besides other charges.

The state Government seems to be

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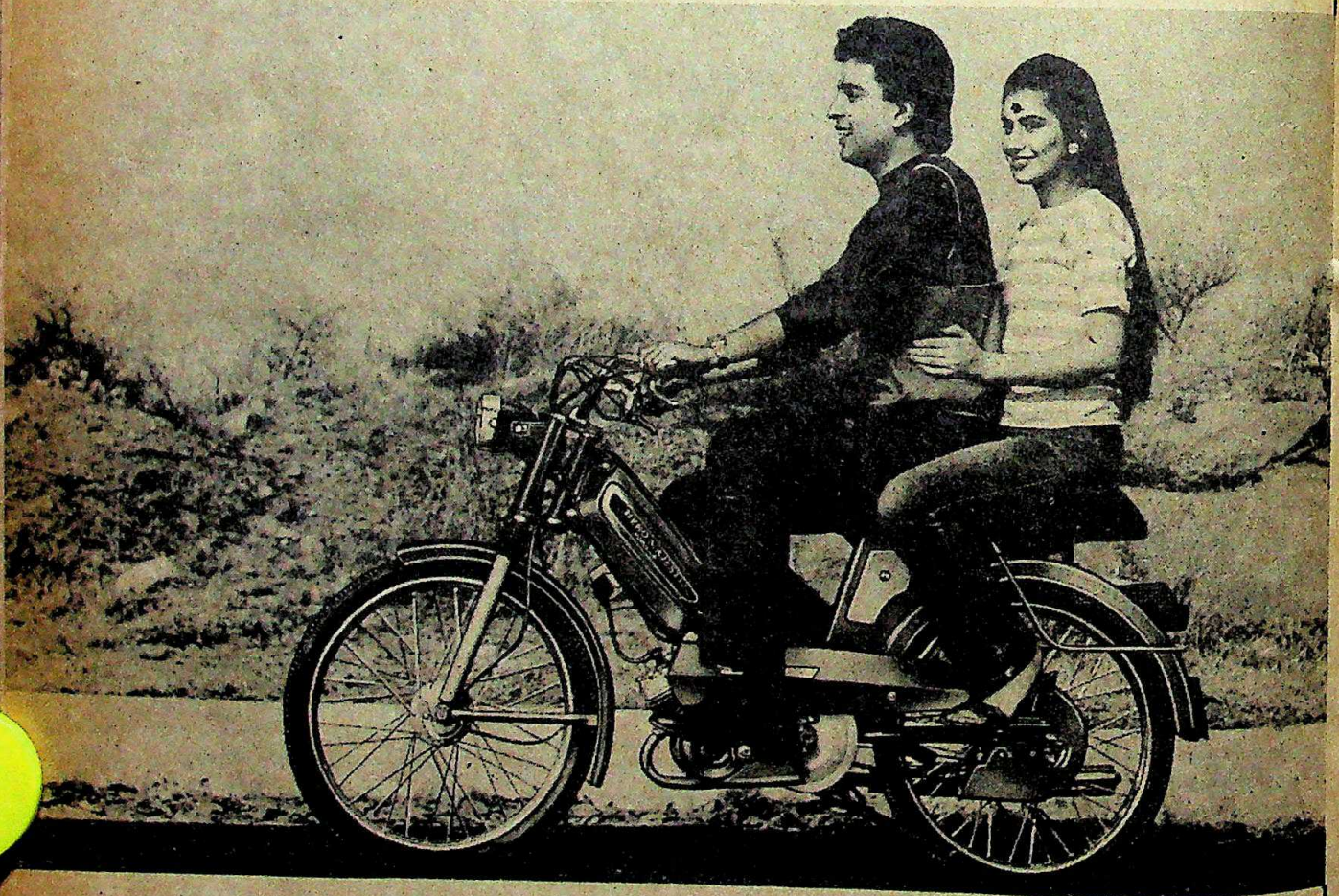

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influenced by reports of resentment in the police force over the prosecution of so many policemen under public pressure—a feeling that in a time of crisis the Government has not stood by its employees. A senior police official points out that such large-scale prosecution on such a serious charge could deter policemen from decisive steps on the spot in future. Chief Minister Harideo Joshi said on the floor of the House that the Government was not convinced that all 18 police personnel should face a charge of murder. Only one realisation emerges from the whole unpleasant scenario: Bhati and Singh would have still been in jail had there been a little better coordination between the Government and the CBI. And this is what has incensed the Opposition.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

BUREAUCRACY

Party Blues

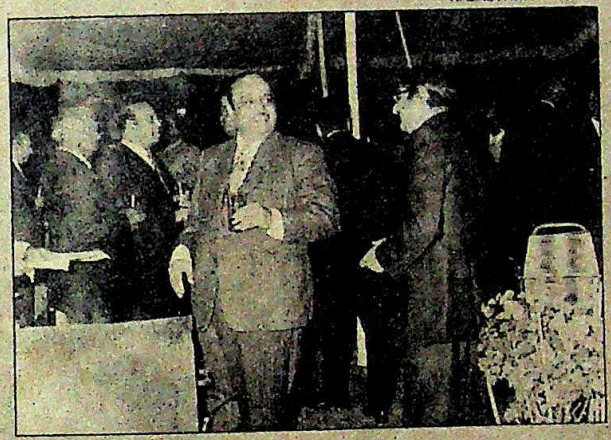
MORE than six months after the guests left and the leftovers were thrown away, a party that a top Rajasthan bureaucrat hosted shows signs of leaving a bad taste in his mouth. State Chief Secretary Anand Mohan Lal could have hardly foreseen the row it would create when he held his dinner do on December 19 last year. As the Opposition went hammer and tongs at Chief Minister Harideo Joshi over the issue last fortnight, the morning six months after the night before not only became unpleasant, it threatened to turn into a nasty, if delayed, hangover. The Opposition charged in the Vidhan Sabha that Lal had misused government money and machinery to hold the party and asked the chief minister why no action had been taken against him.

The chief secretary's bash of last year would still not have come to light had it not been for the state's largest circulated daily, *Rajasthan Patrika*, which carried an article on the "lavish" affair in one of its Sunday supplements last month. Said journalist Milap Chand Dandiya, the author of the story: "I deliberately held back the article for so many months. If it had appeared earlier, they would have covered up the facts. I wanted to be sure that all accounting entries had been made in the Government books." Which is why the Opposition's attack on July 8, though belated, did not lack firepower.

Led by leader of the Opposition Bhairon Singh Shekhawat of the BJP, members faulted Lal on several counts. Further excitement was provided by the fact that the dinner had been attended by various luminaries of Jaipur, among them the state's Governor, O.P.Mehra. In the first place, they alleged that Lal had violated the law by inviting more than 250 people. They pointed to the food control order, now generally ignored, which prohibits the serving of cereals to more than 100 persons on a single occasion. They also objected to Lal's serving drinks in public and expressed disappointment at the governor joining in.

But these were mild charges compared to the ones that followed. Shekhawat said that vehicles of the election department had been misused for organising the dinner. The Public Works Department, he alleged, had chipped in by getting four road rollers from faraway places to fix the road in front of Lal's residence on a priority basis. But the most serious charges related to the tourism department. Food, it was alleged, had been supplied free by a state government hotel, and a cultural troupe had been hired by the tourism directorate at its expense to entertain Lal's guests.

RAJASTHAN PATRIKA



Lal (centre) at his party

Joshi's reply in the Assembly was peculiarly lacklustre and his defence of the chief secretary was weak. Shekhawat wrote to Joshi soon after the article came out but he says he got a dissatisfactory two-line reply from the chief minister. Joshi, on his part, told the Assembly that he had asked for Lal's comments soon after the article appeared but did not get a reply for nearly a month. That Joshi tolerated this delay is quite surprising.

The 54-year-old chief secretary, who has been in office for 17 months, refused when contacted to comment on the whole affair. He only said: "I am accused of having hosted the dinner on my 25th wedding anniversary. Firstly, I was married in October and not in December. And secondly, I have been married only 18 years, not 25."

Director of Tourism K.L. Meena, who is also director of the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC), comes up with a long explanation for his organisation's involvement in the controversy. To attract tourists, he said, the department has been hiring cultural troupes to perform at 13 fairs and festivals all over the state, including the well-known Pushkar and Jaisalmer melas. Instead of repeating the same performance year after year, it had decided to introduce a new show depicting the different wedding ceremonies in Rajasthan, he said. Since the chief secretary was deeply involved in most programmes, it was decided to hold the new item's dress rehearsal in his presence so that he could give his comments, says Meena. The department paid Rs 5,600 to the 74-member troupe. And it was this most of all that invited criticism: the payment of government money to entertain Lal's personal guests. Meena also denies that the food was supplied by a government hotel and claims that only some waiters had been called from the Khasa Kothi hotel. But this was after duty hours and Lal had remunerated them, he says. Some food stuff supplied by Lal was cooked by the hotel staff at his residence and also at the hotel. But the bulk of it came from a private caterer, he adds. Whatever the truth, it has given the state Government plenty of food for thought.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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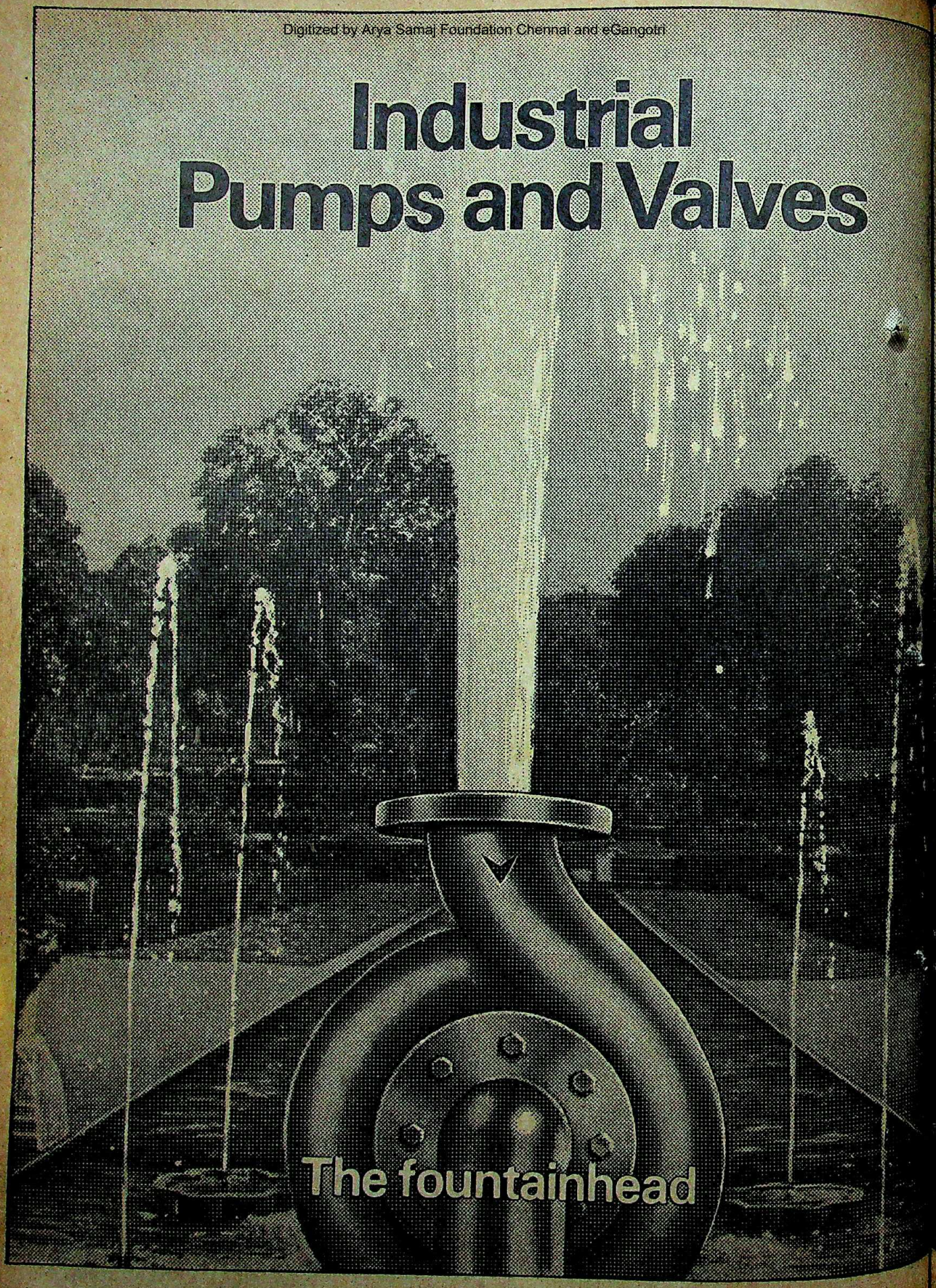

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ORISSA

The Agony of Kalahandi

HERE is a picture of hell: there is no food and no water. For 20 long and agonising years, no one has come to help. Those whose limbs still work have left the villages, never to return. Those who've been unable to get away are dead or dying. They move in groups, licking water, like dogs. For food, they pick the poisonous roots and leaves—the only thing that will grow there—and boil them for three whole days before they can eat them. Those who have been able to find jobs earn from 75 paise to a princely Rs 3.50 a day! Two out of every three children born die in infancy. There is fever, cholera, dysentery and an ever-increasing number of respiratory diseases.

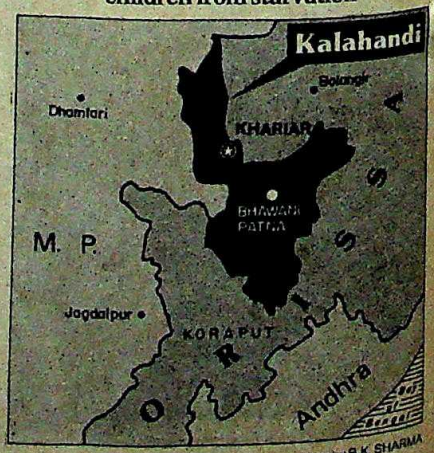
Nothing could be worse, no people more wretched. But in the once princely district of Kalahandi in Orissa, there is something much worse: women have now begun to abandon and sell their children because they can no longer afford to feed them. Principal Correspondent FARZAND AHMED *travelled extensively over the suffering land to see the people that god and man forgot. His report:*

Photographs by PRASANTA PATNAIK

PANASI Punji, 35, of Amlapalli village in Khariar block was abandoned by her husband two years ago. This year she abandoned her husband's little sister Vanita. "My own two children were starving," she said, "what could I do?" In Boden block, Rama Gahir picked up her three-day-old child and walked 25 km to Khariar to leave the tiny new-born baby at a Christian mission. On the way she sold it for Rs 80 and two saris. In a hospital in Khariar, another starving woman abandoned her male child, Jatin Kumar. Said Kapil Narain Tiwary, a former MLA: "Here children are sold cheaper than *channas* and the Government instead of rescuing the poor from hunger was pressurising them to deny the sale stories."

For Janaki Ballav Patnaik, the chief minister of Orissa, the tragedy of Kalahandi is a big slap in the face. Exactly five years ago, the journalist-turned-politician had promised life and good fortune to his state. He had pledged to "turn Orissa into an island of prosperity and bring at least half a million of the poorest of the poor people above the poverty line

Panasi Punji gave away her little sister-in-law Vanita to keep her own children from starvation



Map by B.K. SHARMA

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in five years."

It didn't happen. Five years later, Kalahandi, with a population of 13.39 lakh, is still the poorest of the poor, a dark diseased corner where civilisation has left none of its benefits. Its tragedy started in 1965 when the rains failed. The villagers waited and prayed for water but for 20 years the heavens have been unkind. The iron grip of drought and famine hardened resulting in the worst ever hunger and starvation. "Since then the drought has not loosened its grip," said 28-year-old Khariar block Chairman Madhusudan Das "people are starving and most of the able-bodied persons have migrated to neighbouring Raipur in Madhya Pradesh and other towns to eke out a living by pulling rickshaws or to work as labourers. Since all are poor none can help anyone else." Das pointed out that of the 109 villages in the Khariar block, 107 are suffering from acute drought, with a 75 per cent crop loss. "Most of the people here are half dead, some just breathing skeletons," said Block Development Officer Ganga Dhar Patra.

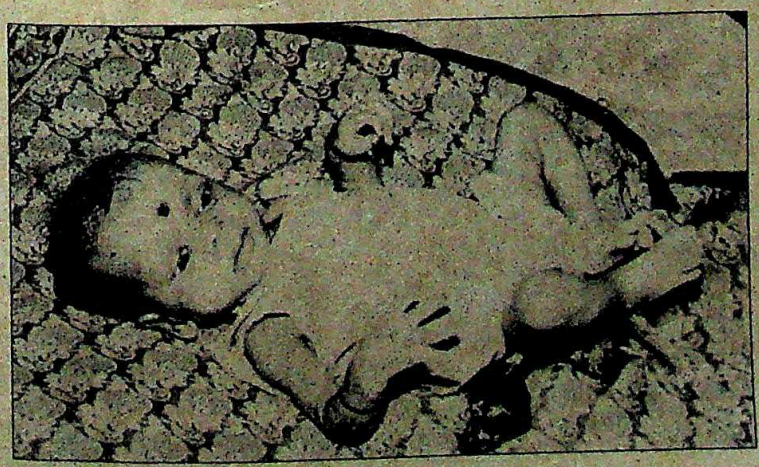
But if nature has been cruel, so has the Government. Tiwary made an extensive survey of the area in May when the sun was at its unkindest. His report, submitted to the district administration, was quite startling: all the people from 16 villages under the Bhaisadani panchayat had shifted to a nearby hill during the summer because that was the only place they could find roots and leaves, often poisonous, but the only thing left to eat in the area. Dhubai village, nearby, was completely deserted because there was no drinking water facility during the summer. And Chooipan Boipan village, Tiwary described as a no man's land. Additional District Magistrate Lalit Mohan Padihari was forced to admit that a "distress situation" had completely overtaken the entire district.

Still no one came to quench the villagers' thirst. Again and again, even in the direst of emergencies, officials have failed Kalahandi. Whatever the Government's assertions about development, local leaders claim that the reality is far, far from it. No one knows what prosperity means and compared to other districts of coastal Orissa, Kalahandi is especially pathetic. Officials argue that rainfall here is always below normal and as a result the food production has remained a static 8.98 quintals per hectare against the state's average of 11.38 quintals. This may be a logical argument, but hardly the kind that will help the starving masses.

"Children are sold cheaper than *channas* and the Government instead of rescuing is pressurising them to deny the sale stories."

KAPIL NARAIN TIWARY

Rama Gahir's three-day-old baby sold for Rs 80 and two saris (below) and Jatin Kumar, an abandoned child



Aid has come in little bits and pieces. According to official figures, the administration could spend only Rs 87.03 lakh out of the Rs 166.03 lakh allotted under the National Rural Employment Programme and Rs 69.36 lakh out of Rs 127.46 lakh meant for Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme during 1984-85. Finally, last month, as hunger and thirst reached a new low, 150 people from Boden and Khariar—guided by the Sangathan, an Oxfam-aided voluntary organisation—trekked 80 km, all the way to district headquarters in Bhawanipatna, spending 17 days en route, to show the district magistrate their pathetic condition. At first the officials refused to see the marchers but as their condition deteriorated, they relented and promised an emergency feeding programme beginning July 1 that would cover 3,400 people in the worst drought-hit areas of the district.

The additional district magistrate told INDIA TODAY that already 1.68 lakh people including children, expectant and nursing mothers were covered under a normal feeding programme, but as often happens, those who needed it most were not even aware of the existence of such a programme. And last month's sudden desertion of children, if anything, proved that if such a programme did indeed exist, it certainly had not been implemented in the interiors for months. Rama Gahir abandoned her three-day-old child because she had no milk to feed him and nothing to feed herself.

To make matters worse, the entire cooperative financing service has also collapsed in the area. No government loans are now available to farmers since all have been declared defaulters. Kalahandi Central Cooperative Bank Secretary Rabindra Kumar Patnaik explained that this was so because recovery was extremely poor, the lowest in the country since most farmers had lost their paying capacity. As a result of the virtual non-recovery of loans, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development had stopped its assistance. In 1980-81, Rs 327.22 lakh had been advanced as loans to farmers. This year no loan has been given at all.

Far away, in the state Assembly, Revenue Minister Jugal Kishore Patnaik refused to believe that any children had been sold out

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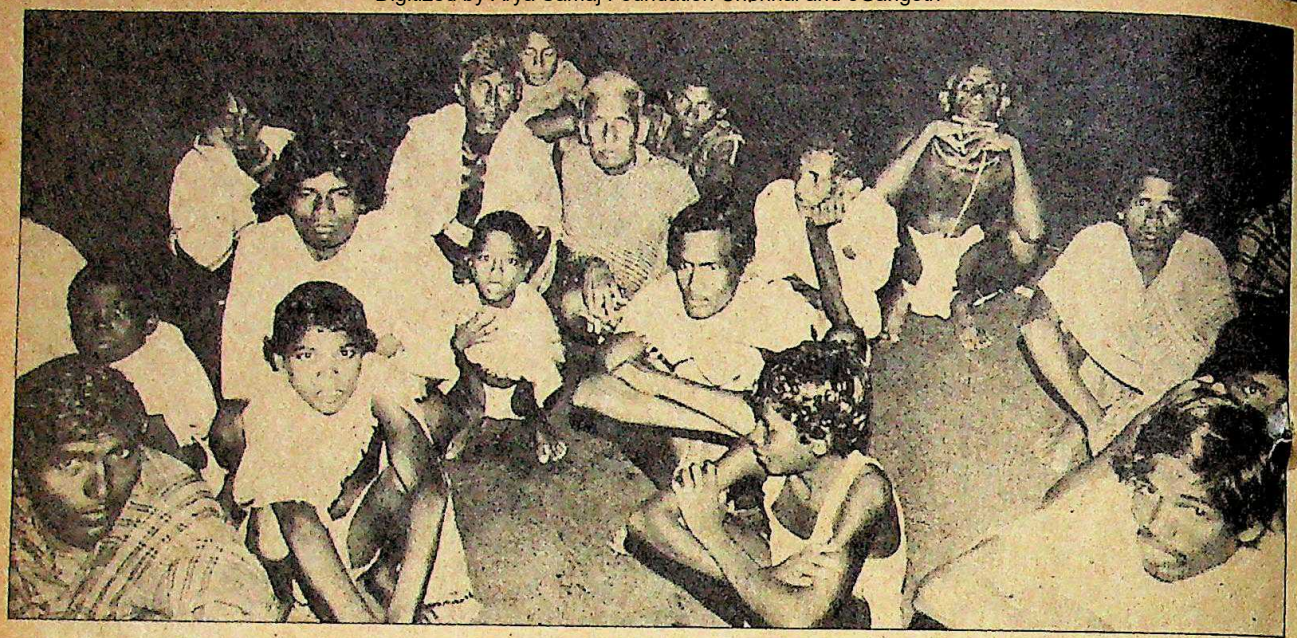

of distress. The administration in Bhubaneswar issued a lengthy press note terming any such reports as exaggerated. "Such news items defame our society and our state," said Chief Minister Patnaik.

The chief minister insisted that his government had taken special measures because of the distress situation in the district and as a result it was able to prevent a repetition of 1965-66 when large-scale starvation deaths had taken place. "My government has taken up Kalahandi as a big challenge," he said loftily as he talked of expensive roads that had been constructed and the nearly 400 school buildings that had been made. According to him the real solution lay in the creation of irrigation facilities and the Government would launch the Rs 90-crore Indira Project which would change the socio-economic composition of the district. In 1981, Patnaik had laid the foundation-stones of four big industries. But none has come up so far.

Most people have begun to believe that the real problem of Kalahandi is that it has no political clout. That is why it has suffered while other districts have thrived. According to Bhupendra Singh, MLA and government deputy chief whip, the local people had to battle for a long time to get a bridge over the river Tel which had been washed away in the 1967 floods. It was given the go-ahead only in 1981, 14 years later. On the other hand, as opposition leaders point out, politically powerful Cuttack has got everything out of proportion. A Rs 19-crore embankment around Cuttack is under construction to save the town from the floods of the Mahanadi.

The villagers have waited and prayed for water but for 20 years the heavens have been unkind. But if nature has been cruel, so has the Government.

Similarly the Tirtol-Kolar road bridge was completed at a cost of Rs 3.37 crore to benefit only three panchayats including that of one-time political strongman Basant Kumar Biswal's uncle. Last year, Chief Minister Patnaik, in a bid to pacify his angry wife Jayanti, MP, and Biswal who had fallen out over the location of a bridge on the river Luna, sanctioned two bridges at Punbasa and Nuapara, each costing Rs 3 crore.

Even in drinking water, Kalahandi has been denied its due. The Government has spent Rs 98 crore in five years claiming that 67,000 tubewells had been sunk in the state—but water has not come to Kalahandi. The miseries of the people don't end there. There is no longer any hope in the area, only disease. The long famine has given the population its special gifts—fever, cholera, dysentery, diarrhoea, respiratory diseases. Here the infant mortality rate is the highest. According to the *District Statistical Handbook* (1979-80), the number of births averaged 1,600 to 18,000 per year and the number of deaths between 9,000 and 12,000. The Government continues to maintain that the district is free from starvation deaths.

However, hunger and disease is not new to Kalahandi. "In fact," said Bhupendra Singh, "the district has frequently been struck by drought or famine for long periods." There have been severe famines in 1897, 1902 and 1919, 1930. Food and water are something the villagers have learnt to live without—till the drought which has just about broken their backbone.

The rich have remained largely unaffected but the poor have become the wretched of the earth. In a country where the slave system has apparently been abolished, the poor of these drought-hit areas continue to live as slaves. Most parents mortgage the hands of their little children to pay off their debts. The children then grow into bonded slaves, tied to their rich masters for life. An official publication in Oriya, however, claims that under the IRDP, a vast number of families have been rehabilitated. In 1980-81, 5,694 families were rehabilitated, in 1981-82, 7,969 families, in 1982-83, 15,573 and in 1983-84, 10,800 families.

The figures fool no one but the Government. Kalahandi is an area that the Patnaik administration would like to believe doesn't exist. Its reality is a shameful story. If 150 bonded slaves could walk for 17 days to Bhawanipatna last month, demanding their emancipation, if women have reached the stage where they must sell their children to survive, then surely the villagers have been denied their most basic fundamental rights in a free country—the right to food, water and liberty.

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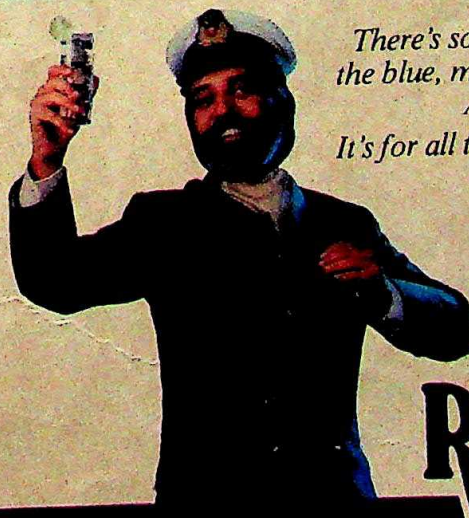

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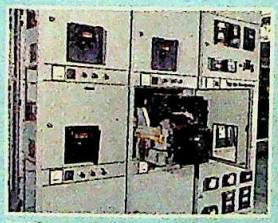

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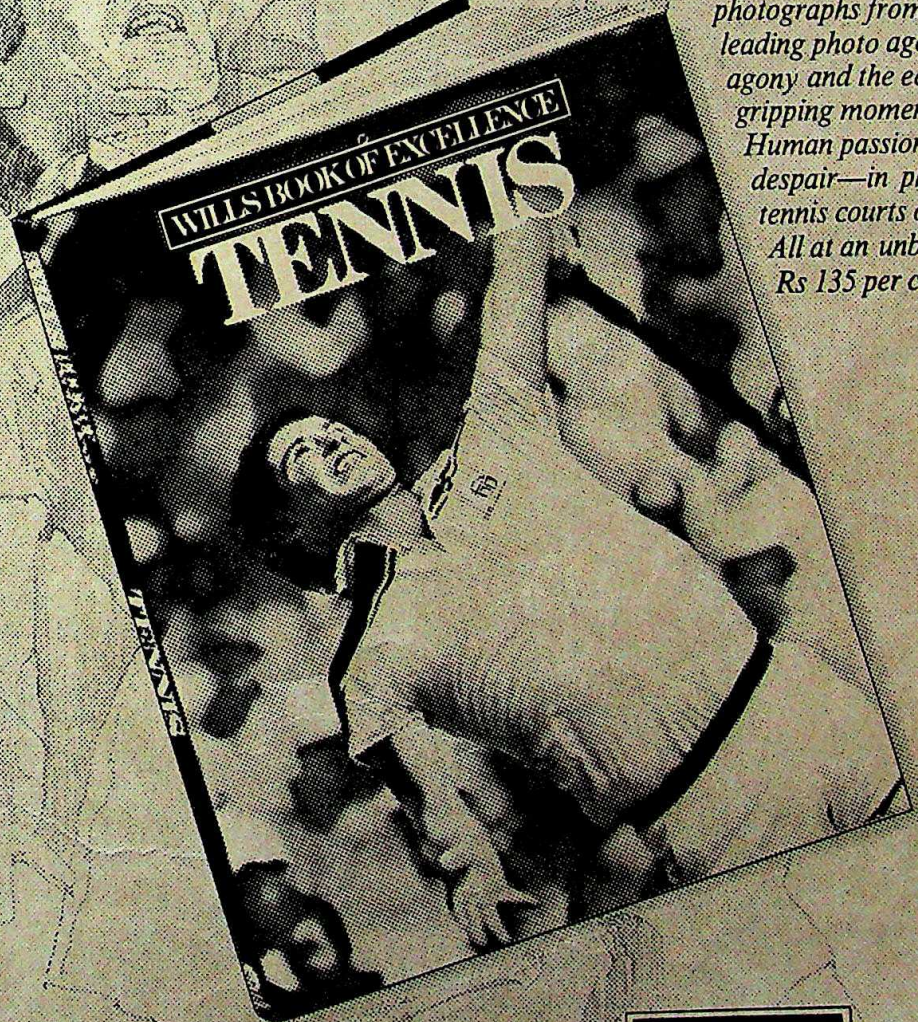

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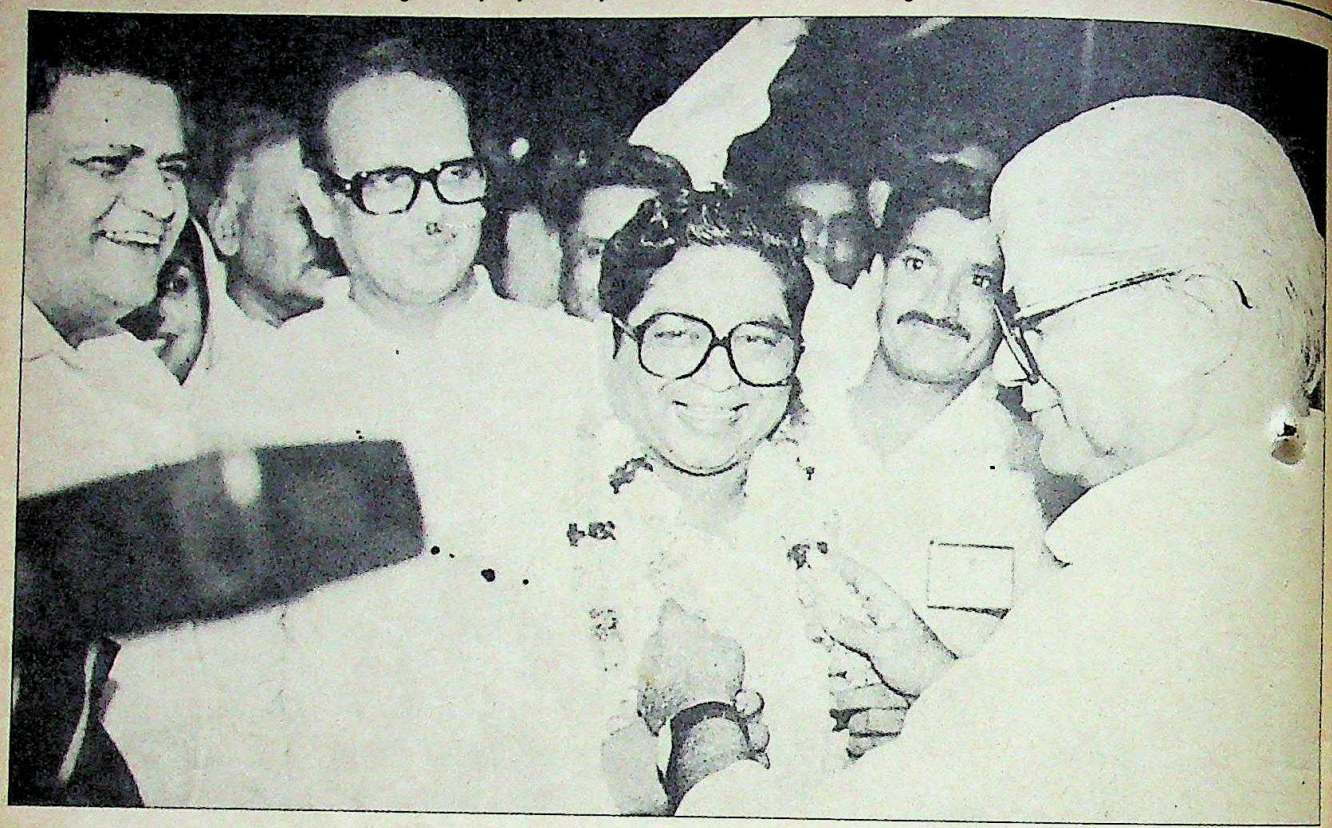

Solanki garlands successor Chaudhuri: changing of the guard

GUJARAT

An Uncertain Legacy

THREE days after he quit office, Madhavsinh Solanki was helping his wife pack their personal effects. He was vacating a house he had occupied for a little over five years and among the many possessions that had grown in these years were books: some 3,000 of them on various subjects ranging from philosophy to natural history. Greeting visitors with his charismatic smile and hiding his hurt behind his usual charm, Solanki did not hide his relief at being divested of all responsibility. As he said: "Now I will have all the time in the world to go back to my books, my first and last love. At 57, the best thing I can do is to pick up on my reading."

If that sounded like a man on the verge of retirement, it couldn't have struck a most unconvincing note. Obviously, Gujarat was happy to see him go. He had done enough damage in the 118 days he had been in power in his second term. But it was difficult to see Solanki bowing out of its affairs just like that politicians don't, and in any case he seemed to have ensured his continuing influence in the choice of his successor, Amarsinh Chaudhuri, who was seen as his nominee. The task of bringing peace and restoring normalcy would be daunting for the tallest of leaders and the man chosen to succeed Solanki—Amarsinh Chaudhuri—did not inspire much confidence. Soon after being sworn in, he moved to establish his authority by dropping several ministers and switching around top bureaucrats but the anti-reservationists refused to call off their agitation and peace was not yet at hand.

Most significant of all, the wily Solanki, a professed champion of the backward castes, was seen to have outsmarted the party high command, which had sent down some half a dozen observers to supervise the switch-over. The observers, it was said, had left Delhi with the objective of installing Natwarlal Shah, the non-controversial high caste speaker, in Solanki's place but had to settle on Chaudhuri in the face of strong pressure from the MLA's who are mostly Solanki's men. After the backtracking that Vasantrao Patil was seen to have compelled the high command to do last month in Maharashtra, the Gujarat episode seemed to provide further confirmation that, as one dissident Gujarat politician said "those who appear to be strong are not really that strong".

The party leadership certainly did not seem irresolute at the beginning of the whole drama. Solanki met Rajiv Gandhi on June 20 and was reportedly given a fortnight to set matters right. The deadline expired on July 5 and the same day the countdown started for Solanki's exit. He had come to Delhi three days ago for a conference on overdrafts with Finance Minister V.P. Singh and was asked to delay his departure. The press had been speculating his exit but after Solanki presented the state's budget earlier in the week, the media too seemed convinced that nothing would happen till the budget session concluded in late July. With minimum publicity the high command had already initiated the process of change-over.

Late on the evening of July 4, two AICC(I) observers, Santosh Mohan Deb and Amarjit Kaur, caught the flight to Ahmedabad. Their presence in the troubled city went unnoticed until, next morning, they began summoning legislators from Gandhinagar, 25 km away,

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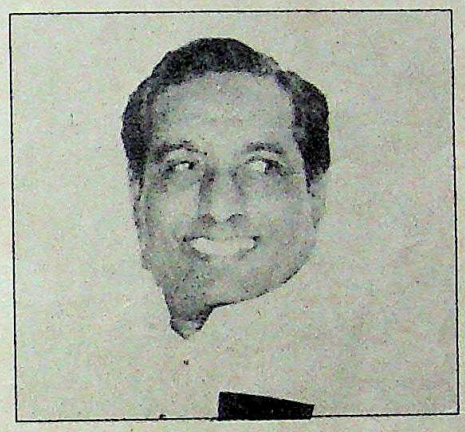
where the Assembly was in session, and asking them leading questions which left nobody in doubt that their mission was to initiate the change of guard. Meanwhile, Solanki met Rajiv Gandhi twice in Delhi. The decision was apparently conveyed at these meetings for thereafter no time was lost. Union Finance Minister Singh, AICC(I) general secretaries G.K. Moopanar and Chandulal Chandrakar, and Solanki left for Gujarat in a special aircraft the same evening.

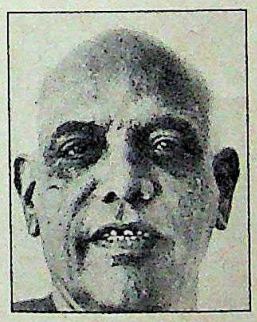
By the time the senior party observers got there, Deb and Kaur had already spoken to an overwhelming majority of the Congress(I) legislators: 92 out of 149. They spent much of their time the next day talking to dissident Congress(I) men like Jinabhai Darji, Sanat Mehta and Manoharsinh Jadeja. The meeting of the legislature party was scheduled for 4 p.m. but was delayed by 35 minutes. There was a last-minute call from Delhi which delayed the meeting further. The meeting itself was over in a jiffy: Solanki proposed Chaudhuri's name; Mahant Vijaydasji, PCC(I) president, seconded it and the house passed the motion with nary a dissenting voice. As Moopanar later said: "We spoke to all the legislators and found that Chaudhuri was their unanimous choice."

That was not quite correct. Another of the observers revealed that Darji and the other dissidents were firm in their view that Shah should be selected. They pointed out that not merely was Chaudhuri identified too closely with Solanki in the public mind, he was also discredited as the home minister who did little to arrest the near anarchy in the state. They argued that it was imperative that peace be restored to the state and since Shah was a high-caste he could be relied upon to persuade the anti-reservationists to call off their agitation.

The irony of the situation was not lost on political observers. Darji, a tribal himself, had persuaded Chaudhuri to enter politics many years ago and was for long his mentor. Five years ago Darji and Mehta had implemented their well-known KHAM (Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims) theory which created such a secure vote bank for the party that it swept the next two polls. And, now, when the legislators were showing a preference for an Adivasi, they were pleading the case of a high-caste Hindu because Chaudhuri is said to be a Solanki man.

The party high command professed to be very satisfied with the ultimate choice. INDIA TODAY learnt that Chaudhuri was certainly on the high command's short list. One of the main protagonists for Chaudhuri was P. Shivshankar, Rajya Sabha member from Gujarat, and member of the five-strong delegation sent by the party high command to assess Solanki last month. A senior leader from Gujarat, who is known to be no great admirer of either Solanki or Chaudhuri, revealed that Shivshankar spent one-and-a-half hours trying to persuade him





Shah (top) and his supporters (from left) Darji, Jadeja and Sanat Mehta

that Chaudhuri would be the best man to take over from Solanki.

Several reasons were advanced in Chaudhuri's favour. Choosing a high-caste man would have been tantamount to setting the clock back in a state where the alignment of social classes and castes had definitely shifted in favour of the backwards. Solanki, a Kshatriya, had been a little too aggressive in pushing the backwards' interests and had ended up antagonising the high-castes but there was no denying that his efforts had raised the political consciousness of the backwards, especially within the Congress(I) ranks. They could not be expected to take kindly to power being restored to the Patels and the Patidars. And as V.P. Singh said: "We could not accept a situation where partymen will constantly be squabbling within themselves."

Nor did the party leadership think that Chaudhuri could be held jointly responsible for Solanki's sins. He certainly was the home minister under Solanki but everybody knew that the chief minister was calling the shots, reportedly with a little bit of help from his old friend and former home minister, Prabodh Raval. Also, as Moopanar explained: "We must not forget that Chaudhuri was never the target of the agitation."

The Congress(I) was also not unaware of the propaganda fallout of the selection of Chaudhuri as the first tribal chief minister of Gujarat. Doordarshan was quick to highlight that his appointment marked part fulfillment of Mrs Gandhi's dream to uplift the Adivasis. Party propagandists went around Delhi pointing out that Mrs Gandhi had spoken about this "dream" even in her by now famous last speech in Orissa where she had talked about giving her last drop of blood for the nation.

There was little doubt, however, that Chaudhuri's choice had come as a surprise, even to Chaudhuri himself (*see interview*). Natwarlal Shah was considered the front runner in the leadership stakes ever since doubts surfaced in mid-June about Solanki's future. A sober and experienced leader, he has both the attributes greatly valued by the high command: a clean image and a non-controversial past. In the last five years, the Gujarat unit of the Congress (I) has been plagued by intense factional infighting but Shah kept himself above factionalism. His bungalow in Gandhinagar is ordinarily one of the least crowded but for several days before Solanki actually quit, it saw an unusual flurry of activity with cars streaming in and out carrying MLA's and MP's.

According to one report, the dissidents' arguments in favour of Shah were so persuasive that the observers tried to convince Solanki to accept Shah. As the speaker, he is ordinarily not invited to meetings of the Congress(I) legislature party but he was asked to be available while the party met. It seemed a foregone conclusion that Shah would be anointed —even in the Gujarat Bhavan in New Delhi the betting was in his favour. His non-selection came as a big surprise but Moopanar, who hardly ever seems surprised at anything, dismissed all the media hype about Shah with the disarm-

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ing poser: "If the vast majority of the MLA's had tipped him, wouldn't he have been made the chief minister?"

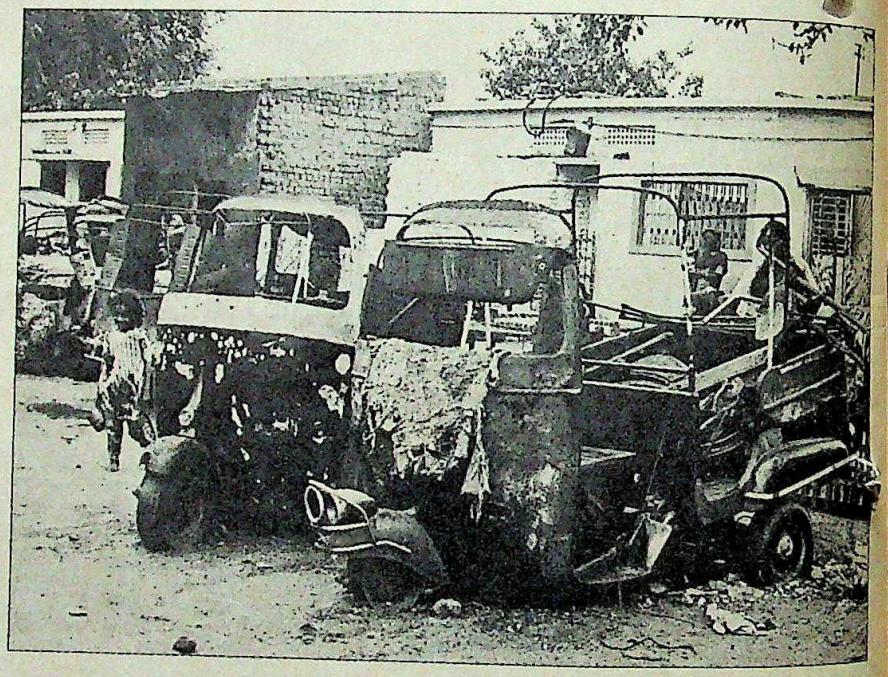
Solanki, it was learnt, had proposed three names for his successor: Revenue Minister Harisinh Mahida, GPCC(I) President Mahant Vijaydasji and Chaudhuri. When the observers urged him to accept Shah, he is understood to have argued that they should choose from among the three because that was the view of the majority of the MLA's. While it was widely believed that the selection of Chaudhuri amounted to a capitulation by the high command, there reason to believe that Solanki would have preferred Mahida or Vijaydasji. INDIA TODAY learned that he plumped for Chaudhuri when he saw that the high command observers were very keen on Shah and would not compromise on any other of his three nominees.

The Congress(I) leadership was keen to show that Chaudhuri's choice was based solely on the preferences of the MLA's. One newspaper report had claimed that the long-distance call that had delayed the meeting was, in fact, made by Singh to Rajiv—with Solanki in attendance—to ask him to break the stalemate between Shah and Chaudhuri. Solanki came out beaming after the call, so the deduction was that Rajiv had decided in Chaudhuri's favour. However, both Singh and Moopanar maintain that the call was one that had earlier been booked by Singh's staff and which had happened to materialise then. Moopanar admitted that they had kept Delhi informed of the developments throughout the day and described speculation about the last minute call as "bunkum".

Public reaction to Chaudhuri's selection was mixed. The day before, when word had quickly spread in Ahmedabad that Solanki had been finally asked to go, a festive mood had gripped the city. People came out to dance and crackers were burst, especially in localities where high-castes are predominant. It was widely expected that Shah would take over and this gave an additional lilt to the celebrations. But the same localities —like Naranpura, Navrangpura, Nava Wadaj, Ellisbridge and Ambawadi—fell silent when it was learnt that now an Adivasi chief minister would rule over them. In sharp contrast, in areas largely inhabited by the backward castes, like Dani Limda, Gitamandir Road, Majoor Gaon, Naroda, Rajpur, Rakhial, among others, jubilant people took out processions beating drums, sprinkling gulal and distributing sweets to all.

Chaudhuri himself moved quickly to try and show that he was not a proxy for Solanki. His compact ministry of 10 showed 12 omissions from Solanki's list. Five of the 12 belonged to Solanki's caste and none of them had a reputation for efficiency. Two of the new ministers, Babubhai Sopariwala and Amarsinh Vaghela, are known critics of Solanki. Chaudhuri, who made an airdash to Delhi to consult the high command before announcing his ministry, was categorical that a clean image and efficiency would undoubtedly be his bench-marks.

Chaudhuri also rung in several bureaucratic changes to show that his government meant business. Three secretaries to the Government, including the Chief Secretary, M. Shivagnanam, were transferred. But the appointment that received the widest publicity, and showed that Delhi was putting the new Government through its paces, was the replacement of V.T. Shah as the director-general of police by Julius Francis Ribeiro, the ex-Bombay police commissioner who had recently taken over as the director-



Scenes of destruction in Gujarat: unabated violence

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AMARSINH CHAUDHURI

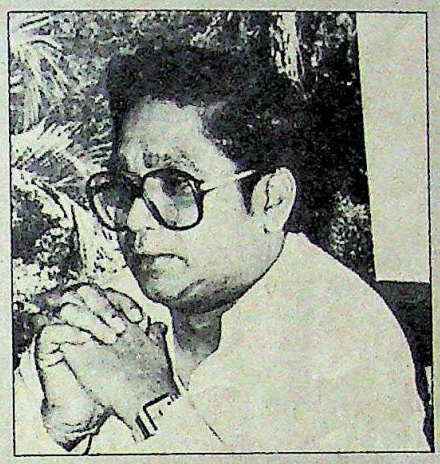
"Violence will be stopped"

FOR AMARSINH Chaudhuri, 44, who became Gujarat's first Adivasi chief minister replacing Madhavsinh Solanki, it has been a struggle to the top. He remembers the days of his childhood when he had to graze cattle every day before going to school. His family in Dolvan village in Surat district owned only about 1.5 acres of land and even basic necessities were difficult to come by. His dream of studying further nearly came to an end after he passed the seventh standard when because of his family's poverty he had to work as the house servant of a landlord.

Not wanting to quit studies, he then started giving tuition to schoolchildren so as to go to secondary school. Later, while studying at the M.S. University in Baroda, he swallowed his pride to borrow used drawing sheets and pencils to do his drawings. At one point he again thought he would have to quit studies as the friends with whom he stayed threw out his baggage one day because he had been unable to pay the rent in time. But there were some kind souls who helped him complete his degree course.

Even as a student he had been interested in politics but had never dreamt he would one day be a politician himself. He had started working as an engineer when Jinabhai Darji, the well-known south Gujarat leader, noticed him and persuaded him to enter politics. He was elected the president of the Vyara taluka Youth Congress (I) in 1971 and four years later was elected to the state Assembly. He was first made a minister in the short-lived Ghanshyam Oza ministry in 1975. When Solanki came to power in 1980, he was made the irrigation minister. In Solanki's second term, he emerged as the most senior minister with the crucial portfolio of home.

His elevation to the top came as a surprise but Chaudhuri sounded confident about tackling the situation when he spoke to Correspondent RAMESH MENON *in Gandhinagar soon after he took charge. Excerpts:*



Chaudhuri: gearing up

Q. *Were you surprised on being elevated as chief minister?*

A. It definitely was a surprise. I never thought I would be made a chief minister in the present circumstances.

Q. *You have taken over a strife-torn state. How do you feel?*

A. It is a very challenging situation and the problems are many and complicated. But I will get around them.

Q. *How will you do that?*

A. We are planning to take various actions at various levels. There is going to be a major shake-up in the bureaucracy and the police. I have signed some orders today. But what will engage my immediate attention is the restoration of communal peace. There is lot of hatred and tension now. This will have to be eased and hurt feelings soothed. Communal violence will be stopped at any cost.

Q. *How will you cool communal passions which are raging through major cities?*

A. By showing the people that the Government is above all castes, creeds and communities.

Q. *You were not able to control the situation as home minister. How will you be able to do that now?*

A. Gujarat's people are very sensitive. Once an agitation starts, it is difficult to stop it. We tried our best to end it. But there were interested parties behind it. I hope it will end now. I plan to take different actions like having talks with agitating government employees.

Q. *Do you think that the anti-reservation agitation will end now?*

A. It should. The situation has changed now. Moreover, we have conceded nearly all the demands of anti-reservationists and government employees. The people have also started realising this.

Q. *Do you plan to change the reservation quota?*

A. No changes will be made till a national consensus is reached.

Q. *How will you end groupism in the party?*

A. That is also one of my prime concerns. I will not hesitate to patch up with different groups, mend relations and ensure that their needs and interests are safeguarded. Once this is done, there is no room for any groupism.

Q. *Will you also then patch up with your one-time political mentor, Jinabhai Darji?*

A. Yes. I have nothing against him.

Q. *You have made drastic changes in the cabinet by dropping 12 members of the Solanki cabinet. Why did you change practically the whole team?*

A. I kept efficiency and a clean image in mind when forming my new team. The changes are part of my plan for a clean, efficient government. I want these ministers to bring in a fresh, new image.

Q. *You have made some changes at the top of the bureaucratic set-up. Why did you make these sudden, drastic changes?*

A. These changes are expected to streamline and gear up the administration.

Q. *In recent years, Gujarat politics has taken on a casteist colour with the* KHAM *(Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim) theory creating a vote bank for the Congress(I). Will you continue to use this strategy?*

A. No, I am against any politics of this sort. Interests of different groups and communities must be safeguarded. But they should never be exploited for political ends. One should not pander to them just to get votes.

Q. *Since caste has become such a major force in Gujarat politics, do you think that your being an Adivasi puts you at a disadvantage?*

A. I do not feel that it will. This kind of feeling may come about if I am biased towards certain communities. I will see that this does not happen. As the chief minister, all communities are equally important to me.

Q. *You were very close to Solanki. He used to guide you. Will you continue to look up to him for advice and help?*

A. Now, I am on my own. I will help and guide myself.

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general of the CRPF. The affable and tough Ribeiro, whose openness with the media came as a welcome departure from the past, has his job cut out for him in restoring self-confidence among the policemen and credibility with the people. He showed that he had his priorities right. He was, he said, not in favour of the army doing the police's job but as long as the army's presence was felt necessary it was his "job to ensure coordination" between the two. He also gave notice that he would not hesitate to take harsh steps to control violence. "It is imperative," he said, "that violence can only be countered by violence."

Politicians who have known Chaudhuri aver that it is a matter of time before he comes out of Solanki's shadow. They point out that Chaudhuri's closeness is only a post-1980 phenomenon. Before that he was closely identified with Darji, who persuaded him in the early '70s to give up his engineer's job and enter politics. Chaudhuri was first made a minister in the Ghanshyam Oza ministry in 1975, the year he was elected to the assembly from Vyara taluka in Surat district. He was again a minister in the short-lived Solanki ministry in 1976. When the Congress (I) returned to power, a senior Gujarat politician revealed, Darji was in two minds which of his two disciples he should back—Solanki or Chaudhuri—for the chief ministership. Solanki won but apparently piled humiliation on Chaudhuri later. Meanwhile, Darji moved away from Solanki and when it came to choosing between Darji and Solanki, Chaudhuri plumped for the man in power. He even let Solanki use him to whittle down Darji's following among tribals. But, as this politician maintained, "nobody forgets anything in politics, least of all humiliation", and Chaudhuri will soon distance himself from Solanki.

Moving out of Solanki's shadow might not prove very difficult for Chaudhuri. He is intelligent enough to realise the propaganda gains of being seen as his own man. What might not prove as easy is to be seen as the leader of all sections of the people. He showed early consciousness of this problem. In an interview over Doordarshan he declared: "I want to assure the people of Gujarat that I am not the representative of any particular section or caste. I am the representative of the whole of Gujarat and I want (them) to evaluate my decisions accordingly." The immediate reaction to his appeal was lukewarm. Chimanbhai Patel, the Janata Party leader who was grinning when Solanki quit, echoed the general feeling towards Chaudhuri when he said: "The new chief minister does not inspire much confidence but let us give him a chance."

The party high command was hoping that the people of Gujarat would do just that while on its part it did what it could to make his task easier. His appointment had barely been announced when Makhan Lal Fotedar, political aide to Rajiv, was ringing up dissident leaders to urge them to extend their cooperation. Assuring them that Chaudhuri was the high command's and not Solanki's nominee, Fotedar argued that Chaudhuri would act on the advice he got from seniors. Darji and Yogendra Makwana, Harijan leader and Union minister of state for health, were quickly persuaded to issue statements extending support to Chaudhuri. Said Darji: "Chaudhuri has my full backing."

Makwana, an outspoken and dynamic leader who was once Solanki's close friend and is now his implacable foe, then caught the media's attention by flying in to Ahmedabad and setting about the task of helping to restore peace. People close to him gave it out that he would be in Gujarat for 10 days but he was back in Delhi in three days. Reports appeared that he had been summoned back because his contention that he had been sent by Rajiv to help Chaudhuri had embarrassed the high command. Reportedly it was felt that when the need of the hour was to

MADHAVSINH SOLANKI

Turning Point

WHEN Madhavsinh Solanki resigned the chief ministership of Gujarat on July 6, he had been in power for 118 days in his second successive term. As tenures go, no chief minister of the 25-year-old state has been in power for such a brief one. But if that is one record Solanki could not be proud of, the charismatic Kshatriya leader also holds another record he can pride himself on: of being, in his first tenure, the only chief minister of Gujarat to have lasted a full term. In the creation of these two records lies the full story of a man who has nobody but himself to blame for being asked to quit.

Barely four months ago, Solanki's political stock could not have been higher. The party high command had backed him in the selection of candidates for the assembly elections and ignored the dissidents. When the party won 149 seats in the 182-member assembly, the decision seemed politically sound. But the state soon became a theatre for a continuing war between castes and communities. It all started with an anti-reservations agitation but, with opposition parties seeing a tailor-made political opportunity, soon metamorphosed into a 'remove Solanki' campaign. Conscious of the domino effect of conceding the demand, the party high command resisted it till it received reports of the communal and caste divides the violence was creating. Within 18 days of the first such report, Solanki was asked to go. An opposition MLA reflected the general feeling when he said: "Solanki was so well entrenched. But he dug his own grave."

There could be little dispute with the assessment. In January, Solanki had increased reservations for the backward castes when there was neither any demand nor need for it. The agitationists charged that the move was political, aimed at winning the March elections, but there is little doubt that Solanki also genuinely believes in uplifting the backwards. But Solanki had moved too fast too soon and had antagonised the still powerful high-castes. In early June came evidence that Solanki was planning to make cynical political capital of his support among his castemen. A convention of Kshatriyas was held in Baroda where his father-in-law Ishwarbhai Chavda and one of Solanki's ministers made speeches affirming the Kshatriyas' right to rule. There was no evidence to directly link Solanki with the convention but there was little doubt that it had his blessings. For the party high command, this was the first alarm bell.

Solanki's desperation grew partly out of his isolation within the party. In the five years that he has been in power, he had systematically alienated every other leader of any eminence. The list of leaders whom he sidelined makes impressive reading: Ratubhai Adani, Yogendra Makwana, Sanat Mehta, Manoharsinh Jadeja and Jinabhai Darji. Of these, Mehta, Makwana and Darji had played a prominent role in bringing him to power. The rift meant that there was nobody in the top rung of the leadership who could give him a worthwhile second opinion. The Gujarat Governor, B.K. Nehru, tried to advise Solanki but he had reached a stage where he was immune to any suggestions which did

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shore up the image of Chaudhuri as the man in command, this was doing just the opposite. Sources close to Makwana denied there was anything unusual in his quick return and Moopanar pointed out that Makwana was not the only MP who had been asked to go to Gujarat to help restore peace. Said Moopanar: "We have asked all MP's to go there. It is only the media which singled out Makwana."

Nevertheless, there was no denying that the party leadership was giving special attention to Gujarat. For one, Rajiv was still keeping his lines open to sources of information from the state. Even after Chaudhuri had taken over, he sent for Hitendra Desai—the former chief minister who has a clean image and is not aligned with any faction in the party. Desai spent half an hour with the prime minister—double the time for normal appointments with Rajiv—apprising him of the situation there. Desai later met several other top party leaders, including Home Minister S.B. Chavan and Moopanar.

The Congress(I) also initiated attempts to restore some of the links that Solanki had ruptured. One such was the local press whom Solanki had antagonised when his policemen had burnt the offices of the *Gujarat Samachar*. Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Vithalrao Gadgil flew to Ahmedabad to meet the press. Denying that there was any political significance attached to his visit, Gadgil met editors to try and create a more congenial relationship between the press and the executive.

However, reason was at a premium among the anti-reservationists who were still refusing to call off their agitation. They celebrated the Monday after Solanki's exit as "victory day" but Shankerbhai Patel, the president of the Parents Association spearheading the stir, announced that their agitation would continue. There was now growing evidence, however, that popular support for the stir was tapering off. The agitation has now gone on for over five months and the people want normalcy. Parents and their wards are keen that schools be reopened. The Government showed recognition of this when it persuaded school managements to open schools after almost four months but the real confrontation with the anti-reservationists will come if and when it tries to hold examinations. The agitationists still inspire fear: in Ahmedabad's schools, attendance was mostly at an abysmal 15 per cent in the first few days after they reopened. And it did not help anybody's nerves when a bomb exploded in one school.

The violence has taken a toll of over 220 lives. Curfew is still on in several parts of the walled city in Ahmedabad, creating records of sorts. Bombs and grenades, some of them highly explosive, still continue to be found in the city. Police intelligence, weak at all times but pathetic of late, had still not been able to identify and clamp down on those who have been stabbing innocent people just to keep tension alive. The army's brass was known to be keen to withdraw from Ahmedabad and Baroda but the people still felt that only the army spelt security. And the administration was making little headway in persuading governments, panchayat and municipal workers to call off their month-old strike.

The state's ailing health was a grave source of worry and apprehension was widespread over Chaudhuri's ability to nurse it back to its blooming self. Gujarat is no stranger to political instability: in its 25 years, Solanki was the first chief minister to have completed his (first) full term in office. The odds against Chaudhuri surviving till the next elections are considered none too bright. His mettle will really be tested in the weeks ahead. Nobody is sure he will succeed but not many want him to fail. The price of failure could be too high even for a prosperous state like Gujarat.

—RAMESH MENON with AJAY KUMAR

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Solanki: at the crossroads

not meet his own predilections. Notes former chief minister Chimanbhai Patel, "Solanki got rid of all his critics and surrounded himself by faceless people. This was one of the main reasons why he was unable to get around the anti-reservations stir."

In fact, Solanki's world had shrunk to encompass only those people who were close to him, mainly, his friends. He spared no effort to brighten up their lives. Mrugesh Jaikrishna was made the chairman of one of the companies of the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation: Mrugesh's wife, Parul, was made a director of the Gujarat State Tourism Corporation; Ashok Bhogilal Patel was made director of the Gujarat State Fertiliser Corporation; Narendra Bhuva was made chairman of the Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation, and so on. The well-being of friends mattered to him more than the welfare of government institutions: K.K. Kanoria was given land on the outskirts of Ahmedabad to build a private hospital at a rate lower than was offered to the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Solanki's record book was not always full of black marks. Industry in Gujarat really bloomed during his first term as over 150 industrial estates mushroomed over the state. Agriculture also prospered and today fully 50 per cent of the agricultural land is irrigated. Foodgrains are being given on subsidised rates to poor families and education has been made free for girls. A mid-day meal scheme, costing Rs 110 crore, has been introduced for children which will benefit over 50 lakhs of them. Expectedly, all these populist moves had made him popular. As Madhuben Gohil, a maidservant in Ahmedabad, said: "Had it not been for Solanki, my child would have gone hungry on most of the days in school."

There is little doubt that the backward classes see Solanki as their champion, if somewhat flawed by personal ambition. And the high command knows this, which is why top leaders like Rajendra Kumari Bajpai and V.P. Singh have been hinting that he would be brought to the Centre. Rajiv Gandhi also did not categorically rule it out in his press conference. But if Solanki's public statements are anything to go by, then he may not be very keen to get back into the hurly-burly of politics. As he told INDIA TODAY "Politics is not my forte. I was in it because so much of responsibility was thrust on me and one cannot shirk it when one is committed to serve the people." But, then, if Solanki was the same man both in private and in public he would not be at the crossroads he found himself at last fortnight.

—RAMESH MENON

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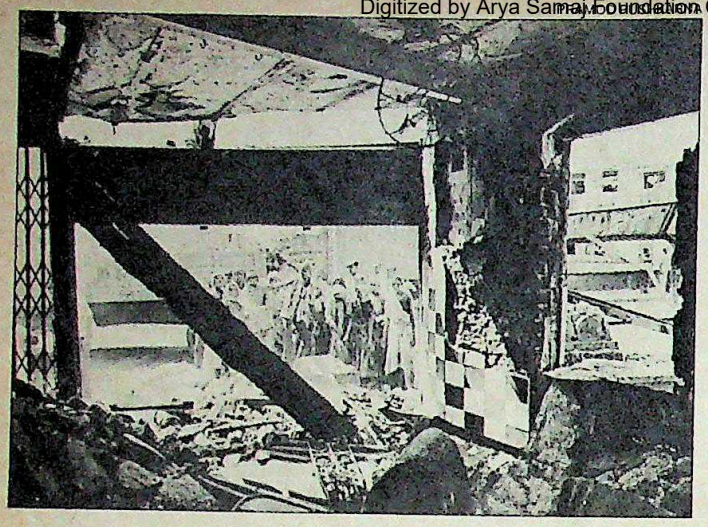

Labourers clearing rubble: debris of hate

"One feels there is no point in living now."

QAMRUNNISA
housewife

"Why has all this happened?"

MIRIAMBIBI
idol-maker

RIOT VICTIMS

The Vicious Circle

QAMRUNNISA'S little world has come to an end. Twice over, her little household has been uprooted by communal frenzy. In 1969, when riots shook Ahmedabad, her husband became the target of mob fury. Helpless, she moved with her seven little children to Prantij in Sabarkantha district, where she took up various odd jobs to bring up her children. Gathering her savings of all these years, she returned to Ahmedabad a year ago, hoping to start life anew. Her sons had also found jobs by now and she thought they were at last settled in their little house in Bapunagar, a labour locality on the city's outskirts.

But as fate would have it, ransacking mobs aided by rebellious policemen again reduced her house to rubble on April 22. Hers was just one of the 280 houses destroyed in the area. Qamrunnisa, who was till recently in a refugee camp with some 5,000 other Muslims at Aman Chowk, has been struck speechless by this cruel quirk of fate. Once again, she is bravely trying to pick up the pieces, but the will to live is barely flickering. "One feels there is no point in living now", she says with a sad nod.

Qamrunnisa is not alone in her suffering. There are thousands like her in the city who find themselves crushed under the unfeeling wheel of circumstance. Over 600 families have been dishoused and some 1,000 are living in the pathetic ruins of what used to be their homes. And yet, most of them have nothing to do with the agitation.

Though the casualties in the '69 riots were far greater, the damage to the city's social fabric this time is more frightening. The disturbances, initially confined to Ahmedabad, have steadily spread to other parts of the state. In a city that prided itself on its mixed heritage, it is not uncommon today to find people talking of teaching lessons to the other community. Vicious rumours are spread to incite communal passions. Cassettes containing inflammatory speeches are circulated. The communal hatred seething in the city is like nowhere else and never before. The Gujarati, known for his pragmatism and tolerance, is today a person easily swayed by emotions that defy reason. Says former prime minister Morarji Desai: "Gujarat has gone mad."

Everything has suddenly boiled down to caste and religion. Neighbour distrusts neighbour and people who had lived peacefully side by side for ages have overnight become enemies. Miriambibi, for instance, has never felt as alienated as she does today. Living in Delhi Chakla, a Hindu-dominated area, this old housewife followed the life-style of her neighbours, wearing the traditional Gujarati sari and making idols of Hindu gods to supplement her income. On March 18, her husband's cycle repair shop was looted and burnt. Terror-struck, she moved to her sister's house some distance away. On June 9, her house was looted by Hindu mobs emboldened by the Rath Yatra. Not ready to take any more chances, she decided to shift to a Muslim-dominated area. But this has not solved all her problems. As communal hatred sweeps the city, Miriambibi wonders if she would be allowed by her new neighbours to practise her craft of idol-making. Confused, she asks, "Why has all this happened?"

If the '69 riots are still remembered as one of the worst in the country, the current disturbances are worse still. The '69 riots, which lasted three days, were confined to the eastern suburbs of Amraiwadi, Bapunagar, Gomtipur, Saraspur and Naroda which had mainly a migrant population. Most of the inhabitants were industrial labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. This time round, the violence has been concentrated in the walled city where Muslims and Gujarati Hindus have been living together for decades.

An example of the severing of past ties is Peeli Chal in Rakhial, a poor locality where Hindus and Muslims have lived together for years. Here, neighbours looted the houses of eight Muslim families when they fled fearing an attack. In Morarji Chowk in Bapunagar, bidiworker Goramma Padmashalli was told by her Muslim neighbours to run away as they feared an attack on Hindu homes. When she picked up whatever she could and fled, her neighbours broke into her house and ransacked it.

Though the violence is mostly communal, what makes the situation more ominous is the parallel casteist clashes. Since Harijans happen to live alongside Muslims in most poor localities, they too have been victims of attacks by caste Hindus. And naturally they have joined hands with their Muslim neighbours.

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Harijans and Muslims in Ahmedabad mostly live in one-room tenements known as *chalis*. These usually have thatched roofs and are surrounded by tall buildings housing caste Hindus. All over Ahmedabad, a similar pattern has been found: the Hindus gather on their terraces at night and stone the *chalis* or throw petrol bombs and lighted torches. Vadigam area in Dariapur experienced one such attack. Across the road is Nagina Pole which is Muslim-dominated. Lighted torches were thrown from the Vadigam buildings, destroying numerous houses in Nagina Pole. In Meghaninagar, a Harijan locality called Jogeshwari-na-jhopda is surrounded by flats of caste Hindus. Here too, the same strategy was adopted and many huts-ments were destroyed.

Last fortnight, the Government was asking most of the refugees at relief camps to go back home but they could only nod dumbly to that as their homes had either been destroyed in the fires or damaged beyond recognition. Those who had got compensation to rebuild their houses did not want to return for fear of being attacked again. Asked Banubibi, an old housewife from Kalupur in the walled city, "How can we go back? There is so much communal hatred all around." Banubibi's house was burnt down in 1969. Her husband took a loan of Rs 12,000 to rebuild it. The house was looted and damaged again when she and her family fled from rampaging mobs in last month's violence. Among the things looted was a pressure cooker meant as a gift for her daughter's wedding.

The relief camps present a pathetic picture. Thousands of desolate people sit staring vacantly into space and clutching their leftover belongings. They are trying to muster strength to piece back their shattered lives. Among them is Mumtaz, an old housewife. Her house was burnt and her son killed in police firing. Though she has got Rs 24,000 as compensation, she asks: "Will it make my son rise from his grave?"

In a dingy municipal school in Kadva Pole in Dariapur are lodged over a dozen families whose houses were burnt in Dabgarwad last month. Muslims from surrounding areas had converged on their houses and set them on fire after locking them in. Seven Dabgars, who are traditional drum-makers, had been roasted alive. The families now lodged at the school are terror-struck. Asks Ambalal Kalidas Dabgar: "We have been living in this Muslim locality ever since we were born. But how can we go back and live there after having seen our houses go up in flames. This might happen again since both the communities are crying for each other's blood." Also at the relief camp is Sadhna Dabgar who was to get married on May 27. Her house was burnt down by a Muslim mob. Among the belongings lost were her wedding clothes and jewellery. In a voice tinged with emotion, she says: "I was looking forward to a new life. Now this tragedy has ruined us. There is no question of getting married now."

"How can we go back? There is so much hatred all around."

BANUBIBI
housewife

"Will the compensation make my son rise from his grave?"

MUMTAZBIBI
housewife

WHILE the Muslims have migrated to Muslim areas, the Hindus have moved out of out of the walled city to Hindu areas. Many have to their relatives in the villages. Some have even left the state. Nazir Mohammed, a textile worker who had lived in Gujarat for the past 30 years, has left for Akola in Maharashtra, since his house in Gomtipur was looted and destroyed.

Laxmi Chauhan, who had a small two-room house in Hardesnagar, has found shelter in a verandah, thanks to a kind family. Her house was looted and burnt by mobs and she had to flee with her six-year-old child. She went from hospital to hospital looking for her missing husband. She had already given him up for dead when she learnt of his escape to his native village in Rajasthan.

The distrust was never so deep. Earlier, various Hindu organisations would rush to the Muslims' rescue and relief. This time their volunteers can be seen only in Hindu localities and camps housing Hindu refugees. Instances of Hindus and Muslims giving shelter to each other have also become rare. The communal divide, it seems, is now complete.

In suburban Gomtipur near Char Toda Kabristan is a congested Muslim locality with about 750 shanty-like houses of textile labourers. Here the Muslims do not dread the Hindus living around them. Instead, they dread the police. And they have good reason to because in mid-May soon after a police inspector was shot dead in Dariapur, the police let loose a reign of terror in the area as they suspected that the inspector had been shot by a Muslim. There had been no trouble in the area until then. But the police took the help of local goondas and gave it a communal colour.

The firing on May 12 had been indiscriminate. Four had died and 56 had been injured in the firing. Over 50 houses had been burnt and terrified Muslims had fled to the relief camp set up in the cemetery nearby. And yet, the police said they had fired to control the Muslims who went on a rampage. Circumstantial evidence proves otherwise. Only Muslim houses and shops in the area bear signs of looting and arson. Says Ibrahim Khan, a mill-worker: "Uniformed policemen were setting our houses on fire. We could not believe it."

Some are now leaving the camps and returning to deserted areas like Bapunagar to rebuild their homes. One of them is Mohammed Hussein, a 42-year-old labourer. When mobs attacked his house on April 22, he fled with his family to a relief camp. On May 12, the mobs set fire to his house. Now he is cleaning the rubble to rebuild his house.

It will take ages for the wounds to heal. The tragedy is too intense; the damage to the state's social fabric too serious. Saidabibi of Rakhial, for one, feels it is not easy to wipe off memories of the holocaust. Her dramatist father, Rafiq Dehlvi, had adopted a Harijan boy about four decades ago. When the boy grew up, nobody was ready to marry him as he was considered to be neither a Harijan nor a Muslim. Dehlvi married him to his own daughter. In the '69 riots, Dehlvi was murdered. Two months ago, Saida's husband too was stoned to death by a rioting mob. A broken Saida feels there is little to live for now. Like Qamrunnisa, her world has been trod on twice over.

—RAMESH MENON

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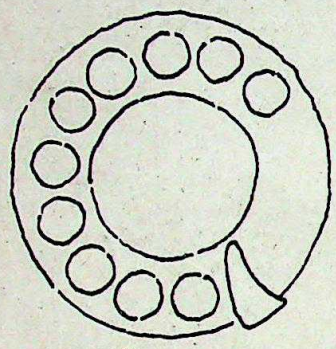
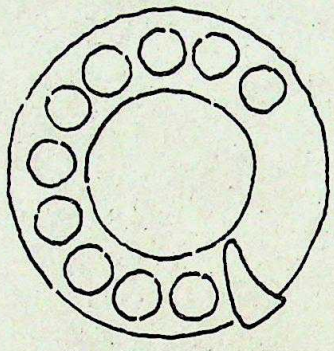
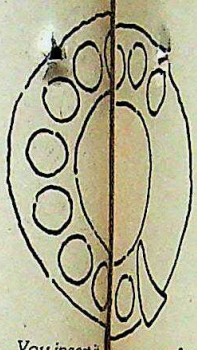


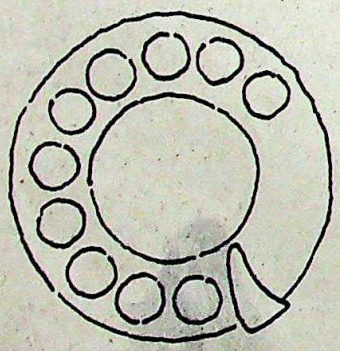
The Chi² is on your desk. You switch on 'Power'.



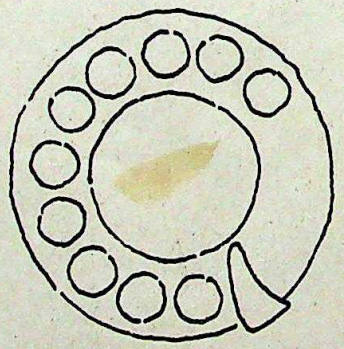
You unwrap a diskette. Looks like a 45 rpm record.



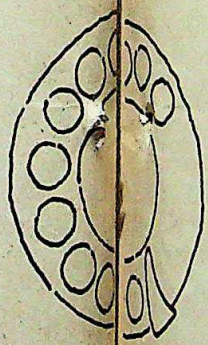
You insert it into the Chi².



Instantly, the screen's covered with rows and columns.



You type in 'Years' and 'Sales', and punch in relevant figures.



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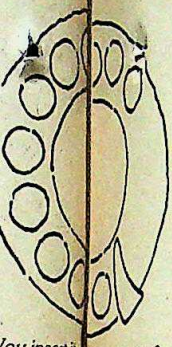
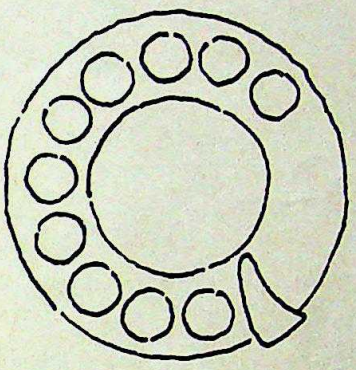
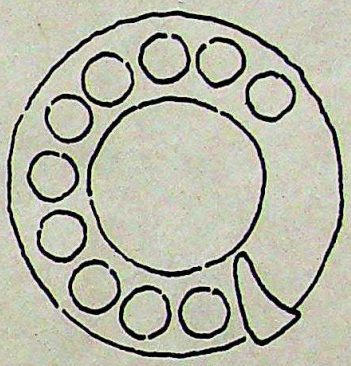


You insert it into the Chi².

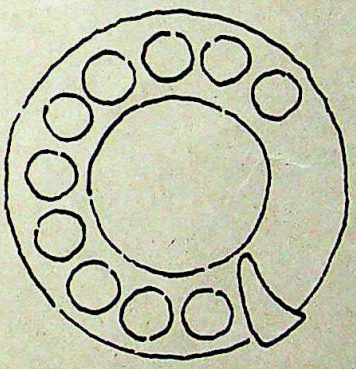


Suddenly, the screen is alive
By itself! "Today's date?"

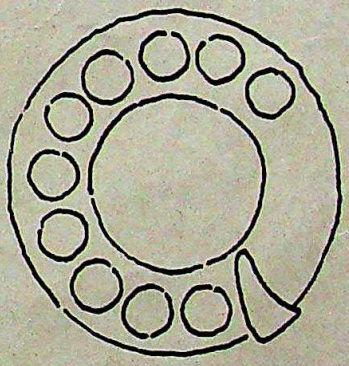


You type in the date
and name of program: 'SC'.

Now press a key,
the screen draws a graph!



One more key and the printer
has printed it out for you!



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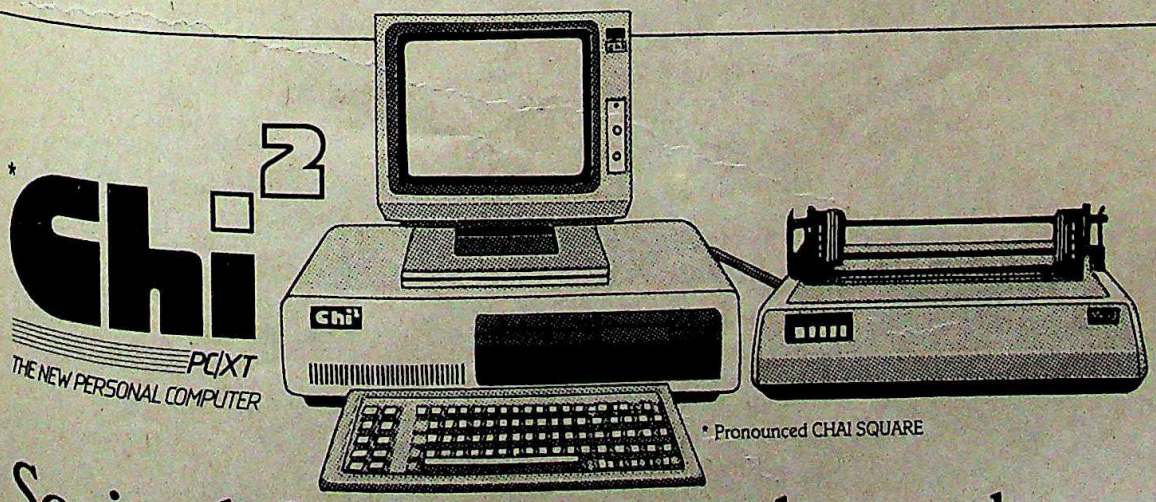

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Y.V. CHANDRACHUD

"We are not spineless"

THE LAST decade has seen the Indian judiciary go through rapid transition, for the better in some aspects, and for worse in others. Beginning with the Emergency, the hallowed institution has come under increasing pressures and has also shown signs of internal fissures at times, bringing the judiciary, and more so the Supreme Court of India in limelight. The judges' conduct and their judgements have been questioned as never before. Yet many landmark judgements have been delivered.

Through much of this eventful period Yeshwant Vishnu Chandrachud has had to hold centre-stage as the chief justice of India. "It is not an easy job...my biggest achievement is that I am leaving an undivided court for my successor," he now says reflecting philosophically. As India's longest-serving chief justice, he has seen more change and controversy in his seven years than any of his predecessors and has also had the misfortune of seeing charges of corruption levelled against members of his family.

More important, however, he has seen through a period of rapid change, of an increasingly nebulous love-hate relationship with the Government and of the evolution of the concept of public interest litigation. His critics say he and the court during his tenure were found wanting on crucial occasions. Civil liberties activists question his judgements during the Emergency throwing out habeas corpus cases and his siding with the minority in the Keshavanand Bharati case.

Last week on the eve of his retirement, Chandrachud who had spent 25 years as a judge, beginning with the Bombay High Court in 1961, looked back on all this with remarkable candour, publicly expressing regrets for taking "too legalistic" a view of the habeas corpus cases and admitting in retrospect that the majority judgement in the Keshavanand Bharati case was correct.

But controversy did not spare him on even his last day in the office. A small section of the Bar boycotted his farewell dinner party because of his role in the habeas corpus cases and partly because of the ridiculously puerile accusation that he was backing the corrupt contractor of the court canteen. Yet he spared time to talk to Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA *in an interview, interrupted by well-wishers on farewell calls, the inevitable farewell functions and ended just as he boarded the car for his last day in the office. Chandrachud touched upon a wide range of subjects. Excerpts:*

Q. You have spent a quarter century as a judge. How do you look back at your innings?

A. To have been a judge for 25 years is one of the finest things that could happen to me. I love to write judgements. I spend enormous time in conceiving and composing them. And still my disappointment is that I could not find enough time to produce better judgements after coming to the Supreme Court. If I may say so in all humility one of my achievements is that I am handing over an undivided court to my successor, a court marked by friendship and solidarity. There are ideological differences among the judges but no factions. The other achievement of which anyone may feel proud is the all-round improvement in the relations with the Bar and emergence of able juniors.

> **"We seek immortality through the pages of law reporters and our judgements are frightfully long, almost so long as to discourage the most ardent follower of law from reading them."**

Q. In this period, how did you see the judicial system evolve in the country —for better or worse?

A. I have no doubt that the judicial system has evolved for the better in the post-Independence era. Today there is a greater awareness of social commitment amongst judges than ever before. The system has served us well and truly. It needs improvement, not annihilation.

Q. Judicial delays, political pressures, decreasing dignity of the judge's office—these are considered as problems confronting the judiciary. In which order of importance do you place them?

A. I disagree with the basic premise underlying this question. I have not seen acceptable evidence of political pressures on the judiciary. I do not also agree that the judge's office has suffered indignity. Insofar as delays are concerned, law's delays are quite notorious. I should have thought that the major problem confronting the judicial system today is the enormous flow of work which is difficult to dispose of within a reasonable period. Appointment of more judges is not the answer because what is needed is the appointment of judges who are competent.

Q. Aren't judges themselves sometimes responsible for delays? Or do lawyers indulge in filibuster?

A. Judges cannot be fully absolved from the responsibility for delays. It is now time that at least the Supreme Court stops delivering judgements in every case that is argued before it. In judgements of affirmation, a simple order should suffice. But judges are, after all, human beings and the desire for immortality is a common human failing. We seek immortality through the pages of law reporters and our judgements are frightfully long, almost so long as to discourage the most ardent follower of law from reading them. So much scholarship is often wasted on the desert air and full many a judgement is born to blush unread.

Insofar as litigants are concerned, whether it is a private party or government, they are equally to blame for delays. Government counsel ask for adjournments even more than the counsel for private parties do.

Q. What can be done to reverse this situation?

A. In the speeches that I have made on the Law Days during the last five years, I have suggested remedies to reverse this situation. Reduction in the length of oral arguments, but not their elimination, and the filing of written briefs can appreciably help solve the problem of arrears. Setting up of expert tribunals at national level chaired by retired Supreme Court judges and manned by retired high court judges will also help to remedy the situation. But the appointment of unqualified persons on these tribunals is a remedy worse than the disease.

Q. Is the institution of judiciary today capable of resisting political and administrative pressures?

A. The judiciary today is in a position in which it can pride itself for its independence and integrity. In the midst of an all-round fall in values, the judiciary stands like a rock of strength and character. Indeed that is why people flock in such large numbers to the courts for justice.

Q. Do you agree that the judgement in the judges' transfer case was an abject surrender to these pressures?

A. I disagree with that. It is one thing to say that a decision requires further exa-

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mination and quite another to accuse the judges of submitting to political pressure. Some cases in the judges' case unquestionably require fresh consideration but I do not believe that political pressures played any part in the decision of that case. Some issues which come up before the court have political overtones. Judgements in such cases appear to have a political complexion. But that is not to be mixed up with political pressures.

Q. What exactly do you mean when you say that the judiciary is facing a threat from within? Are the judges getting increasingly spineless?

A. The threat from within is the result of materialistic ambitions and lack of contentment. One must cultivate a philosophical attitude and learn to take life as it comes in order to be able to maintain one's independence and serenity which are so essential for a judge. Judges know how to take care of their spines. There are isolated defaulters but they are exceptions. At the back of such defaults is the patronage which the Government commands.

Q. What can be done to counter the threat of this patronage?

A. The conditions of service of the judges must be improved and better post-retirement benefits should be made available to them. One problem which faces every judge at the time of retirement is that he or she has no house to live in. I have no house now and have written to the prime minister to help with the allotment of something like a DDA flat on priority basis. That is what the Government should do, provide houses through its housing boards at the prices charged to all others. That kind of courtesy to a retiring judge will help so much.

Q. This has reference to two of the most important constitutional cases of our times. In the Keshavanand Bharati case the Supreme Court said the Constitution had an unalterable basic structure. The Government sought to have it overruled in the Minerva Mills case where Mr Justice Bhagwati questioned the earlier judgement saying that members of the bench had hardly had the opportunity to discuss the case. Is that correct?

A. It is not correct. It was a marathon case and the hearing lasted about four months. There were several occasions when the judges met to discuss the points and exchange their views on these. What can be said, however, is that it was not possible for the judges to go through each other's draft judgements with due care.

Q. Is it correct that following this, two brother judges had written to you questioning Mr Justice Bhagwati's remarks? If so, what action did you take?

A. It is correct that two of my colleagues had written letters to me saying that there was a full discussion among the judges. It would have been improper to take any action on those letters. My constant endeavour has been to hold the court together, even at the cost of personal embarrassment. The institution has to be greater than the individuals who man it.

Q. Drawing from these questions, there is a feeling that you have had differences with your successor. Is that so?

A. There have been no notable differences between me and my successor Justice P.N. Bhagwati. No two individuals are alike and the approach of the judges at the level of Supreme Court is bound to differ from person to person. There is not a single incident outside the court which can be pointed out as reflecting personal animosity between me and Justice Bhagwati. Indeed he had a word of praise in his judgement for a toddler member of my family. That was generous on his part. In court matters we have confided in each other on numerous occasions. I relied upon him heavily in judicial work. The general impression that all is not well between us arose because of observations made by him in two of his judgements which, with respect, were somewhat harsh. But I did not allow these observations to mar our relationship.

Q. Were you consulted on the appointment of your successor?

A. Yes. My unquestioned choice was Justice Bhagwati.

Q. What can be done to counter the increasing executive interference in judges' appointment?

BHAWAN SINGH

A. The appointment of judges is too much of a clandestine affair. There should be wider consultation and a freer discussion on the question of judicial appointments. But once an appointment is decided upon or made, all criticism must cease.

Q. But you have already talked of the influence of caste in appointments, singling out the Allahabad High Court appointments as a specific example. Is that a problem?

A. Yes, casteism is a serious problem everywhere, in varying degrees. In fact I now regret having singled out the Allahabad High Court. This problem must be countered. But one thing I would like to say that the only place where there is no casteism is the Calcutta High Court.

Q. How serious is the problem of corruption in the judiciary?

A. The judiciary was almost totally free from corruption until a decade back. Unfortunately, today one hears whispers of a fall in judicial rectitude. I am not in a position to say that every one of such allegations is well-founded but there is a reason to suppose that occasionally judges invite suspicion by the way they conduct themselves. Caesar's wife has to be beyond suspicion. Increasing judges' emoluments will be no remedy because people with unlimited wealth can also be corrupt.

Q. And what about charges against members of your family for unfairly acquiring plots of land?

A. All this is untrue. My wife had applied for a bit of farmland in response to

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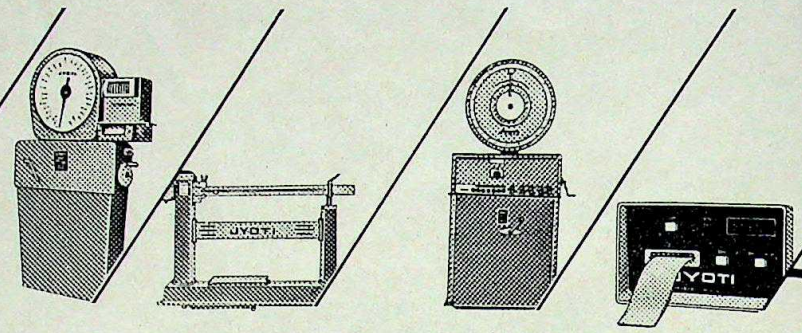

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some advertisement and deposited Rs 7,000. After some time we realised that the DDA was acquiring the particular piece of land. We were offered land elsewhere in return but the DDA said they could take up to 10 years giving us that. So we said we were not interested and sold our land back to DDA for Rs 7,001. And a journal said I had bought land for Rs 6 lakh and was going to make 35 lakh. The point is, before that someone had to give me six lakhs. If I have a crore of rupees I can make fifty crores. But do you think a judge has so much money? The sale was registered on a full-stamp sale deed two years before the allegations were published in a journal.

It hurts me that a prestigious journal should have done so. I did not contradict them for the simple reason that a judge cannot engage himself in a war with the press. I regret to say that I was not even extended the courtesy of answering the charges before they were published. What can a judge do? He has no platform where he can defend himself.

Q. *And how do you explain your acquiring a Maruti car out of turn?*

A. I had not applied for an out-of-turn allotment even though my own car, an Ambassador, is 18 years old. Probably the company decided to allot cars on priority basis in order to boost their sales. I was asked whether I wanted a car to be allotted early and I said yes, provided enough time was given to me to find the money to buy it. The provident fund came handy.

Q. *There has even been controversy regarding your farewell dinner. A section of the Bar is threatening to boycott it over your alleged patronage to the "inefficient" court canteen contractor. Is the charge true?*

A. Utterly false. Once again no newspaper sought my version before publishing this. The whole thing was planted by a daily newspaper correspondent here who is a briefless lawyer and wants to run the court canteen much against the wishes of the Bar.

Q. *Would you then say that all allegations against you have been motivated since you have already stated that after the allegations on the land acquisition you were approached by certain people offering to publish a contradiction in case you recommended the name of a particular person for a judicial appointment?*

A. Motivated yes, but I am not blaming anyone. I would like to clarify that the person for whom the favour was being sought never approached me. But indirectly that approach had come.

Q. *There has been an increasing tendency to hold trials in camera or even in jails. Trials of suspected Sikh terrorists and Mrs Gandhi's alleged assassins are some such examples. How do you react to this trend?*

BHAWAN SINGH

> "Some cases in the judges' case unquestionably require fresh consideration but I do not believe that political pressures played any part in the decision of that case."

A. To my mind a trial should be held in the open, in fierce gaze of publicity. That is what inspires confidence. People are likely to express doubts about trials held in jails. At the same time there may be special circumstances in some cases where, for example, it may be necessary to save witnesses from publicity.

Q. *Do you think terrorism and the increasing threat to public servants dealing with the terrorists have put additional pressure on the judiciary particularly in a state such as Punjab?*

A. No, I don't think a judge trying terrorists should have a particular apprehension to his life. We have session judges who try cases of murder every day. Let me tell you it is a remarkable feature of Indian life that not even once—barring the very odd exception—has a judge been physically harmed.

Q. *What are your views on the concept of public interest litigation?*

A. The phenomenon has increased the workload of the court but that has been one of the Supreme Court's most worthwhile experiments. However, great care must be taken to see that interlopers and busybodies do not take undue advantage of this venture and give it a bad name.

Q. *At the same time the court has also taken cognizance of a national problem like the electoral rolls revision in Assam. Can the Supreme Court intervene in, say, the reservation controversy? What are your views on reservations?*

A. Reservations is not a purely political issue. It involves consideration of constitutional provisions and the judges cannot keep themselves aloof. My view is that the policy of reservations in promotional posts requires a fresh look. It is also necessary to apply the 'means test' at some stage in order that the benefits of reservation are not monopolised by affluent families.

Q. *Do you have any regrets, now in the evening of your career?*

A. One of my regrets is that I was not able to speed up the course of justice. I had a long spell as chief justice but our whole system is so hidebound that it is difficult to introduce innovations.

Q. *No regrets even on having stirred controversy by turning out the advocate's woman assistant wearing tight jeans?*

A. Well (smiles), I had no difference with her jeans. What I objected to was the way she was strutting up and down the court with a comb peeping out of her hip-pocket. It was as if she wanted her jeans to be felt in the court. So I objected.

Q. *How would you like to spend your time in retirement? Will you go back to teaching?*

A. We have strange regulations governing aspects of life in our country. I love to teach but I understand that no one will accept me as a teacher since there is an age limit. I am quite relaxed and happy. I will now sit by the fireside and hear my wife hum a song. And I will read out to my grandchildren the masterpieces of literature which have been a source of great joy to me.

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THE STOCK MARKETS

New Money Spinner

THREE floors below, you can hear the excited buzz, like bees collecting honey. Up the staircase, it becomes increasingly difficult to make your way as the loiterers and hangers-on thicken into groups and then a crowd. On the third floor landing, you have to wade through the crush, and the buzz has become a deafening roar. Through a door and into the large, makeshift trading ring of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the frenzy of the action finally hits you with all its force.

Brokers, jobbers, brokers' clerks and other assorted animals that make up the stock-market fraternity—basically the bulls and the bears—are yelling at the top of their voices, paan-stained mouths twisted into unpretty shapes as arms, hands and fingers are waved, twisted and twirled in the frenetic business of striking deals and making or losing money. Above a door in the distance, the Goddess Lakshmi and Mahatma Gandhi adorn a badly plastered wall, while fans at every turn and corner whirr in furious futility as the humidity of the city combines with the heat of the action to make for sweat-soaked kurtas and imparts an edge of stained perspiration to the black caps that adorn broker heads. High above the action, a large glass panel lights up with various numbers, indicating to the brokers below that their offices want them to get on to the hot lines that link the offices to the scene of the action. Banks of telephones—over 100 in number—line the perimeter of the trading ring, near one end of which a battered old man sits on a broken bench, dishing out water in aluminium *lotas* that the dalals gulp down hurriedly before rushing back to the scene of activity for some more frenetic yelling and waving and wheeling and dealing.

Despite the frenzy, the setting fails to suggest big money: the hall is a makeshift affair, corrugated tin sheets make do for walls, the odd pieces of furniture strewn around are invariably in need of repair, steel tube girders point at odd angles, and on a wet day the rain beats in. Yet this large, ungainly 'room' sees daily business transactions of up to Rs 7 crore and more on scores of share counters, and represents for millions of investors across the country a new El Dorado.

Over the last six months, the unprecedented boom on the stock-market has resulted in the market value of shares going up from Rs 9,984 crore in December 1984 to more than Rs 15,000 crore now. That means a net gain of over Rs 5,000 crore to the seven million investors in the country. The investors themselves numbered barely two million five years ago, but their numbers are growing by leaps and bounds. Today, there are three times as many share investors as income-tax payers, denoting the ultimate flowering of Indian capitalism. The experts now predict that more than 15 million Indians will be hooked on to the stock-market in the next three or four years. In poverty-stricken India, the stock-market has finally transformed itself from an esoteric club of dalals who speak a strange language to the new money-spinning hope of the middle class.

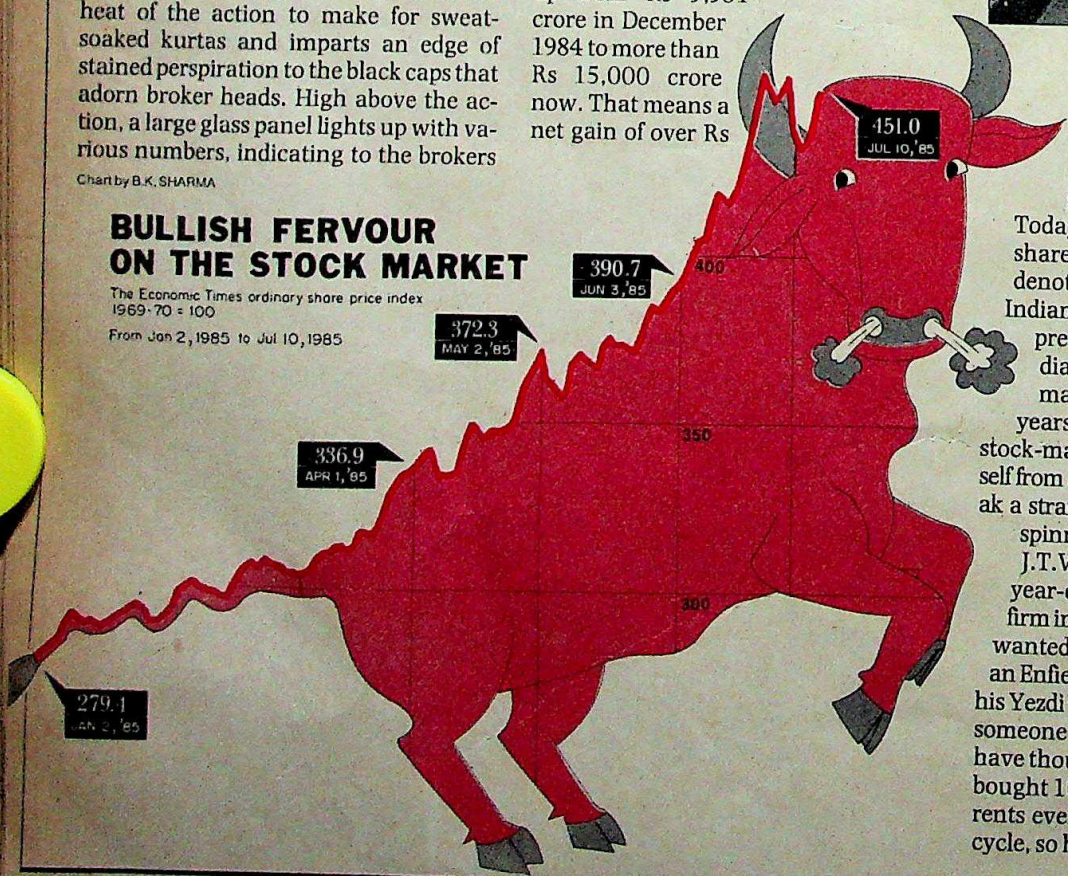
J.T.V.Satyanarayana Rao is a 28-year-old sales executive in a computer firm in Hyderabad. In May last year, he wanted to raise Rs 4,000 quickly to buy an Enfield Bullet motorcycle after selling his Yezdi vehicle, so he did something that someone in his station in life would not have thought of doing some years ago: he bought 100 shares in Ind-Suzuki. His parents eventually paid for his new motorcycle, so his initial investment has, after a

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

BULLISH FERVOUR ON THE STOCK MARKET

The Economic Times ordinary share price index 1969-70 = 100

From Jan 2, 1985 to Jul 10, 1985



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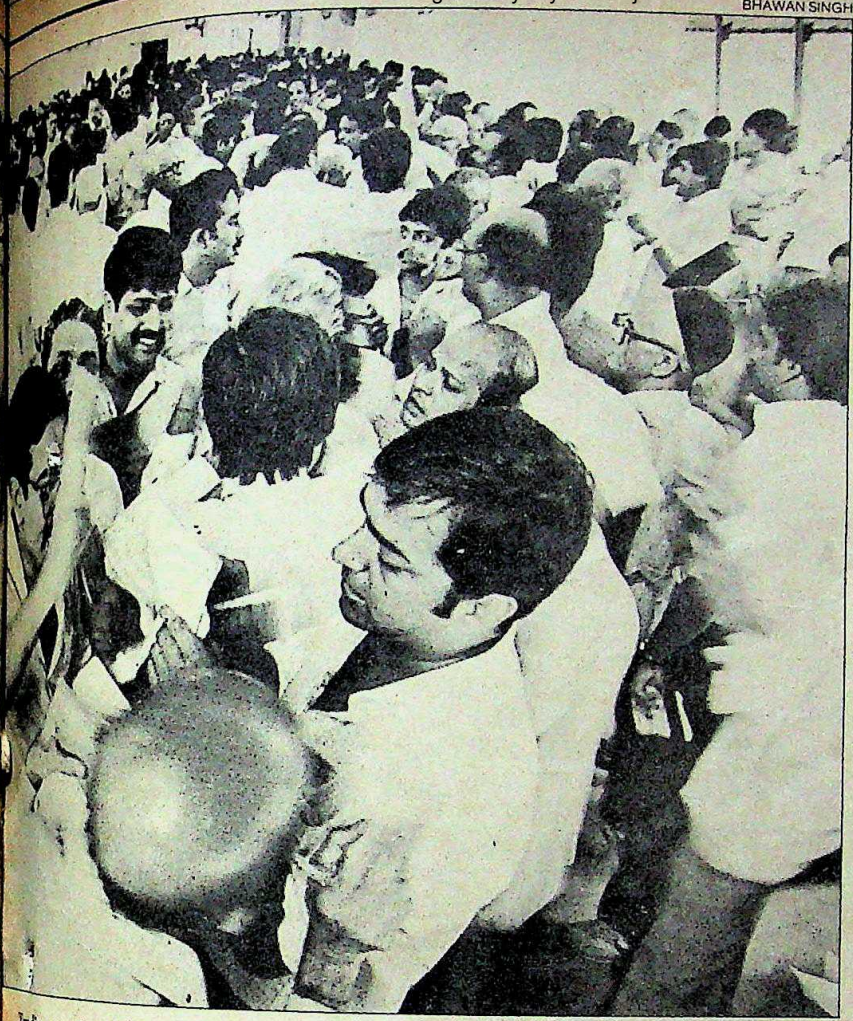
BHAWAN SINGH



Trading on the Bombay Stock Exchange: frenetic boom

BHAWAN SINGH

"Shares were not a good investment earlier. Today they are, because they yield handsome returns and are an effective hedge against inflation."

M.R. MAYYA
Executive Director
Bombay Stock Exchange

series of reinvestments, become Rs 25,000. Rao is now an avid investor: he has borrowed money at 36 per cent interest to invest in shares that he thinks will give him a 50 to 100 per cent return in the short span of a year.

V.J. Parikh is a retired professor from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, and now settled in Delhi. On his morning constitutional, he meets up with fellow-retirees on a park bench, and the subject of discussion is invariably the share-market.

Ashwini Windlass is the senior corporate manager in a Delhi drug firm. Three years ago, he was advised by a fellow-passenger on a flight to Bombay to buy shares in Premier Automobiles. The price shot up from Rs 95 to Rs 220 in 16 days. Windlass recalls. He reinvested his takings and now has an investment portfolio that runs into lakhs of rupees. Last year he made many times more than his substantial salary by playing the market.

Journalist Kewal Varma recalls with surprise how his 75-year-old mother-in-law, Ram Pyari, asked him some time ago for advice on which debentures to buy. "I didn't even know she had heard of something called debentures," Varma recalls with amusement.

The surprise is everywhere. There is so much money now being poured into the stock-market that companies asking for share subscriptions are flooded with offers 10 to 50 times more than what is required. Hero Honda Motors recently floated shares worth Rs 4.46 crore, and was offered Rs 46.8 crore. In August last year, Roche Products floated shares worth Rs 81 lakh, and was offered Rs 27 crore. And a few months ago, Kinetic Honda was offered 150 times the amount it wanted. The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) has managed share issues worth Rs 9 crore this year; it has got offers from the public for Rs 99 crore.

Five years ago, share and debenture issues by all companies put together totalled Rs 100 crore in a full year. Now one company alone raises Rs 100 crore in less than a month. And last year, investors put Rs 2,000 crore into new issues: more than the Rs 1,746 crore which the Government collected through the income tax. This year, says D.R. Mehta, controller of Capital Issues in the Finance Ministry, the figure is expected to be between Rs 2,500 crore and Rs 3,000 crore.

Who is investing, and why? The answers: almost everybody, and because there is quick money to be made. An employee in the Delhi office of a fertiliser company says that two years ago only five of his 100 colleagues used to take an interest in stocks and shares. Now 70 of them—both white collar and brown collar—are investors. In the capital's Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, engineers working for the Tata Consultancy Services use their lunch hour to take a quick trip to the Delhi Stock Exchange on nearby Asaf Ali Road, to watch the action, consult their brokers and make investment decisions.

Intrigued by the sudden broad-basing of the investor population, Hindustan Lever decided recently to find out who the new investors were, and commissioned a market research company to do a survey. The surveyors quizzed people queueing up outside bank offices to subscribe to share issues and found that those waiting in line included office peons and bus

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drivers working for the Bombay Electric Supply and Transport (BEST).

The fever has spread up and down the social and economic ladder, and fanned out from the big metropolises to the smaller cities and burgeoning towns where more money is now known to be available on tap than even financial whiz-kids had imagined. There are investors like Y.S.N. Murthy, an officer in the Hyderabad office of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) who invests in shares because the LIC will not give him a pension when he retires, and others like Ludhiana bank clerk Y.S.Kohli who sees in the stock-market a safe way of adding to his income in a manner that his bank cannot object: "Some of my colleagues run their own businesses on the side, but the stock-market is perfectly legal and gives me good returns," says Kohli.

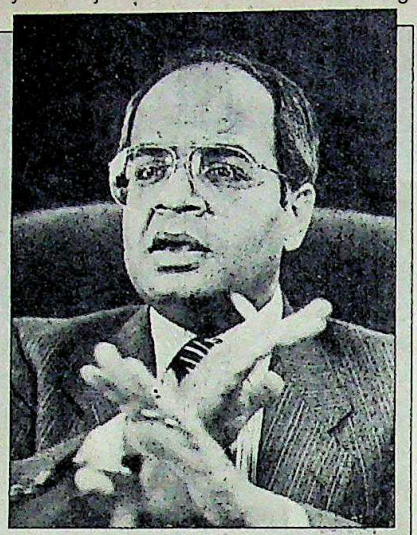
IN GEOGRAPHICAL terms, eight new stock exchanges have been opened in the last three years, adding to the five that existed earlier in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Ahmedabad and Madras. Already, the membership of the Ludhiana Stock Exchange commands a premium of Rs 20,000, and of the Kanpur exchange Rs65,000. In Delhi, which has come close to overtaking Calcutta in stock-market importance, the premium for membership of the stock exchange is a staggering Rs 4 lakh. And in towns that do not yet have stock-markets, sub-brokers and informal investors' clubs do a roaring business. Pramod Kohli, a partner in the Delhi stockbroking firm of Sikander Lal and Co, says he gets a staggering amount of business from such far-flung towns as Ajmer, Aligarh, Hardwar, Rishikesh, Pune, Lucknow and Agra. And in Chandigarh, S.P. Bhatia takes time off from his duties as a junior officer in the Allahabad Bank to run an investors' club that meets fortnightly in a local restaurant. The business conducted at each meeting of the club often crosses Rs 1 lakh, and Bhatia occasionally makes a trip to Delhi to do business with brokers.

Investors' clubs have sprouted even in the big cities where stock exchanges are easily accessible. In Bombay, a dozen employees of Imageads and Communications Pvt Ltd have pooled their finances to make joint investment decisions. And at the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun, officer cadets go through a course in share investments, where they are advised not to waste their precious savings on such outdated favourites as fixed deposits in banks.

The speed and ease with which the stock-market has entered ordinary people's lives is entirely understandable. M.R. Mayya, executive director of the BSE points out that during the 1960s share prices rose on average by only 6 per cent, much less than the 80 per cent increase in wholesale prices. During the 1970s, share prices continued to rise slower than general prices. Says Mayya: "Shares were simply not a good investment earlier. Today they are, because they provide an effective hedge against inflation and yield handsome returns." He is absolutely right, for share prices this year alone have risen by an average of 56 per cent, or close to 10 per cent a month. And some of the leading scrips have doubled and trebled in market value, yielding undreamt of windfalls to the lucky investors. Bajaj Auto shares, for instance, have shot up from Rs 865 in January to Rs 1,675 in July, Blue Star from Rs 33 to Rs 70, Indian Photographic Company from Rs 57.50 to Rs 145, Kinetic Engineering from Rs 135 to Rs 305, TISCO from Rs 382 to Rs 890, and so on. "The price increase in shares is unbelievable," says P.N. Vijay, manager of the Grindlays Bank's merchant banking division. "The share prices of some companies have doubled in a single day. Sometimes people in company managements have got so worried by the price rise that they have rung me up asking if a takeover raid is being mounted." Even rumours are enough to set off quantum leaps in prices: an investment analyst in Bombay points out that the shares of Scooters India jumped from Rs 5 to Rs 20 on the strength of market rumour that Bajaj Auto might be taking over the scooter company.

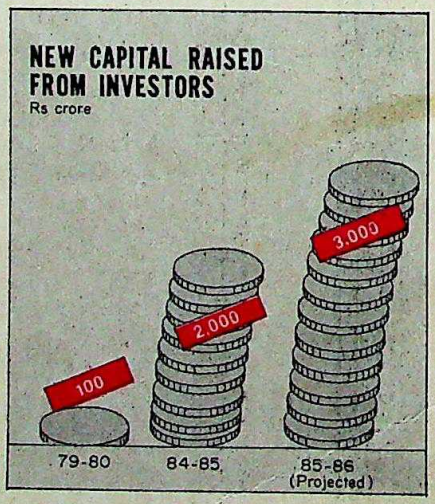
With such extraordinary price increases now a fact of stock-market life, numerous stories do the rounds about overnight riches: Bimal Jain, a New Delhi housewife, bought 500 debentures of Reliance Textiles a year ago at their then market price of Rs 92. The company then offered to convert these into shares which are ruling at record levels. Jain's initial investment of Rs 46,000 is now worth Rs 1.5 lakh in barely a year.

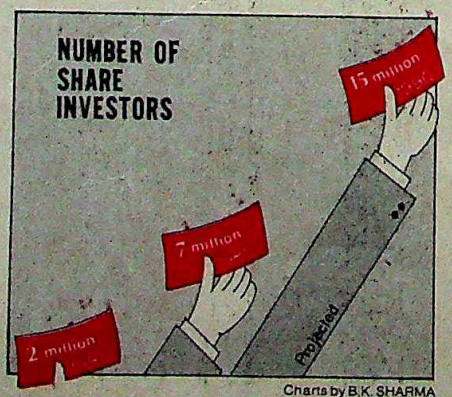
Such easy pickings may not always be available, and certainly the unprecedented boom that the stock-market has witnessed this year cannot continue indefinitely; some sort of stability must return and indeed this transition is already evident. Nevertheless, there is no turning back from the new investor awareness, the financial awakening of the middle class as the stock-market becomes a central factor in household financial planning. Equally important, the general



"Any intelligent businessman can now eliminate the banks as middlemen and get money directly from investors."

CHANDER PARKASH
Deputy Managing Director
Orkay Silk Mills





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TRADE JARGON

Bulls vs Bears

SOME time ago a few gentlemen on Wall Street got together to feed a computer a whole lot of information on the stock-market and find out how to beat the system. The computer took a day to come up with the answer: "Buy low, sell high!"

Actually, it's not that simple. The market is peopled with two kinds of animals: the bulls and the bears. The bull—the *tejiwala*—makes money when share prices are rising, as in the current phase, and the bear—the *mandiwala*—when the prices are falling. Shakespeare's homily "There is a tide in the affairs of men" is best understood when applied to the share bazar, because the key to being a successful bull or bear is to understand, as Ram K. Piparaiya, investment consultant, says: "That there is no sure way of knowing when prices will rise or fall, but that they will rise and fall and to catch the rise or the fall at its start and ride it up or down."

There are two kinds of scrips: 'A' group securities, which number 49 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the 'B' group which accounts for 277 companies on the BSE. Debentures can also be traded and the BSE currently lists 32 such 'A' group securities, also known as "specified" securities which are usually the big daddies of the market: ACC, TISCO, Reliance, Century. Forward transactions are allowed in these—the buyer can carry forward the transaction from one fortnightly settlement of outstanding transactions to another, sometimes for years together. 'B' group transactions, however, are on a cash basis, they cannot be carried forward from settlement to settlement but have to be completed within one settlement period. Clearly 'A' group securities have more scope for speculation and one way the powers-that-be try and cool the market down is to transfer scrips for the 'A' column to the 'B' column, as was done in TISCO recently.

How does a bull ride the wave up? He buys low and waits. When settlement day comes he can take delivery of the shares, which means that he will now hold shares valued at higher than the price he paid. If he doesn't have the money to take delivery or if he is very daring—nowadays the two go together—he can carry forward the transaction, paying another person contango charges ("*badla*" charges, in the vernacular) to put up the money on his behalf. These days, with hundreds of *badlas* every day, the *badla* financiers are making a packet. To cool the market down the authorities impose margins, which means that a percentage of the money involved has to be paid to the BSE. This is supposed to discourage overtrading and it does, but usually not fully. Recently the authorities could down the extremely volatile TISCO scrip only with an incredible margin of 100 per cent.

Cartoon by NINAN

A bear rides the scrip on the way down by selling short, that is selling a scrip at say Rs 100—and hoping to buy it back when it touches, say Rs 80. His profit on a scrip which he may never have held in his hot little hands is the difference between the two prices. This is a tricky process sometimes: three years ago, a whole lot of bears got together to picnic off Reliance shares. The scrip, because it was a strong one and because there were three or four very obliging buyers who grabbed everything they could lay their hands on, kept rising. When judgement day arrived, the buyers demanded delivery and the bears had to scramble to collect shares at very high prices and lost quite a bit of fur in the process.

Most of the transactions are done between "jobbers"—brokers who stand on one spot in the ring and specialise in one or two securities—and brokers' clerks—who travel from jobber to jobber and place orders. Anything can start off a *teji*—a bull market—or a *mandi*—a bear market. TELCO stock rose by Rs 55 just on the news that it had entered into an agreement with Honda for cars. Orkay roared up to Rs 140 from Rs 90 in a matter of days simply because the company's annual meeting of shareholders is due—and despite the Rs 10.5 crore excise case, the company is embroiled in.

The one thing that can be said to determine the price of a share is the floating stock: that fraction of the equity capital of a company which is actually available for trading, and usually works out to 15 per cent of the equity capital. Otherwise, there is absolutely no way the price can be predicted. Last fortnight, for instance, with the income-tax raids on a few brokers' offices in the market, it was expected the shares would crash: they emerged stronger than ever.

Besides the transactions in the ring, brokers make money in outside trading. One way is by "arbitrage"—the buying and selling of securities between stock exchanges. Another is through kerb dealings—*band ne bhao*—dealings literally on the kerb outside. Once BSE Executive Director M.R. Mayya even had to go down to the kerb from his eyrie on the 25th floor to shoo away kerb brokers and impose heavy fines.

The world of the stock exchange is a hard one and it is also sometimes not very clean: settlements often take place at privately agreed prices, and it is now a new haven for black money. But there is one redeeming feature: very, very rarely has anyone reneged on his bargain. This is one place where one's word or just asserting the lift of a finger is still enough. —JAGANNATH DURASHI

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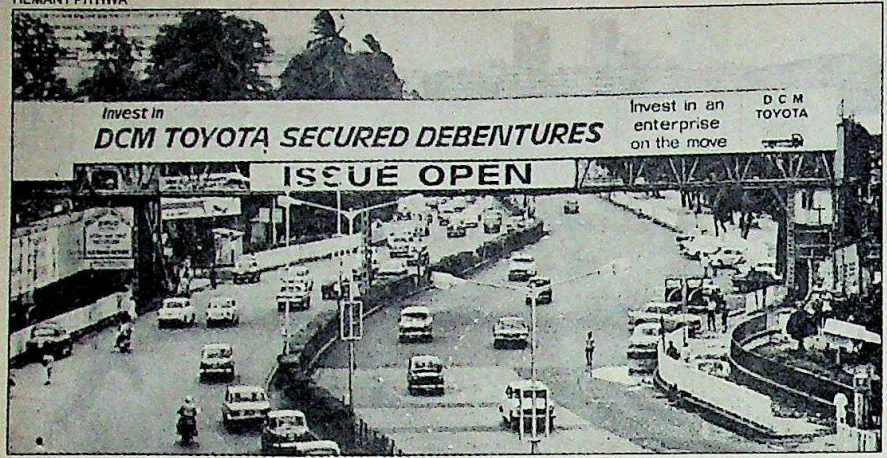
HEMANT PITHWA



New advertising strategies:hardsell

confidence about the economy being set for a take-off is now getting reflected on the stock-market.

Five years ago, Hindustan Lever could boast of having the largest number of shareholders among all companies in the country: 80,000. Today, the Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertiliser Corporation (GNFC) has 4.22 lakh shareholders, Reliance has 3.58 lakh shareholders and a total of 1.2 million investors (counting also those who hold the company's debentures and who have invested fixed deposits with the company), while a dozen other companies have more than a lakh shareholders each, including Lohia Machines, Gwalior Rayon, ITC, J.K. Synthetics, Ambalal Sarabhai, Indian Rayon, Lipton Tea and Glaxo Laboratories. Reliance alone has half as many investors as the total number of income tax payers in the country, and a couple of lakh shareholders in GNFC are farmers from the Gujarat countryside, introduced to the stock-market for the first time. Indeed, according to a study conducted two months ago by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), every eighth shareholder in the country today is a farmer. So the fever has spread to the rural areas as well.

Now, even as the Government views with satisfaction the broad-basing of share ownerships, its postal department is creaking under the strain of handling the gigantic mailing lists for company annual reports. Reliance Textiles has to distribute its annual reports through over a dozen post offices because no one office can handle the workload. And sometimes it is faster for the annual reports to be despatched from Bombay in trucks to other towns, where they are then handed in at the local post offices.

The share boom has resulted in numerous other spin-offs. Investment consultants have sprouted round almost every corner in the financial districts of the big cities, and investment journals crowd the news stands: *Fortune India, Money Opportunities, Investment Today, Current Investments India* and numerous others like *Market Outlook, Corporate Panorama, Investment Bonanza, Market Trends* and many more. There is also the promise of new investment companies and mutual funds that will undertake investment decisions on behalf of individual investors who may not be boned up on what is happening on the market. One such is the Hyderabad Investment and Financial Consultancy Corporation (HIFCO). Another company riding the crest of the wave is the Bombay-based J.M. Financial and Investment Consultancy Services, whose managing director Nimesh Kampani says he had five branch offices five years ago. Today, he has 14 and in the next two years he hopes to take that number to 50. "There are thousands of shareholders in small towns who have to be serviced," Kampani explains, adding that he expects the investor population to double in short order to 15 million. And Amrit Lal Bajaj, president of the Delhi Stock Exchange, has started ALB Trading Company to help small investors pool their resources and get substantial allotments on new share issues.

"The number of investors has gone up from 2 million to 7 million, and I expect this to grow to 15 million in the next few years."

NIMESH KAMPANI
Managing Director
JM Financial and Investment Consultancy Services

Such spin-offs can only multiply in an economy that now sees the middle class growing in size and financial clout, where urbanisation and the increasing economic surpluses accumulating in private hands provide the base for a more general acceptance of the joint stock principle that makes for public limited companies and stock exchanges.

N.J.Yasaswy, the Hyderabad-based share analyst, is one of several people who now see good times ahead. "The number of investors in the south has gone up four or five times in recent years, and it is becoming increasingly obvious to many prospective shareholders that returns from the stock-market are better than other investments." And the most significant finding of a survey of investors Yasaswy conducted in Hyderabad was that half of them were in the 31 to 45 age group, while another 16 per cent were in the 26 to 30 age group. Clearly, if the young are leading the headlong rush into the stock-market, the future can only be bright. Equally interestingly, Yasaswy's survey showed that more than half the investors had a monthly income of less than Rs 3,000.

Yet another finding of the IDBI study of investment patterns is that the salaried class now outnumbers the self-employed and professionals among the investing population. Now, with the Government talking of mandatorily offering company shares to employees in those companies the shareholding population could explode manifold yet again and lead to another quantum leap on the already booming stock-market.

If the entry of new classes of investors into the stock-market underlines the basic transformation of the share market, the history of this revolutionary development traces back to the late 1970s, when dozens of foreign-controlled companies were forced by the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) to dilute their foreign shareholding by offering shares to

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Indian investors. This was invariably done at prices far below the ruling market rates for the concerned shares, and investors quickly sensed easy pickings and rushed in to buy a stake in such blue chip firms as Colgate-Palmolive, Hindustan Lever and some of the leading pharmaceutical firms. Many made instant money through these easy investments, and the shareholding population doubled overnight as the companies allotted their shares in small lots to an increasingly large numbers of investors.

If this whetted the appetite of numerous investors for the stock-market, the advent of the convertible debentures in the early 1980s marked a new phase of the boom. Convertible debentures are first-term bonds floated by companies at a specified rate of interest, with a part of the debenture value to be converted later into shares in the company. Thus, this investment instrument offered both an assured return (in the form of interest) plus the prospect of capital appreciation once the conversion to shares took place. In short, they were a surefire success, and the investors flocked in in droves once again. The debentures listed on the BSE totalled only Rs 671 crore in 1980. By 1984, this number had shot up to Rs 2,370 crore. During the same period, debenture grew on the Calcutta Stock Exchange from Rs 136 crore to Rs 623 crore, and on the Madras Stock Exchange from Rs 117 crore to Rs 746 crore.

Through this period, the Government itself took a series of bold and imaginative steps to boost the capital market. The maximum rate of interest on debentures was raised repeatedly so as to increase their attractiveness, and the same government that had banned forward (i.e. speculative) trading in 1969 allowed it once again two years ago. Further, companies were given permission to raise debentures for working capital, and then for investment in modernisation, and the norms governing the issue of these debentures were liberalised progressively.

All this marked a complete change in government attitudes from a decade ago, when the authorities had clamped down on the dividend freeze and restricted the issuing of bonus shares in their effort to hold the price line by reducing the quantity of money flowing into consumers' hands. Today, in sharp contrast, the effort consciously is to try and develop the private capital market further, to broad-base corporate shareholdings and to encourage companies to rely for funds on private investors rather than on the Government-owned financial institutions like the IDBI

SYMBOLS

Handy Signs

THE RING of the Bombay Stock Exchange is a kidney-shaped area which on good days accommodates up to 6,000 brokers and jobbers (people who trade in just one or two securities) buying and selling for all they are worth. When the heat is on and the din is deafening, communication in such places is largely a matter of signs. Also, with all brokers obsessed with secrecy, signs are perhaps the best way of keeping that secret.

The unmarked trading ring has a floor plan just as much as any carefully designed office. Shares on which forward trading are allowed are usually dealt with on the left of the ring, and cash scrips on the right. The leader in the former category, alphabetically as well as in terms of interest, is the Associated Cement Companies, or ACC, or "cement", or more graphically "murder"—because price movements in this volatile scrip can be murderous. The ACC jobbers stand in the centre of the ring, the TISCO people next to them, Reliance jobbers hang together at the side, and the rest are spread around. There is a fair amount of movement from one jobbing post to the other.

The signs are simple and made with such rapidity that few other than the two brokers involved actually catch on to the messages being exchanged in a fraction of a second. First, there are the quantity signs: the tip of the thumb resting on the first joint of the forefinger means one share, resting on the second joint means 10, and the entire forefinger equals 100 shares. One forefinger sticking up combined with an aggressive expression means 1,000 shares and the entire palm is 5,000 shares. The palm facing inwards is "buy" and facing out is "sell". Two palms facing outwards and waved frantically with little thought of secrecy is "sell, or I will have to jump off window sill." Waving palms must have been a common feature on the day of the great ACC crash last year.

The gestures that are combined with these to make up a complete transaction denote the scrips themselves and the signs for these vary, even changing from time to time. When a broker wants to buy 1,000 ACC shares, for instance, he might fleetingly touch his ear with one hand and make what seems like an obscene one-finger gesture with it half a second later, even as he looks like King Kong about to assault Jessica Lange. For Century Spinning, he will touch his clothes, for Tata Oil he'll rub his hands together, for Reliance he'll raise a fist, and so on. Some of the gestures are quite elaborate: a hand put on one's head, for instance, means TISCO because the company makes iron, which is black—black as the hair on the head.

People in the ring tell the rather apocryphal story of the innocent who wandered into the stock exchange as the guest of a broker, and then started talking animatedly. In less than the time it has taken to read this, he had started a veritable buying riot in a particular scrip. The odd thing is that in recent months even the hardened specialists have set off buying riots with little reason.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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and the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI). As the Controller of Capital Issues, D.R. Mehta, said last fortnight, "Some kind of a bullish (upward) trend in prices is helpful for growth because more investment is attracted."

If the investing public has sensed this change of attitude and jumped into the market to take advantage, nothing has fired shareholders' imaginations as much as the economic policies of the Rajiv Gandhi Government. Virtually every half-way expert on stocks and shares attributes the unprecedented share boom of the last six months to a new confidence born out of the economic policies promised or followed by the new Government. Said Amrit Lal Bajaj: "The new Government is more pragmatic, so people feel that companies will now do better, and investor psychology has changed."

Perhaps this was inevitable. The Government has in recent months lowered income tax and wealth tax rates (leaving more money for investment in investors' hands), abolished the estate duty and the compulsory deposit scheme, raised the exemption floor under the monopolies act from Rs 20 crore to Rs 100 crore, announced hikes in the prices of steel and cement (boosting the shares of companies operating in these areas), liberalised licensing policies, put together a new policy package for the textile industry, delicensed major sectors of the drug industry, suggested in various ways that the private sector will now be the primary arm used for industrialisation (instead of the public sector, as in the past), and offered new avenues of growth for companies in almost every sector. Close to half the companies which earlier came into the net of the monopolies law are now out of it because of the asset floor being raised, and companies producing trucks can now produce cars. Thus, TELCO shares shot up merely on the announcement last fortnight of a collaboration agreement with Honda for producing cars.

Said S.L. Bardhan, president of the Calcutta Stock Exchange: "The latest stock-market boom is essentially because of the measures announced in the last budget, the lowering of taxes and the various reliefs offered to industry." Added a broker in Bombay: "Look at the way companies are expanding. Everyone is talking big, no one is planning investment of less than Rs 100 crore. And companies like TISCO are talking of investing a few thousand crores."

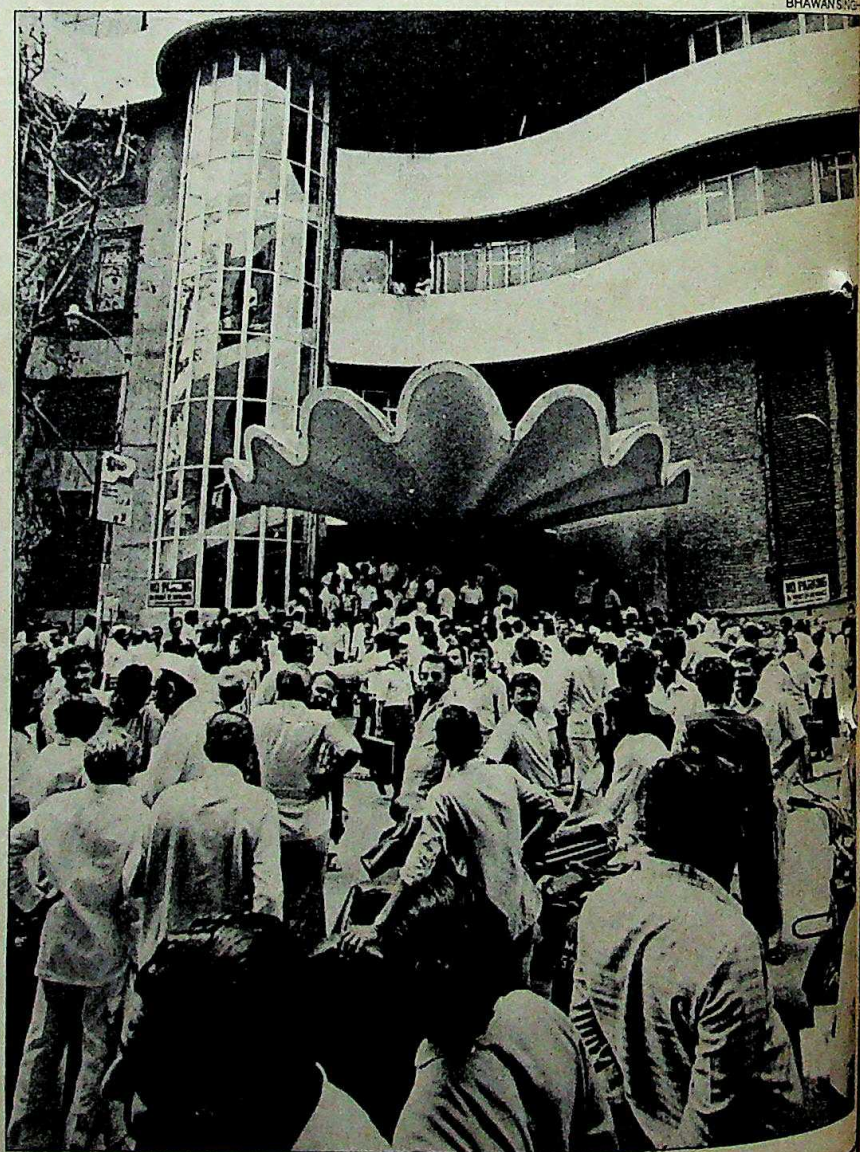
That is certainly true. Minoo Mody, director of several Tata companies, told a meeting of corporate financial experts organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Bangalore last fortnight that TISCO alone could raise Rs 1,500 crore from the capital market in the next five years, and along with other resources finance investment of more than Rs 3,000 crore in one quinquennium. Even smaller corporate giants are talking a similar language of optimism: Chander Parkash, deputy managing director of the high-flying Orkay Silk Mills, said: "I can sell a Rs 3,000-crore Orkay project on the capital market tomorrow, if I need to." Considering that the total capital raised on the market this year will be around Rs 3,000 crore, this is a tall claim to make, but it reflects the new optimism in corporate financial circles, even as the realisation dawns that companies can now by-pass the banks and financial institutions and go directly to the capital market. Says Parkash: "I am talking of eliminating the banks as middlemen, and any intelligent industrialist can do this today. In a few years' time, more than Rs 5,000 crore will be raised on the capital market every year, against Rs 2,000 crore that was raised last year."

That might sound far-fetched, but R.K. Pitamber, finance director of Mahindra & Mahindra, who is otherwise sceptical of the recent share price boom, talks of a foreign bank opening a bank in Delhi, raising Rs 9 crore in deposits and then not finding good companies to which it could lend the money. "If companies continue to raise more and more money directly from investors, you might find more banks in a similar plight," Pitamber says.

Quite clearly, the share market boom and the minting of a new money machine

Crowds outside the Bombay Stock Exchange: growing investor population

BHAWAN SINGH



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has opened new doors for companies, encouraged corporate financiers to set their sights higher, and provided a new threat to an already burdened banking system by creating an attractive financial alternative to bank deposits. These and other far-reaching changes have now begun to be wrought in the economy in a manner that no one could have forecast even five years ago. And in a very fundamental sense, the private sector has come to resemble a public sector in the true sense of the term.

Other transformations have occurred too. As the investor response to new share issues sets into management consciousness, companies will increasingly seek to grow faster by going to the market for funds: privately held companies can cash in on the prospect of going public and overnight have their shares quoted at sky-high prices that automatically mean millions for the company's original promoters. Clearly, corporate thinking will adapt to the new reality of a large, powerful and responsive capital market. As Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman of Reliance Textiles, says: "If a company has the right pump, it can pump the money out of the people because the money is there."

Conversely, the growing shareholder awareness is already getting reflected in large attendances at companies' annual general meetings. Often times the questions are sharper and more pointed than during the ritualistic meetings of the past, and managements will soon find that they have to be more careful of shareholder criticism and public perceptions of their actions, for their future growth could be mortgaged by the shortchanging of shareholders. Indeed, if Reliance has one basic strength in relation to other companies, it is the iron faith that the investing public has in Ambani's desire to keep his shareholders happy.

Several factors have therefore come together in conjunction to bring about the stock-market boom: the entry of new classes of investors, non-resident money, confidence-boosting government policies, the growing awareness of companies themselves to the potential of raising more money on the stock-market, the lower tax rates, the broadening of the middle class base, the larger sums of disposable surpluses in private pockets, the emergence of shares as a hedge against inflation, and much more.

Black money too has started shifting into the stock-market, attracted by the quick gains available here. This, coming together with the inflow of non-resident money and the investments being made by new classes of people, has resulted in far more money chasing the same number of shares as earlier, leading to the price explosion of the last few months. Indeed, with large chunks of shares held by financial institutions and company promoters (the average for companies being around 70 per cent), the stock floating on the share market is often quite limited, so that even a modicum of buying could send share prices zooming.

"Black money is an evil, but if it comes into shares it is being put to productive use by supporting the corporate sector."

ARVIND C. DALAL
Member, Governing Board
Bombay Stock Exchange

"Brokers mislead their clients regarding the actual buying and selling price, and keep a part of the take for themselves."

ASHWINI WINDLASS
Corporate executive

As should be obvious, all these do not reflect entirely healthy developments. Although leading brokers like Arvind Dalal of the broking firm Chimanbhai Dalal argue that "Black money is an evil, but if it comes into shares it is being put to productive use by supporting the corporate sector," no share boom riding on an inflow of black money can be considered healthy. For one thing, this is hot money that can just as quickly be pulled out for investment in some other momentarily attractive area of enterprise. Such a development will inevitably bring about a price drop that could result in many small investors getting their fingers burnt. In fact, the current boom has swept up even dud shares in its wake: the closed Nilhat Shipping and the sick Rohtas Industries are two examples, and the extraordinary rise in the share price of companies like Jayant Vitamins and Uniscan and Unisonics are also inexplicable. The latter has shot up from Rs 13 to Rs 68 in short order, enabling investors like Chandigarh journalist Ravi Sidhu to make a quick killing. But as industrialist Surrendra Paul says, "Some people are being had."

If that is indeed the case, and a momentary slump results in even the small investors pulling out, the market could suffer a setback that will not be easy to recover from because the small investors may then need a great deal of coaxing to put their faith in the stock-market once again.

Increasingly, market observers are also realising the need for more effective regulation of stock-market functioning. Ram K. Piparaiya, who runs Aridhi Investments in Bombay, points out that much of the trading on the markets today is based on insider information that is denied to the ordinary investor. "The investing public must be informed of quarterly company performances, and of the volume of trading that is taking place, otherwise they can be misled," Piparaiya says. Ashwini Windlass, who has made a not so small fortune by investing in shares in the last three years, has another complaint that is commonly heard: brokers mislead their clients regarding the actual buying or selling price, keeping a part of the take for themselves, over and above the normal brokerage charges. Another investor talks of powerful brokers ganging up to force the market up or down, depending on their immediate interests, so that other innocent players on the market become unwitting victims of their

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machinations. Finally, independent observers of the market's operations point out that a good chunk of the business on the stock-market goes unreported because it is either done on the kerb outside the stock exchange building or conducted privately. Not only does this make any accurate monitoring of the market difficult, but control measures that the Government tries to impose are often rendered ineffective as a result.

There are yet other reforms required: the number of brokers operating in any stock exchange is far too small, but the broking community refuses to expand its numbers. Admits Amrit Lal Bajaj, "Brokers have a closed door club. It's like the MRTP law in operation here. Instead of 125 brokers in Delhi, there should be 1,000." Some of the dalals admit that investor-servicing is often quite poor. Says Arvind Dalal: "Brokers don't have enough space in the stock exchange building, and communications are always poor. So it can take several weeks to give an investor the shares he has bought."

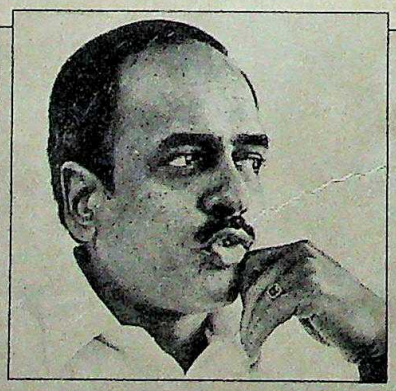
There are virtually no effective penalties in existence at the moment for many of the malpractices that are commonplace on the stock-market. As Arun Bharat Ram, managing director of Shriram Fibres, points out, "Almost everyone indulges in insider trading, which would attract very severe penalties in any other country." And all too often the people who indulge in the malpractices are the ones who sit on the governing boards of the stock exchanges, so that no effective correctives are possible. On the New York Stock Exchange, in contrast, the president cannot be an active trader and the governing board is not dominated by brokers in the manner existent in India.

Some overdue reforms may come soon, after an official committee that is going into the stock-markets' functioning submits all its reports. And the Government may well be persuaded to exempt share investments from the capital gains tax, so that both individuals and institutions can buy and sell freely without worrying about tax problems. This will have the salutary effect of increasing the stock traded on the market and reduce the scarcity of floating scrips. Also, most investors do not in any case report their gains on the market to the taxman.

Meanwhile, despite the problems that investors have to face, the new appetite for shares remains seemingly insatiable. The Government has tried repeatedly in recent months to slow down the spurt in prices, which it sees as being unhealthily rapid, but nothing has been able to dampen the market. BSE Executive Director Mayya points out that he has imposed special financial margins on shares, suspended brokers for trying to evade controls, restricted trading in specified shares that were the most sought-after, and closely monitored the operations of the most active brokers in order to avoid the danger of a default in a volatile market where people might make financial commitments that they cannot keep. Yet, the market for a long time refused to recognise the restraints and merrily scaled new peaks of excitement, with even tax raids failing to dampen the enthusiasm for bidding prices up further. Nevertheless the signs are now there of the long-awaited stability in prices coming about, and the experts even forecast a slight dip.

"The investing public must be informed of quarterly company performances, and of the volume of trading, or they can be misled."

RAM K. PIPARAIYA
Proprielor Aridhi Investments



"Almost everyone indulges in insider trading, which would attract very severe penalties in any other country."

ARUN BHARAT RAM
managing director, Shriram Fibres

On balance, however, both brokers and investment analysts are confident that the boom will continue on a long-term basis. Amrit Lal Bajaj, points out that "Indian shares have been traditionally undervalued. In Japan, where shares are quoted at 50 times the net post-tax earnings of companies, TISCO would be quoted at Rs 5,000 per share instead of less than Rs 1,000 in Bombay." Also, as Bajaj's predecessor as president of the Delhi Stock Exchange, Harish Bhasin, points out, "Any company that is 10 years old has plant and machinery whose value on the market today will be four or five times the cost 10 years ago. This hidden financial strength does not show in the company's books, so the market price of the company's share must reflect this strength." That point is buttressed by Delhi investor Raj Kapoor, who points out that it would take Rs 700 crore today to set up a company like the Southern Petro-Chemical Industries Corporation (SPIC), which because of its low capital cost a decade ago has a share capital of only Rs 18 crore, but makes a profit of Rs 24 crore. Clearly, there is room for share prices to rise and reflect the true financial strength of such companies.

But another fundamental transformation has taken place on Indian stock-markets in recent years. Earlier, conservative investors used to judge the attractiveness of a share's market price in relation to the dividend rates that the company had been declaring. As everyone now knows, this is no way to assess a share's attractiveness, which depends essentially on whether its price is likely to rise or fall. The name of the game is not dividend yield but capital appreciation. And as Nimesh Kampani points out, "Unlike earlier, people are now looking for growth." In short, the attitude to the stock-market is now the one that will see it go places in the future. What has happened so far may only be the beginning of the ultimate flowering of Indian capitalism.

—T.N. NINAN with PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI and bureau reports

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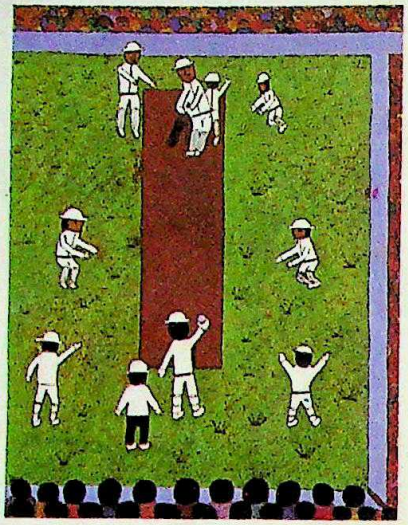
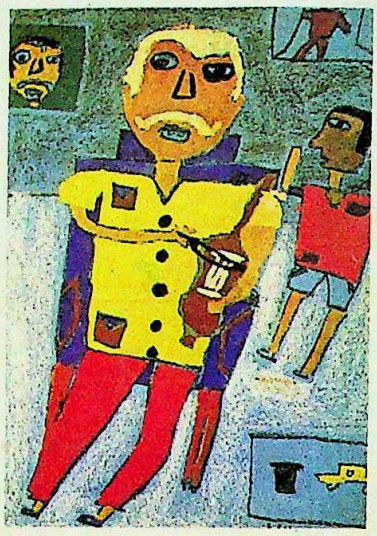
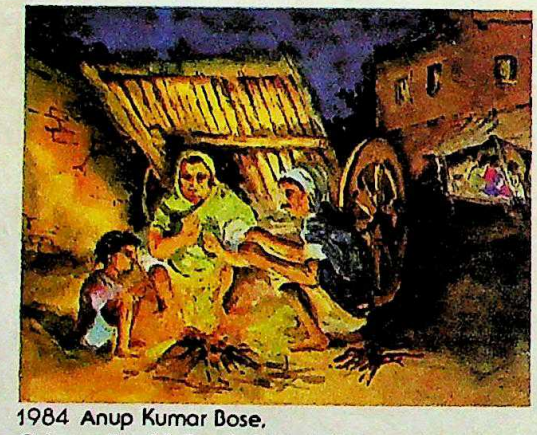
ALL-INDIA CAMEL



1982
Reynold D'cruz,
Model English School,
Dombivili, Maharashtra.



1983
Devang Mistry,
Bal Kala Kendra,
Vadodara, Gujarat.



1984 **Anup Kumar Bose,**
Calcutta Deaf & Dumb School, Calcutta, West Bengal.

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AFGHANISTAN

Deadlocked War

EARLY July, when the monsoon was still eluding sunburnt Delhi, Pakistan's elegant foreign minister had a 40-minute session with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which Pakistani diplomats described as the most relaxed meeting between a Pakistan dignitary and an Indian premier in recent years. Among the issues discussed was Afghanistan. Sahebzada Yakub Khan gave the prime minister a report on Geneva-4, the fourth round of "proximity" talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan held in Geneva in June. The talks did not break the political crux of the Afghan problem. Yakub Khan told INDIA TODAY that much as Pakistan would like India to help open a channel of communication with Moscow, he did not specifically seek the prime minister's intervention in the slowly crawling political talks to settle the Afghan issue.

The Pakistani authorities realise that the time has come when Pakistan should talk directly to the Soviet Union, but they just do not know how to. Diplomatic channels do exist between the two capitals; there is also a tenuous mechanism of bilateral consultation: the foreign ministers of the two countries meet once a year to review the bilateral relationship, and a junior minister of the Soviet Government pays an annual visit to Islamabad to follow up the results of the review. But neither meeting took place last year as the Soviets took a darker view of the escalation of the level of weapons supplied by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the guerrillas in Afghanistan. Since Gorbachov's chilling monologue with General Zia-ul-Haq in Moscow last March, Soviet-Afghan military pressure on Pakistan has increased. This has created a certain nervousness in Islamabad, which manifested itself in the budget session of the Pakistan National Assembly. Members asked for a debate; the Government demurred. It was stated on behalf of the treasury benches that the foreign minister would "take the house into confidence" in a closed session. He did not. Prime Minister Junejo said in a statement that the Government would talk to the Soviets, but not to the Karmal regime in Kabul, which is what all political parties except the Jamaat-e-Islami want. General Zia himself conceded with unusual candour in an interview to a London-based journal that most political groups, some of the generals, and sizeable sections of the public did not support the government's Afghanistan policy.

After five years and seven months of bloody warfare, the overall situation appears to have tilted in favour of Moscow and Kabul. The Soviets are in control of all major and most medium towns. The rebels still operate in about 30 per cent of the Afghan rural terrain. In the other 70 per cent, neither side exercises firm control. The Soviet-Afghan forces now operate in strength in areas close to the Pakistani border, and the heat of battle frequently spills over to Pakistan.

In recent weeks, the Soviet-Afghan forces have stormed a main rebel outpost almost adjacent to the Pakistani border, built a "fortress" of their own, drawing an American protest, and—ominous for Pakistan in the long run—Kabul has decided "in principle" to close the border with Pakistan. This can be done only when the Pushtun tribes inhabiting the Afghan side of the border have ceased to fight against the Marxist regime. But as and when the Afghan Government closes the border, the chances of the three million refugees returning home will further fade away.

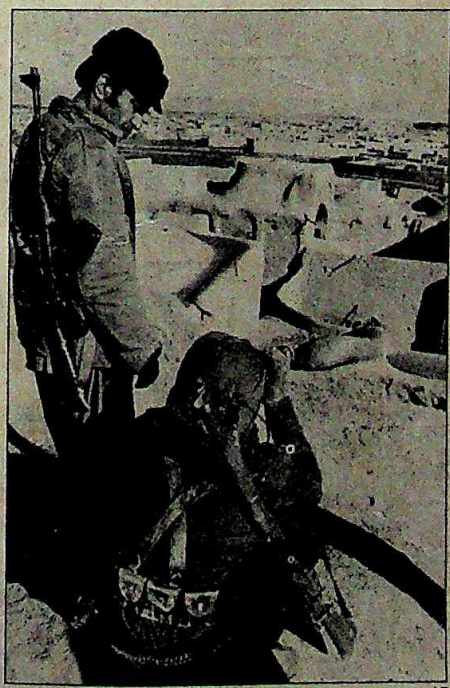
The biggest Soviet-Afghan gain is the resistance groups' failure to set up an alternative government on Afghan territory or even outside Afghanistan. The tribal and ethnic divisions of Afghans have stolen the resistance of its political substance. Even if fighting goes on in Afghanistan for a decade, the Karmal regime, protected by Soviet arms, will be there slowly and steadily gaining ground.

Americans realise the political war in Afghanistan has been lost, and the military war cannot be won. Donor fatigue has begun to set in. In conversations with the Soviets through official as well as informal channels, the Americans are throwing baits like "Finlandisation" and "tradeoffs", but Moscow is not biting. The Soviet line has hardened to a rigid immovable position: the situation in Afghanistan is not negotiable. What is negotiable is the "situation around Afghanistan".

During his Washington visit, Rajiv Gandhi was asked by Secretary of State George Schultz if he could help in breaking the deadlock in Afghan political negotiations. The prime minister's polite and candid response amounted to a simple 'no'. The main parties to the problem were Pakistan and Afghanistan and, he suggested, the two talk to each other directly. He had been assured by Gorbachov that the Soviet troops would pull out as soon as the CIA stopped supplying arms to the Afghan rebels and the US gave a guarantee of non-interference. The actual time-frame of withdrawal would be determined in a treaty Moscow would sign with Kabul.

This is a position that is unacceptable to the US. The Pakistanis scan the portents of the future with creased foreheads, and ask how the refugees will go back if Kabul doesn't have a stable government? How, they question, can Karmal stay in power if the Soviet troops pull out? To these and many other agonising questions there are still no answers. India will not help to find Moscow's answers; Pakistan is not going to even ask India to probe Moscow's mind on its behalf. Nor will Pakistan talk directly to Moscow because, as a Pakistani source put it, "the channels are there, but the language of communication is missing". This is where the Afghan tragedy has debouched after nearly six years of civil war. At the end of the tunnel: a faint Moscow-Kabul lamp blinking lamely on the deeply soured Saur Revolution.

Afghan rebels in Herat: few gains



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BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

"Terrorism is a cancer"

ISRAEL'S Ambassador to the United Nations Benjamin Netanyahu at 35 is one of Israel's youngest diplomats. He is also one of its most effective. Netanyahu is a recognised expert on international terrorism. Before the world accepted that terrorism was anything other than an Israeli problem, he hosted a symposium in Jerusalem five years ago that foreshadowed the unfortunate events that have unfolded around the world. Netanyahu is the brother of the Israeli hero Colonel Jonathan Netanyahu, the ground commander of the Entebbe operation and Israel's sole casualty there.

Netanyahu is a hard liner in that he feels appeasement can never work and only resolute action is an effective measure against worldwide terrorism. He is forthright and honest. What follows is an interview between Netanyahu and our Washington Correspondent INDERJIT BADHWAR. *It is the first ever given to an Indian correspondent.*

The interview took a surprising twist when during its course, Netanyahu, fully aware of the political differences between India and Israel, called for cementing ties between the two countries. "We don't even ask India to accept all of our political positions," he said. Excerpts:

Q. *What new developments have changed terrorism in the last five years?*

A. Terrorism has become a weapon of warfare used by governments against governments, in that it is different from the work of individuals or groups. The main countries supporting terrorism are the Soviet bloc, including Cuba, and the radical Arab states and Iran, who are using it as an instrument of foreign policy. And the major targets have been democracies and countries aligned with democracies. Terrorist wars are shadow wars, the new wars.

Q. *What countries are most susceptible?*

A. Democracies and open societies are vulnerable because there are no barriers on movement or transfers of money, and there are few, if any, personal curbs on individuals. Totalitarian societies are not only able to squelch terrorism within their own borders, but also have a natural and philosophical alliance with terrorist groups.

Q. *What are the real dangers of terrorism?*

A. Terrorism obliterates the distinction between combatant and non-combatant. A child is seen as a potential soldier. A mother is seen as an enemy because she will give birth to a child. Their wars are waged in supermarkets, schools. While war is a tragic element of life, there are war crimes and they are not permissible. Terrorists deliberately choose women and children as targets because they are indefensible.

"In the face of terrorism, citizens have to be educated to be soldiers. Democracies must use the mass media and show the people what terrorist bombs and devices look like.

Q. *What nurtures terrorism?*

A. Terrorism grows by direct nurturing of class, political and religious conflicts. International terrorism has taken violent groups and internationalised the conflicts. For example, the PLO has offered arms and money and embassies for use by one side against the other in these conflicts—usually the radical left wing. But there are also right wing terrorist groups like the Mussolini Action Squads (Italian fascists). Why don't you hear about them? Because no mainstream governments have offered them any kind of support.

Q. *What countries support international terrorism?*

A. Syria, South Yemen and Iran espouse doctrines of terrorist states. They have their own terrorists plus they support international groups. They use terrorism as an instrument of warfare against other states. There are very few cases where a local terrorist campaign—if it is successful—remains local. A determined group can sustain a terrorist campaign only if it can find a host government to support it.

Q. *How can governments fight terrorism?*

A. Governments facing terrorism must educate their citizens to be ever vigilant. Straight terrorist actions deliberately and systematically damage civilians. Those people who turned on those radios which exploded in Delhi had nothing to do with the grievances the terrorists were fighting. This is what distinguishes the victim of terrorism from the incidental civilian casualties of war. For example, the RAF bombers against Gestapo HQ in Copenhagen in World War II missed the target and released their bombs on scores of children. That was an accident. It was not terrorism.

Q. *What is the danger of world terrorism?*

A. Terrorism is a cancer that spreads. If it is not stopped it spreads through the body politic and it destroys democracies. It is not a marginal threat to democratic societies. It undermines the faith of people in the Government and in the rule of law. It is a precursor of anarchism, and anarchism is the precursor of totalitarianism.

Q. *Won't counter-measures destroy democracy?*

A. Democracies are often paralysed by the thought that if they take steps against terrorism they will destroy democracy. That's not true. Italy, West Germany, Britain, Israel—exemplary democracies who have taken steps against terrorism—have maintained their civil liberties and the rule of law by taking vigorous action against terrorists.

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Q. How can terrorism be fought?

A. In the face of terrorism, citizens have to be educated to be soldiers. Democracies must use the mass media—TV, radio—and show the people what terrorist bombs and devices look like. And governments must refuse as far as possible to yield to terrorist demands. Surrender produces more terrorism. Whenever possible, even in hostage situations, action must be taken to free the hostages even at considerable cost of life. Other steps include infiltration of terrorist groups through intelligence, disruption and sealing out of terrorist sanctuaries and concentrations before they can get you: Israel had a terrorist mini-state of 30,000 with a potential army of 60,000 in the north. Our cities were beginning to empty out because of indefensible danger from terrorists. In this case we had to pursue the terrorist threat outside our borders.

Q. Isn't there a danger of a wide war if terrorists are pursued across national borders?

A. It makes no difference if they are inside or outside the country. A government's primary duty is to ensure the safety of its citizens. If the terrorists are outside your territory that is controlled by a government either assisting the terrorists or is unable to control them, then you have every right and obligation for cross border attacks. Or if a foreign government is colluding with the terrorists—like Idi Amin, who was in cahoots with German and Arab terrorists (in Entebbe) then you should not be paralysed by a misguided absolutist concept of sovereignty. By doing so we're protecting the very countries who support shadow wars and are not themselves guided by this doctrine. There can be no paralysis. A democratic government has to establish the principle that terrorism is unacceptable.

Q. But terrorists claim they are justified because all other means have failed.

A. The moment you begin to rationalise the motives of people using terrorism you become open to further terrorism. Terrorism for any goal is unjustifiable. Nothing can justify blowing up the brains of a two-year-old girl, or blasting a bus full of schoolchildren. The minute you begin to make excuses, you paralyse yourself and lose moral authority. A democratic government must learn this lesson first.

Q. Is Israel now in a better position politically, for taking the stands that it has?

A. Throughout the decade of the '70s, Israel was isolated and ostracised. But it hasn't worked. We see a great improvement in Israel's international position in the 1980s. This is partly because of the decline of Arab oil power. There is now no fear of the oil embargo that was felt in Washington, Paris, Tokyo. Israel had been expelled from Africa because of Arab pressure and oil promises. But Israel is now coming back to Africa. The Arab threat is no real threat and the Arab promises were no real promises.

Q. Can you give some specifics?

A. Israel's aid and agricultural exports are now being sought increasingly in countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. We now have diplomatic relations with 70 other countries and other formal relationships with a hundred more asking for economic, scientific and military cooperation. And the numbers are increasing every day. Every day of the week there is an approach to us being made by a new country. And this represents a dramatic change. Our decade of isolation is over.

Q. Any other reasons for this change?

A. Another reason for the change is the decline of the PLO. The blow they received in Lebanon not only destroyed their capability of terror against Israel, but also destroyed their position as a terrorist mini-state and their power to intimidate other Arab states. They no longer have this power of intimidation. Before Lebanon, the PLO had the aura of inevitability—the destruction of the State of Israel. This is no longer true. There is now set the stage for different movements for accommodation between Israel and its neighbours and the West Bank.

Q. How does this change Israel's global relationships?

A. This also means that internationally many other countries are no longer afraid of the oil threat and PLO blackmail. And this opens up new economic and political opportunities. We would like very much to expand ties with India. India recognises our right to exist. But we are now even getting approaches from countries that don't even recognise us.

Q. What common interests do you see between Israel and India?

A. India is a sister democracy. We admire India and its potential. There can be tremendous mutual benefits with closer ties. More and more countries are now acting in their own interests rather than placating Arab pressure. We don't even ask India to accept all our political positions. We have trade and economic relations with countries who have much less in common with us than does India. It's high time that Israel and India cement their ties.

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INDO-PAK RELATIONS

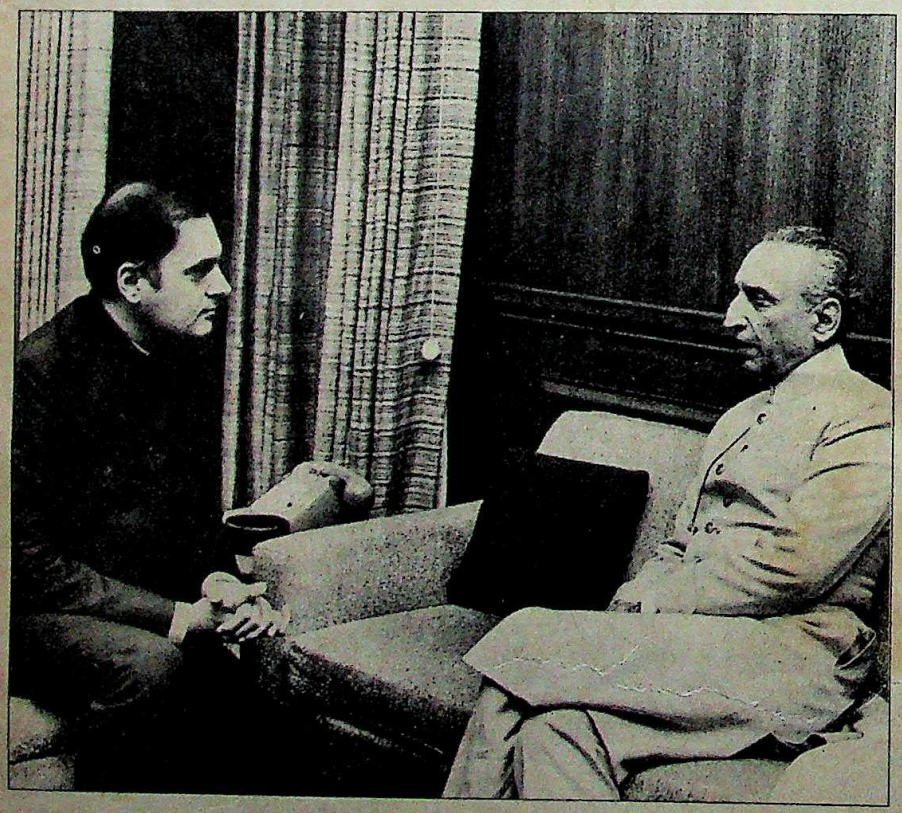
Painful Progress

SOMEHOW, every bilateral contact between India and Pakistan seems to conjure up images of a pair of gawky teenagers on their first date: the same coyness and confusion, the hesitation and tentative groping and, of course, the mutual suspicion of intentions. Last fortnight's three-day meeting of the Indo-Pakistan joint commission in New Delhi, delayed a whole year by the traumatic occurrences in Punjab, was not all that different. Despite the ardent embraces at the airport and the engaging endearments expressed in the banquet speeches, the outcome of the exchange was hardly earth-moving in nature or content considering its relative insignificance in the context of the larger issues that continue to keep the two countries tantalisingly apart. "The outcome was as we expected in the sense that there was no progress on the major areas of disagreement," admitted a Foreign Ministry source.

Even the fact that Pakistan's military ruler, the enigmatic Zia-ul-Haq, had seen fit to telephone Rajiv Gandhi on the eve of the conclave, urging him to "give an energetic push to make the meeting a success" was ultimately pure political theatre. The Pakistan side, led by the redoubtable Foreign Minister Sahebzada Yakub Khan, had obviously left Islamabad with clear instructions on where to draw the line. Consequently, the areas of agreement; expansion of communication links, easing of restrictions for visitors on both sides, cooperation in the field of agriculture and the introduction of scholarships for greater academic intercourse in the field of higher studies, were all cosmetic cover that only succeeded in underlining the fact that at the moment, the only issues the two sides can progress on are purely non-controversial.

But in the larger historical context of Indo-Pakistan relations, the conclave was not all that fruitless. The very fact that the dialogue has been resumed must necessarily be the cause for subdued celebration. The onset of the crisis in Punjab coupled with Pakistan's accelerated quest for nuclear weapons status had reduced relations between the two neighbours to yet another dangerous low. The resurrection of the joint commission clearly implies that the two sides are ready to sup at the same table again, even if it means using extra-long spoons. That, in itself, is significant enough. The agreements signed, though minor in nature, also indicate that the scope of wider cooperation is still in existence, however distant its eventual realisation. "Our brief was to concentrate on consolidating the issues related to people. People impact on governments and the agreements signed are a useful step in the right direction," says a member of the Indian delegation.

Yakub Khan with Rajiv Gandhi: avoiding the crucial issues



That, however, is small consolation considering the fact that the Indian side entered the negotiations prepared to go much further but was stymied by Pakistan's stubborn refusal to get drawn into anything remotely sensitive. The Indian side, for instance, pressed hard for extending the agreement on railway bookings to include reopening the railway line from Munabao in Rajasthan to Khokhrapar in Pakistan's Sind district. The Pakistan side, obviously fearing internal interference from India in an area where the Opposition, especially the Pakistan People's Party, has a strong following, shot down the proposal. On a lower scale, the agreement on increased cultural exchanges was restricted by a rider that any Indian troupes would not include women, a reflection on the sensitivity of that particular issue in Pakistan. Again, when the Indian side reintroduced the idea of free exchange of newspapers and periodicals, it was met with stout resistance and the minor concession that it should be restricted to literary magazines. "We tried to convince them that it would lead to better mutual understanding between the people of the two countries, but obviously they feel this is something they are not ready for yet," says an Indian delegation member.

Surprisingly, Pakistan was also unusually defensive on an issue that India is seriously concerned about and affects both countries, namely, the dangerously high volume of narcotics flowing in and out of India and Pakistan. According to an Indian official present at the talks, the Pakistan side adopted the stand that they were not a producing country and therefore it was not their problem. "We tried to argue that it was a major problem for both of us. We even showed them evidence that they are in fact producing narcotics in large volumes but they were not very forthcoming," says the official. Ultimately, the two sides identified organisations

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that would in future cooperate in terms of exchanging information but Indian officials are rather sceptical of the outcome. In much the same fashion, the Pakistan side dug in their heels on the issue of increasing trade relations. Though Pakistan's reluctance is understandable when viewed in the context of that country's narrow industrial base as compared to India, during the talks, the issue was sidetracked on what seemed an unusually petty issue. The Indian side had produced what it called a Positive List which contains items that the two countries can trade in without upsetting any applecarts. Pakistan, however, insisted instead on having a Negative List, which would lay down items that would be barred from bilateral trade. The trade exercise, consequently, will have to wait for fairer weather before it can be aired again.

Against that restrictive backdrop, the real gut issues brought up in the private meetings between Yakub Khan and senior Indian officials, including Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Defence Minister Narasimha Rao, had little chance of survival. Indian concern over Pakistan's nuclear programme was countered by the predictable proposal for a joint inspection of nuclear sites, something the Indian Government views with justifiable suspicion. And Pakistan's nuclear ambitions have currently become the crux of the entire security issue between the two countries which has seemingly bogged down over the semantic question of whether it should be a No War Pact or a Friendship Treaty. Significantly, as Rajiv subtly reminded Zia on the telephone, the day the joint commission met represented the 13th anniversary of the long-forgotten Simla Agreement. But as the attitudes of the two sides revealed, the chances of a security agreement, whatever fancy label it is given are still in the realm of make-believe.

Obviously, the joint commission is not destined to be the engine for improved relations. That will evidently have to await a higher level of contact. Yakub Khan expressed considerable optimism about the forthcoming meeting between the foreign secretaries of the two countries which will specifically discuss the security proposals put forward by the two sides. But again, the fact that Indo-Pakistan relations are, and always have been, precariously perched on a razor's edge, means that the slightest pressure —Pakistan's nuclear ambitions being one prime example—could once again bring the house of cards tumbling down.

The other dependency would necessarily be the internal situation in Pakistan and its future course. Rajiv Gandhi, on his part, has made regional amity the cornerstone of his foreign policy. According to members of the Indian delegation, the new Pakistan team under Yakub Khan is the best they have dealt with so far in terms of their understanding of Indian sensibilities and their collective determination to bestow the joint commission with some meaning. In Yakub Khan, Pakistan has a foreign minister of considerable prowess, stature and personality—he even has his sherwanis tailored at Saville Row, according to members of his own delegation. But Pakistan at the moment, in the words of a senior Foreign Ministry official, is "a halfway house". It is unclear just how sincere Zia is in his attempts to put on a more democratic face. It is equally unclear just how much power and influence Prime Minister Mohammed Junejo really wields, and, by extension, the National Assembly which has just completed its first session without achieving anything of note. For that matter, it is also unclear whether Yakub Khan himself is in a position to influence Zia and his generals on issues that affect Indo-Pakistan ties. In that situation, the achievements of the joint commission last fortnight represent a miniscule and hesitant step forward. The giant leap that is required to bridge an ancient animosity is still a dark smudge on the distant horizon and at the moment its contours are suspiciously shaped like a mushroom.

—DILIP BOBB

The two delegations just before the session: resuming the dialogue

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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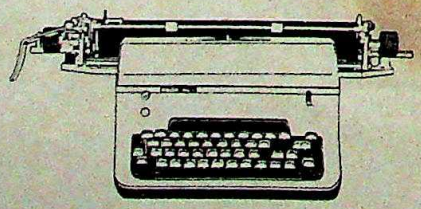

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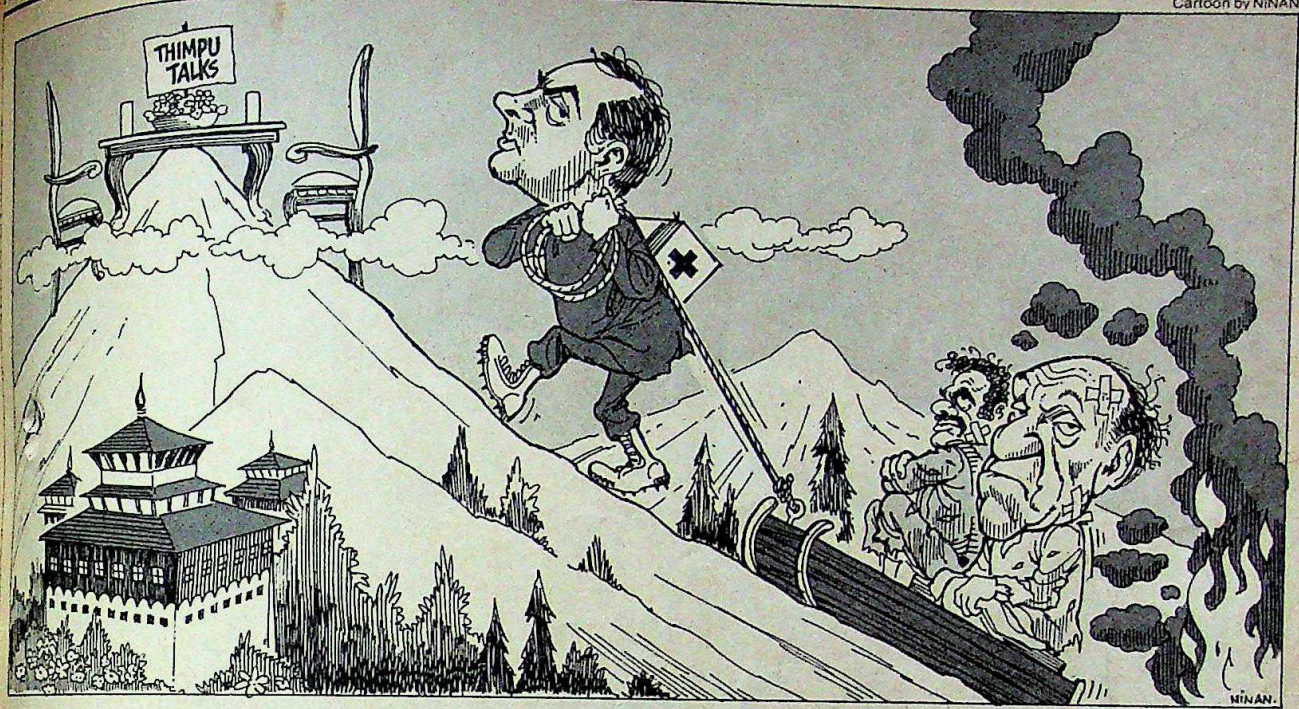

SRI LANKA

Search for a Solution

IT WAS a singular honour to be a royal guest at Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, last fortnight, just as it was a misfortune to be a journalist or a tourist. In preparation for the historic Sri Lanka peace talks which began in the Himalayan kingdom on July 8, Thimpu had been tightly and effectively sealed off for all visitors except those participating in the talks. Madras correspondent S.H. VENKATRAMANI *who managed to arrive in Thimpu as a tourist, was unceremoniously woken up in the middle of the night and politely told to leave the country. However, he did manage to obtain exclusive details of the negotiations and the crucial role being played by India in the peace process before leaving. His report:*

THE SETTING was totally in keeping with the occasion. Secluded from the rest of the world in the quiet splendour of Bhutan's fairy-tale capital, the 28 members of the official delegation to the Sri Lankan peace talks were given red carpet treatment. The 10-member Sri Lankan delegation led by President J.R. Jayewardene's brother, Hector Jayewardene had the elegant 46-roomed Motithang Hotel, perched atop a hill with the capital sprawling below and the majestic spread of the Himalayas behind, all to themselves. The 13-member Tamil delegation comprising two members from each of the five Tamil liberation groups (four comprising the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) and the fifth being the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, three top representatives from the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and the five Indian officials were accommodated in the equally luxurious and scenic Royal Kuengacholing guest-house.

The talks themselves—the first time in recent Sri Lankan history that official representatives of the Sri Lanka Government were sitting at the same negotiating table with some of the most wanted Tamil militants who have been waging a decade-old war for a separate Tamil Eelam—were held at the exquisitely designed Banquet Hall with gleaming chandeliers casting a benign glow over the proceedings. Surrounding the hall were blue-coated members of the Bhutanese police. As one of the organisers remarked: "Even a bird cannot enter without an official invitation." The ceremony and secrecy were inevitable though at least one delegation, the Tamil militants, were rather reluctant receivers of royal hospitality. The Tamil group, consisting of the eight representatives of the ENLF—Anton and Tilakar from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Madi and Mohan from the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation, L. Ketheeswaran and Varadaraja Perulam from the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front and Rathnasabapathy and Rajee from the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students—had been virtually frog-marched to the talks by the Indian Government. But the reluctance of the delegates to say anything openly critical of the Indian Government was clear enough indication that they had little choice in the matter. "India has always supported the cause of the Tamils and support is crucial to us," says Professor Balasingham, the Madras-based spokesman for the LTTE.

However, there was also no denying that deep down, the militants feel that India has let them down. Admits S. Sivanayagam of the Tamil Information Centre: "The militants are certainly very de-

The militants had been virtually forced to go to Thimpu by the Indian Government and establish some kind of a negotiating position even if it was a loose understanding.

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pressed and demoralised." That basically stems from the realisation that the new Government in New Delhi has not taken kindly to the Eelam liberation struggle and certainly will no longer allow it to be launched from Indian soil. In fact, the Thimpu talks were agreed to be aimed at finding a lasting political solution to the problem within, as the Indian Government says, "the framework of a united Sri Lanka" which is in itself a negation of the Eelam liberation ideal. In fact, when the Thimpu talks were officially announced, the militants had declared that they would boycott the talks and in a press release, the ENLF claimed that the Sri Lankan security forces were violating the unilateral 12-week ceasefire declaration announced by Sri Lanka last month. They had also demanded certain preconditions for the talks which had not been forthcoming.

But when the ENLF leaders arrived in New Delhi to explain their stand, they were told by officials of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the defence and external affairs ministries that they had no option but to attend the Thimpu deliberations. On the question of the ceasefire violations, the Indian Government assured them that they would bring pressure to bear on Colombo to ensure that it would be observed. The militants also objected to the presence of the TULF and PLOT who have not been party to the armed struggle but were overruled. Neither did the Indian side give in to their request to postpone the talks by three or four weeks so that a common strategy could be formulated.

At Thimpu, even though the militants sent their second rung leadership since Sri Lanka had no ministerial representation there, they were given short shrift. They were not allowed to meet any outsiders or make phone calls and were virtually held as hostages. They were told that the talks could go on for 10 days or more and that apart from discussing the ceasfire they would have to listen and react to the Sri Lanka Government's proposals to settle the Tamil issue once and for all. But, according to inside sources, the proposals themselves were not much different than those put forward at the All Party Conference in Colombo last year. These included the scheme to form district councils in all the 24 districts of Sri Lanka; that the chief ministers and other ministers of the councils would have no executive powers of their own and would be ap-

Hector Jayewardene (left) and Romesh Bhandari: proposal problems

pointed by the President. Even the legislative powers of the councils would be limited with the provision for two or three councils joining together to form an inter-district provisional council. When they were brought up last year, the proposals had been rejected by even the moderate TULF.

The militants, on their part, raised preliminary objections to the presence of Sri Lankan military intelligence personnel in the delegation. They also pro-

According to inside sources, the proposals themselves were not much different than those put forward at the All Party Conference in Colombo last year.

tested about the restrictions on Indian media personnel when the Sri Lankan papers were carrying detailed and accurate accounts of the negotiations every day thanks no doubt to telephone calls to and from Thimpu. At one stage, the militants threatened to walk out of the talks in protest against the unacceptability of the district council proposals but were persuaded to remain by the Indian officials present who were obviously there for that very purpose. "Object if the proposals are unacceptable but at least continue the negotiations," they were told. TULF leader A. Amrithalingham also voiced his party's objection to the district council proposal and declared that they had only come to Thimpu in the hope that the Sri Lankans would come up with fresh proposals.

But along with the stick were also some carrots. Hector Jayewardene announced that 643 of 1,197 Tamil detenus in Sri Lanka were being released and the cases of others would be referred to the attorney-general. Again, when the militants objected to Sri Lanka Radio characterising them as "terrorists" participating in the Thimpu talks, Jayewardene agreed to send a message to Colombo to stop such references. The militants also succeeded in registering their suspicion that the Sri Lankan Government was utilising the ceasefire period to consolidate military position by the purchase of four helicopter gunships from Pakistan and 18 gunboats from China. But perhaps the greatest gain for the militants was the fact that their presence at Thimpu conferred recognition and legitimacy on them as opposed to their being dismissed as terrorists.

That, however, was cold comfort in the face of the fact that the militants had been virtually forced to come to Thimpu in the first place by the Indian Government and establish some kind of a negotiating position even if it was a loose understanding which could be used as a basis for subsequent discussions. But it was also clear that any such patchwork deal would hardly find popular agreement within the ranks of the militants or the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Neither would any major concessions by the Sri Lankan delegation find favour with the hardline Sinhalese back in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, four days after the talks started, the alleged attempt by Tamil militants to assassinate President Jayewardene in Colombo added a dramatic new twist to the talks. Initial reports said that the two militants caught trying to plant a bomb timed to go off when Jayewardene was scheduled to arrive at the presidential secretariat, belonged to the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS), one of the groups represented at the Thimpu talks. However, its fallout on the talks itself may not be that damaging. Indications are that the incident was intended to disrupt the talks but the Indian government reacted promptly by dispatching foreign office firefighter Romesh Bhandari to Thimpu to ensure the talks went on and the militants arrive at some kind of settlement.

But despite the Indian Government's zeal and determination, the Thimpu talks were clouded in uncertainty and it was clear that if the militants in Madras decided to abandon their sanctuary in India and head back to Sri Lanka to resume the battle in the enemy camp, India's leverage would vanish yielding perhaps to battles even more bloody and destructive than before.

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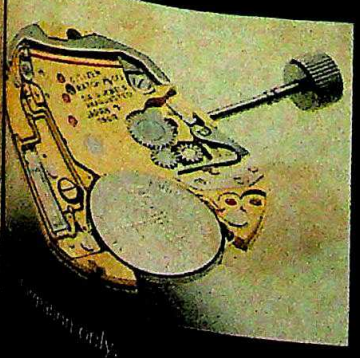

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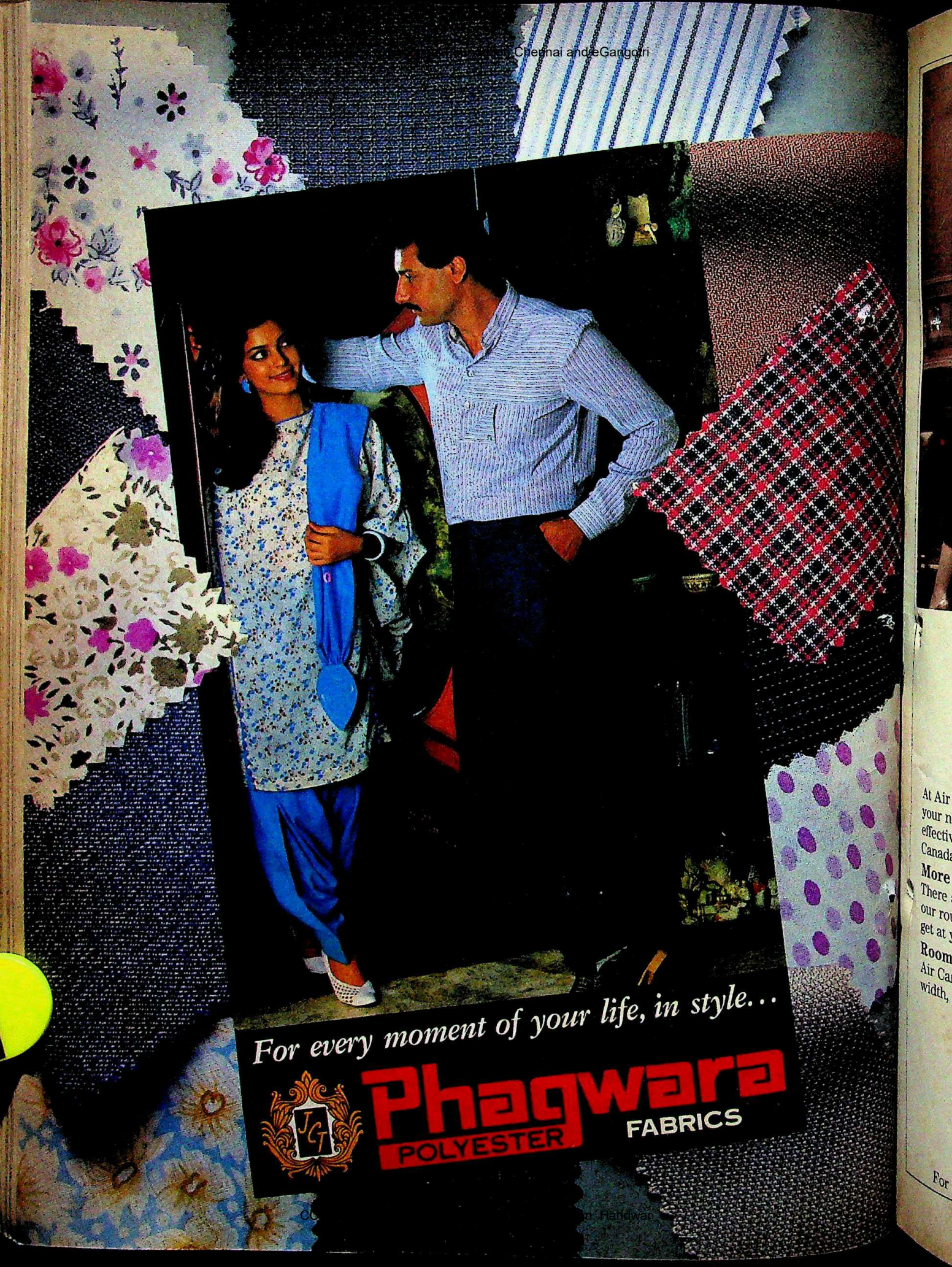

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Best & Crompton Engineering Ltd., a multi-product diversified organisation based in Madras has seen rapid growth over the past few years leading to sales exceeding Rs. 120 crores in 1984, together with a national and international reputation as a professionally managed Company known for its reliability and service to customers. As part of its development plans, this Company is in the process of finalising Agency agreements with leading foreign manufacturers of sophisticated equipment for:

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GENERAL MANAGER

The incumbent will head this new Division and be responsible for its profitability, growth, diversification and negotiations, not only for new Agency agreements with principals in the developed countries but also for individual contracts whose values could be in the range of US $ 5 million. Career advancement prospects for the selected person are excellent.

Suitable candidates for this position will be engineering graduates with management qualifications and a proven track record in the management of Agency Sales. The preferred age group is 40-45 years, but this could be relaxed in exceptional cases.

Apart from qualifications and experience, this position calls for a person with leadership qualities, high achievement motivation and a capacity to develop and lead a team of professionals.

SENIOR MANAGERS

Incumbents will head one or more product groups and report to the General Manager of this Division. The main responsibilities of persons selected for these positions will be that of ensuring profitability and development of business on an all India basis and also leading a team of Marketing and Service Engineers located at strategic areas so as to be of service to customers.

These managers will be engineers with qualifications in Business Management having a thorough knowledge of import and licencing procedures. They will be in the age group of 35-40 years with at least 5 years' experience in Agencies' business in a large national or multi-national organisation.

SERVICE ENGINEERS

Since service to customers is an important factor in all areas of Best & Crompton's operations, several Service Engineers with experience in installation and servicing of large, sophisticated equipment marketed by this Division are also required. For these positions, not only is proven competence essential but also a great degree of mobility. Knowledge of more than one Indian language will be an advantage.

Compensation: Salaries and allowances will be negotiated at levels consistent with qualifications and experience. However this factor will not hinder the recruitment of the right persons.

Foreign Training: In order to obtain maximum knowledge and familiarisation of products handled by this Division, selected persons should be prepared to accept short-term training in manufacturers' works in foreign countries.

Persons interested in these challenging career-oriented positions are invited to send — within 10 days — their bio-data, details of experience, current emoluments and a short review of their career objectives to:–

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Esquire Consultants Pvt. Ltd.
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1-A Jehangir Street
Madras 600001

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MAKING WAVES

MANOHAR Rajaram Chhabria, who has created waves in Indian industry with his acquisition of major chunks of shareholdings in Shaw Wallace, Dunlop India and Bayer India, is now coming on to the board of the high-flying Orkay Silk Mills. Orkay is now thinking of diversifying into electronics from synthetic textiles. Chhabria has considerable marketing and manufacturing experience in this field, since his Jumbo Electronics sells Sony products in West Asia, while another company in India makes television sets and other consumer electronics goods.

Meanwhile, Chhabria is believed to be planning two new headline-hitting moves. One is a proposal to join hands with Sony to make colour television sets in India, and another is a reported bid to acquire major shareholdings in five pharmaceutical companies. Some share brokers in Bombay have reportedly been given blanket instructions to buy till the required stake is acquired.

BLEAK PROSPECTS

ENGINEERS India Ltd (EIL), the giant public sector engineering consultancy company that employs thousands of engineers, could be heading for hard times because of the doubts over the money being available for two giant refinery complexes at Karnal (in Haryana) and Mangalore (in Karnataka). Several other projects being handled by EIL are now in their closing stages as far as EIL's role is concerned, and new orders are proving scarce. The only ray of hope at the moment is the giant Maharashtra Gas Cracker Complex. Nevertheless, the company's profits in relation to turnover dipped last year, and the turnover itself could dip in the near future. Employees argue that a long overdue revision of pay scales is being held in abeyance because of the uncertain future.

FRONT RUNNER

RELIANCE Textile Industries seem to be on the aggressive look-out for new projects over and above the handful it already has on its plate for the next three years. The company's Chairman, Dhirubhai Ambani, is making a serious bid to locate a synthetic yarn unit in Uttar Pradesh. The competition for the licence is provided by the JK Singhania group, who were at one stage ahead of Reliance in the race for the project. But Ambani seems to have moved the levers of power effectively to emerge as the front runner at the moment. Meanwhile, key Reliance executives have also been looking for investment opportunities in West Bengal. If any of the projects materialise Reliance will have begun shifting its investments from western India to other parts of the country.

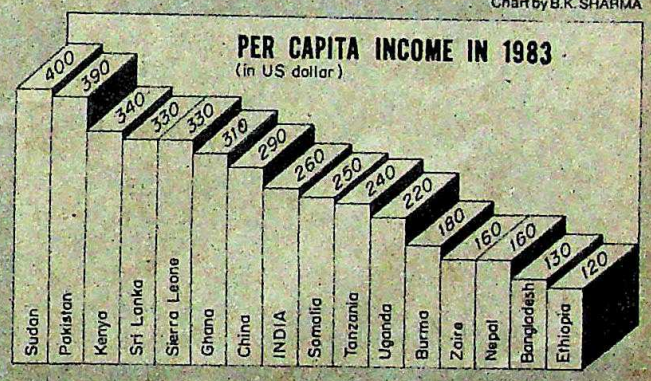
TRANSFER TRAVAILS

PROBLEMS continue to dog the arrangements worked out for the transfer of technology from the United States to India. Although a memorandum of understanding was signed on the issue shortly before Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited the US last month, this seems to have been limited to a broad agreement on the principles of technology transfer, with the details yet to be worked out on some of the contentious issues involved. For instance, the US has been insisting that the computers imported into India must not be used for defence and atomic energy programmes. The Government of India has not given in on this issue, and a final agreement is yet to be hammered out.

LAGGING BEHIND

INDIA continues to bring up the rear in global economic indicators. The latest World Development Report, published by the World Bank, places India 14th from the bottom in terms of per capita income ($ 260 in 1983), below China (19th with $ 300) and Pakistan (27th from the bottom, with $ 390).

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Some of the comparisons may not be fully valid because of distortions caused by fluctuating exchange rates, but India's annual per capita growth of GNP is 1.5 per cent, lower than both China (4.4 per cent) and Pakistan (2.5 per cent). But India's growth performance is significantly better than the average of low income economies excluding China and India.

JINXED PROJECT

THE NAGARJUNA group's effort to get ahead with the Rs 550 crore Nagarjuna Fertiliser project seems to have run into some unexpected hurdles. The joint project, jinxed for many years because partners like the Birlas and Shaw Wallace pulled out, seems to have run into trouble yet again: the Government has yet to clear the foreign collaboration with Snamprogetti of Italy, the controller of capital issues has yet to give the green signal for the raising of capital, and the financial institutions have not yet committed any loans. Meanwhile, anonymous letters have started reaching the Government and the financial institutions, questioning the managerial and financial ability of the Nagarjuna group in relation to the size of the project. These may or may not be authored by rival companies. But the group has, meanwhile, attracted considerable flak for allowing brokers to raise funds from the general public as a part of the promoters' share of the new venture's equity capital.

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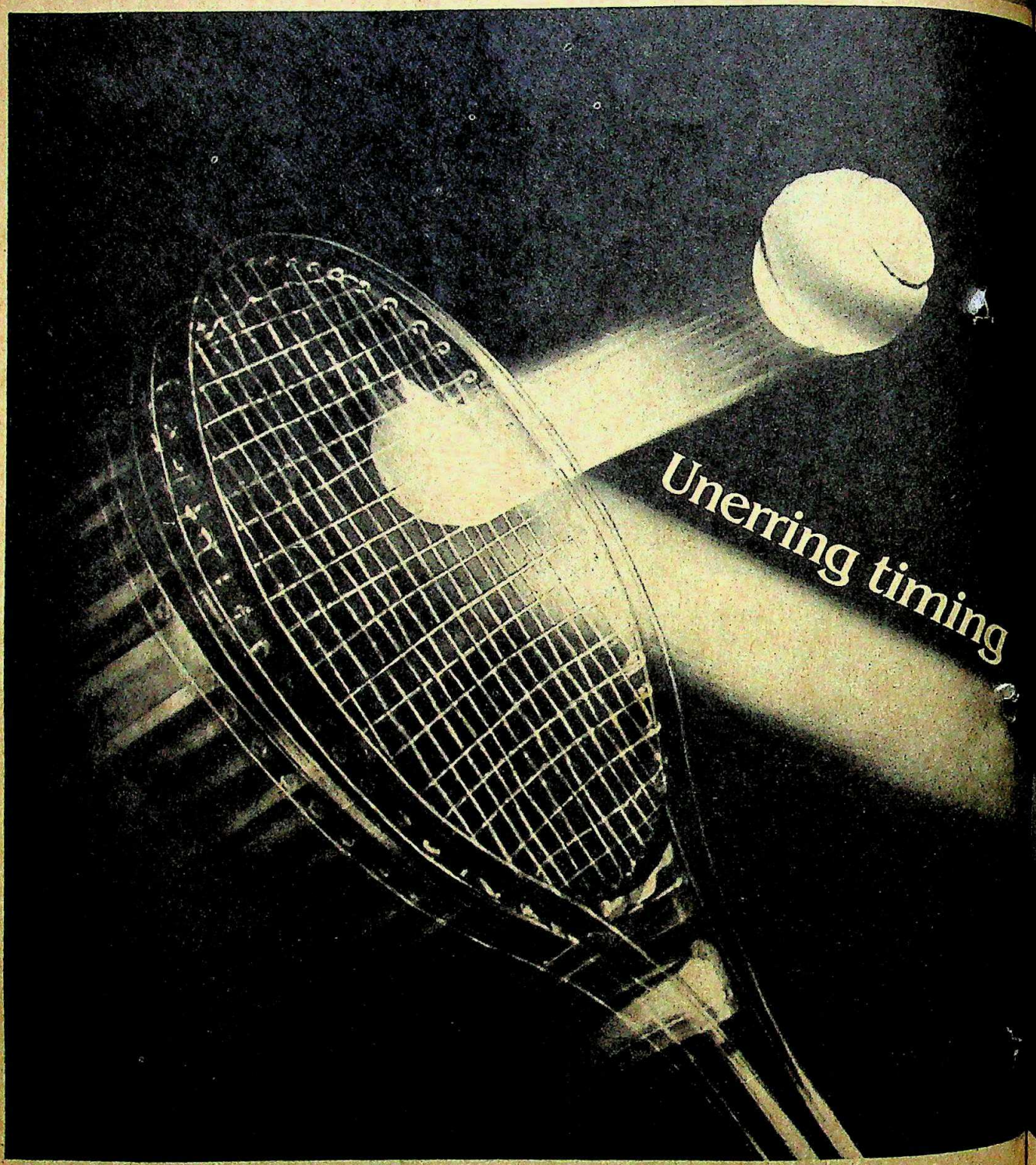

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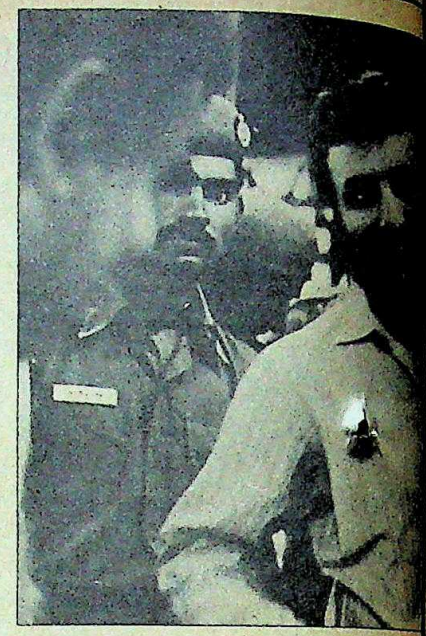
RAJENDRA SETHIA

The Twisted Trail



"The preliminary investigations made so far (by the CBI) shows that the amount of total fraud may run into $1,000 million."
—K.C. Lohia, Metropolitan Magistrate on March 1985

"Investigations carried till date... are that Rajendra Singh Sethia had defrauded London-based nationalised banks... to the tune of $146 million."
—S.M. Agarwal, Add. Sessions judge on March 27, 1985

"The chargesheet which has been filed in the present case relates to offences committed in respect of these transactions involving $10.4 million."
—D.P. Wadhwa, Delhi High Court judge on June 17, 1985

THE TUNE, it appeared, was changing fast. And far from building up to a dramatic crescendo, as it should have, it seemed rapidly to be degenerating into a mass of discordant noises. There was a strange irony to it all. In the dock was the biggest bankrupt in British history, the London-based Rajendra Sethia, who is alleged to have defrauded the London branches of three giant Indian public sector banks of several crore rupees. Ranged against him were the sleuths of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and top functionaries of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) who, after four months of painstaking investigation, had only questioned scores of witnesses but had pored over literally trunksfull of documents, a process they were still far from completing.

Yet, when Sethia's interolcutors finally filed their charges in a Delhi Court at the end of June, the high expectations case seemed to deflate almost audibly. If the chargesheet against Sethia and fellow accused Amarjeet Singh, the dismissed general manager of the Punjab National Bank branch in London, and supporting

INTERVIEW

"I have done nothing illegal"

HE USED to shuttle between London and Lagos, Zurich and New York. Today, he shuttles once a fortnight between New Delhi and Calcutta escorted by four policemen. But Rajendra Sethia, the flamboyant entrepreneur currently lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail, still believes in maintaining the style "I am used to." He flies executive class at his own expense and also pays the fare for his advocates and his four police escorts.

Since his incarceration for alleged fraud and bankruptcy earlier this year, the tall, bearded figure dressed in the jeans and striped shirts he favours has become familiar to millions. "I think I am the second best known person after Rajiv Gandhi," he says with a laugh, referring to the excessive attention and hushed whispers that he receives from his co-passengers. Last fortnight, Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA *found himself sitting next to Sethia on one of his trips to Calcutta where his legal battle is going on. During the flight, Sethia, after some persuasion, agreed to grant what is his first ever interview to an Indian journalist since he fled Britain in 1984. Excerpts:*

Q. How do you feel about this temporary change in your role, from a jet-set high-profile entrepreneur to an ordinary prisoner in Tihar Jail?

A. Frankly, I never expected to land up in a prison. I was not prepared for it either. But it is an interesting experience which I will not forget. At the same time I would not like this to be repeated.

Q. Who do you blame for your current predicament?

A. Primarily, I hold my *karma* responsible for sending me to jail. But it is also due to the conspiracy of circumstances which outmanoeuvred me and here I am. To begin with it was a coup in Nigeria, followed by a change of government in Sudan and finally the glare of publicity in which I found myself in India and abroad. And it started with a very hostile coverage of the Central Bank of India in your magazine in 1984.

Q. Do you really believe that media exposure has contributed to your downfall?

A. I firmly believe that I am a victim of excessive and adverse publicity. I must confess that it was my inexperienced youth during which I never realised that one required both, a powerful political umbrella and friends in the press to survive in business life.

Q. But it is widely believed that you had powerful connections in Mrs Gandhi's government and the bureaucracy.

A. This is all bunkum and nonsense. I never met any of the ministers in Mrs Gandhi's or Rajiv Gandhi's government. Although I have maintained a low profile as a businessman and dealt with officials who were directly concerned with my business activities, I wish I had known some politicians and escaped from this traumatic experience of my life.

Q. You mean you succeeded in taking huge loans from Indian banks without any clout or influence?

A. They gave me every penny on the basis of my track-record and security. If you look at their profitability, you will find it was due to Esal's that they made huge profits from 1979-83. I have done a business of about $1,000 million with Indian banks. With that huge cash flow and regular payments, any bank or financial institution would have kissed my feet for getting my accounts.

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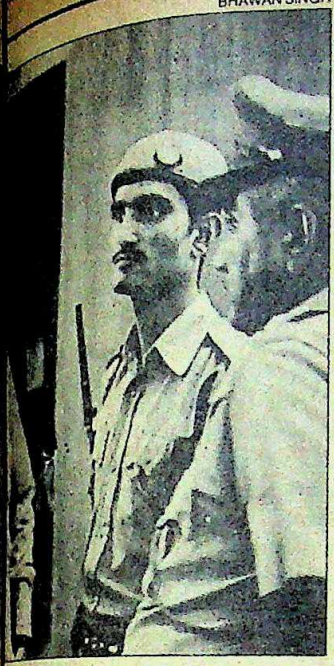
BHAWAN SINGH



Sethia with his police escorts: trials and tribulations

documents are any indication, the CBI has a long way to go before it can make its case stick.

Says Sethia's Calcutta-based counsel, R.K. Khanna: "Sethia has undoubtedly been indicted in the media, but the CBI has not lived up to its promise of unravelling the alleged conspiracy." CBI officials declined to comment because, as one said dismissively, "till our investigations are complete we don't want to get involved in this controversy."

The first tell-tale signs emerged from a comparison of the five-page charge-sheet submitted to the court on May 28 and the first information report (FIR) lodged against Sethia last March. The FIR had said specifically that:

► certain officials of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) and the Central Bank of India based in London had conspired with Sethia to defraud these banks of 'millions of pounds sterling'.

► Sethia obtained huge loans by falsely representing his assets to these banks.

In comparison, the CBI's chargesheet in court—filed just one day before the expiry of the statutory 90-day deadline—seeks conviction on an alleged fraud of $ 10.4 million (Rs 13 crore). The chargesheet says that the Sethia-Singh conspiracy to defraud PNB was hatched in November 1983. Singh, it says, was personally supervising Sethia's accounts to help out Sethia's Esal Commodities, which was in financial difficulties.

The CBI rests its case on four bills of exchange worth $10.4 million drawn on the Hong Kong-based Alglobe Trading Ltd, another Sethia company, relating to the supply of sugar to Nigeria. The bills, which were offered up to the bank, remained unpaid and later turned out to be fake. The CBI also says that the bills were later transferred with PNB approval to another Sethia company floated in Hong Kong simply to accept the bills, but once they were presented, the company's directors were found to be untraceable.

Sethia argues that there was no fraud since no money was actually paid out by the bank against them. But the CBI's chargesheet shows that the day after the bills were received on December 6, 1983, the bank reduced the debts outstanding against the Esal group from $33.263 million to $23.259 million. At the same time, in a clever move to paper over this, Sethia's total advances were shown to have gone up by a precisely similar amount

Q. There are allegations that you overstated the inflated value of your securities and presented fake documents to secure loans.

A. Let us wait for the trial to begin. My assets have been undervalued. Moreover, evaluation has been done by independent people in UK and not in India. The Central Bureau of Investigation is after my blood now because it has found nothing substantial against me. They began with £ 1,000 million (Rs 1,600 crore) and have come down to $ 7 million (Rs 8 crore). I have not done anything which is illegal, unethical or even wrong by any standards and I am committed to repay everything which I owe to anybody in the world. I have done it in the past. I will do it again.

Q. But once you are declared bankrupt you are under no obligation to pay anybody.

A. True. But I don't want to carry the stigma of a debtor. I may die but my children will suffer from it. I am an Indian and a Rajasthan Marwari. Since I am proud of being a Marwari, I will ensure that I will die with my own money.

Q. How much time do you think it will take you to clear all the debts?

A. It depends upon the progress of the cases I am involved in. Let them release me today, I will clear everything within 24 months, sitting in India. My first priority is Indian banks because their credibility in Britain is at stake now. After their money is over, I will settle scores with the British police who dragged me into this controversy due to ethnic considerations. They could not tolerate Indians flourishing and giving jobs to them in Indian-companies.

"Let them release me today, I will clear everything within 24 hours, sitting in India."

Q. But why did you come to India when you knew that the new Government was after you?

A. I never expected that I would be arrested in India. They were talking to me till February. Representatives of the Reserve Bank of India and other Indian banks were involved in a rescue package. If I had the intention of defrauding the banks, I would have gone to Brazil or any other country. Nothing would have happened. I came here because I meant business but it was not to happen.

Q. But they have got you and may recover the money too.

A. They will get the money because my securities are sound. There may be a shortfall of a few million pounds which can be made up if I am in business. But keeping me in jail is not a solution.

Q. You seem to be feeling very uncomfortable in jail.

A. Not any more. After four-and-a-half months I have become used to my new abode. But I miss my children and family members. Now I am in the company of VIP prisoners and get legal facilities. I miss nothing except my family and travelling from one country to another in search of customers and clients.

Q. Do you intend to write a book on the saga of the world's biggest bankrupt?

A. I have found place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* due to the Punjab National Bank which clamped a claim of $ 92 million which was fully secured. I have not given any thought to it. Charles Sobhraj, who is also in Tihar Jail, has offered me a multi-million dollar contract. But I am a salesman and not an author. I want to get back to my job and prove that Sethia is not a scoundrel, a crook or a dishonest businessman.

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—in spite of the fact that no money had been received from Hong Kong and the bills were fake. The CBI concentrated on this case after Sethia—who describes these entries as "only book adjustments"—reportedly disclosed to his interrogators that he had once submitted forged bills and Singh had, in fact, accepted them.

Amarjeet Singh

One reason why the CBI seems to have retreated from its earlier position seems to be the reluctance of the bank concerned to give up their efforts to recover their money. While the CBI has been pursuing a conviction, the banks are after the money they stand to lose. According to claims filed with Cork Gully, a reputed London-based firm of official liquidators appointed by a London court, PNB currently has $92.73 million (Rs 115 crore) outstanding, the Central Bank $51 million (Rs 60 crore) and the Union Bank of India $17 million (Rs 21 crore). Interestingly, none of these banks have lodged criminal complaints, and the documents they have handed to the CBI seek to show that there is no-thing wrong with their Sethia accounts. The CBI has gone into the case under instructions from the Finance Ministry.

The bank's gamble seems to be paying off. According to information obtained by INDIA TODAY, the banks have made some progress in making good their losses. It is now clear that some 90 per cent of the outstandings relate to Esal's business with Nigeria and Sudan. Of the $95 million payments due from these countries, some $65 million are covered by Lloyds insurance and over half has been paid to the creditor banks. PNB, for example, received 30 million in April against total dues of $53 million. The second instalment has not been paid out because Sethia is in detention in Delhi and Lloyds is entitled to a discussion with the party concerned before it releases payments. In fact, soon after Sethia's arrest, two representatives of Lloyds came to Delhi in March and moved the court for an interview with Sethia which the CBI opposed.

While Lloyds have now formally protested to the banks about their inability to meet Sethia, the banks have started to get their money out of Sudan. Some $20 million (Rs 25 crore) had been paid till July 7, and the authorities in both countries have written to the liquidators to say that they are rescheduling the payments.

At the same time, the Indian banks have started to sell various securities lodged with them by Sethia in order to recover their loans. But since they must first secure the permission of the court in London, the recovery is relatively slow. There are other problems. Sethia owns over 13 lakh shares in Jokai India Ltd, a tea concern. PNB sought the transfer of these shares, which are worth Rs 18 crore, in its favour but the company refused. Last month, PNB moved the Finance Ministry to intervene so that it could offload the shares and recover the money.

LATEST POSITION OF SETHIA'S ACCOUNTS

As on March 31, 1985, in $ million.	Punjab National Bank	Central Bank of India	Union Bank of India	Total
Total Outstandings	92	51	16.9	159.9
Secured	91	27	14.0	132
Unsecured	0.9	24	2.9	27.8

The bank is also attempting to sell Holland Hotel in New York, another property owned by Sethia and mortgaged to PNB for $6 million (Rs 7.5 crore). According to a report by Ferguson Maidment & Co, chartered accountants retained by PNB to make an independent assessment of Esal's financial accounts, the hotel's assessed value today is $7 million but PNB last month received an offer of $12 million (Rs15 crore) from a New York broker. But the London court has refused permission to sell because it believes a still higher price can be obtained.

Ferguson Maidment have also reported that PNB isn't in the tight spot its large outstandings would seem to indicate. PNB's advances were more or less fully secured. The chartered accountants say that "based on summary, the estimated net deficiency is $99,840 (Rs 12.5 lakh)" which is small change considering PNB's total unrecovered outstandings.

It is the other two banks that are in difficulty. The only good news for the Central Bank is the availability of $5 million that it will receive from the sale of Holland Hotel in New York. Another $2 million has been received from the Nigerian authorities, but the official liquidator suggests that some 25 per cent of its advances were not properly secured and may not be recovered. The Union Bank too is left with a similar 25 per cent of its advances unsecured, but it is likely to receive about $10 million from Nigeria.

The CBI realises that as more money flows into the coffers of the banks, its case will become progressively weaker. Failing to come up with more concrete evidence at the moment, the CBI has created a problem for PNB which has not been able to reply to a notice filed by Singh challenging his dismissal. Singh was removed from service on March 15 because of his alleged role in the Sethia advances, but the Delhi High Court admitted Singh's petition and gave PNB till July 9 to reply to it —which it has not done.

In his petition, Singh argues that his branch did not commit any fraud, that the bank authorities, RBI and the Central Government were all kept fully informed of its actions. Moreover, he points out that it was the Government and the RBI which launched a fiscal operation to rescue Sethia by which the banks were to advance another $40 million (Rs 50 crore). The operation never went through because of the liquidation order passed by the London court.

Meanwhile, concern is growing among banking circles that the longer the Government takes to bring the guilty to book, the more is the loss of confidence in Indian banks abroad. Already deposits in the London branches of Indian banks have declined 20 per cent in the last 20 months, and the Central Government has withdrawn loan sanctioning authority of local branch managers. Says a dejected London-based official of an Indian bank: "Every day we receive a telex from Delhi about someone or other arriving to investigate. Are we to do business or keep answering questions?" Clearly, the guessing game isn't likely to be over in a hurry, not till the Sethia trial remains unconcluded.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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REVENUE DEPARTMENT

Tightening Up

WHAT does a finance minister do when he has a budget deficit of over Rs 3,000 crore, and when the deficit threatens to get still bigger because of lackadaisical tax collection? The answer came last month when Vishwanath Pratap Singh undertook the most comprehensive shake-up the Government's tax collection machinery has seen in the last 40 years.

The headline-hitting moves Singh ordered the transfer of all but one member of the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), including the board chairman, inducted three new members on to the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), superseded 20 senior income tax officials in the process, and appointed new incumbents to head vital and sensitive agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Directorate of Anti-excise Evasion. At the end of the shake-up, every fourth officer above the rank of commissioner and collector had been shifted around. Said Singh: "The first phase of my budgetary exercise was over. Earlier, I had distributed carrots. Now it is the time for wielding the big stick."

In a sense, the changes were forced on him. A review of the functioning of the department of revenue had turned up the startling fact that tax recoveries had been 30 to 40 per cent short of the targets for the first quarter of the year. While the CBDT had recovered only Rs 500 crore against a target of Rs 800 crore, the CBEC had collected Rs 1,500 crore less than the target of Rs 5,000 crore. What annoyed Singh the most was not even these shortfalls, but that slackness on the part of the officials had resulted in a failure to realise tax arrears amounting to a staggering figure of Rs 2,000 crore.

During the budget-making exercises in February and March, Singh had warned his officials that if they failed to bring down the arrears and hasten the process of revenue recovery he would view it as administrative failure, and that heads would then roll. Meanwhile he started a process to screen the records of all the top officials in the revenue department, including those working with CBEC and the CBDT.

What exactly this showed up is not known. But the customs and excise officials seem to have taken the warning seriously, and launched "Operation Ketu" during which a specific hit list was prepared comprising serious cases of excise evasion. Soon after his warning the customs and excise authorities also began massive raids and conducted over a 100 searches, leading to the seizure of over Rs 81 crore of contraband goods in the first six months, as against Rs 100 crore during the previous year. The income tax authorities, however, did not take the finance minister's message seriously, and it was mainly the CBDT which attracted the finance minister's wrath.

V.P. Singh (left) and new CBEC Chairman Dutta: cracking down

In a surprise move that sent shock waves throughout the CBDT, Singh directed its Chairman, M. S. Narayana, to shunt out all senior income tax commissioners to non-field posts within 24 hours. Narayana had no option but to comply with his minister's sudden fiat and sent individual telex messages to eight senior officials of commissioner rank in New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Haryana and Kerala asking them to hand over charge to the next in command and proceed as officers on special duty to the National Academy of Direct Taxes (NADT) in Nagpur, a training institution for new recruits.

At the end of the shake-up every fourth officer above the rank of commissioner and collector had been shifted around.

There was no mistaking the fact that Nagpur was meant to be a punishment posting, because the NADT had neither office accommodation nor work for so many senior officials. Surprisingly, none of them was served with a formal transfer order: nor were they due for transfer under the normal guidelines in the case of transfers.

This order was the second successive blow to the CBDT. Earlier in May and June, the Finance Ministry had filled five of the six board level vacancies by ignoring the time-honoured seniority principle. In the first of two orders on the subject, officers who were 14th and 21st on the seniority list were made members of the CBDT, superseding at least eight senior officials. In the second round, three officers who were 35th, 37th and 40th in seniority were appointed as board members, ignoring the claims of over 20 other senior commissioners. Their selection was justified on the plea that the Government had taken a conscious decision to appoint only those who had two years or more of service left. Said Singh: "I want to demolish this notion that CBDT membership is meant for rewarding officials who are on the verge of retirement. If an organisation dealing with policy issues is packed with people who are waiting for their day to end peacefully, one should not expect any innovative approach and dynamism from them."

Among others to be swept out by Singh's new broom was Revenue Secretary V.K. Dhar who had moved in only two months earlier. Before that, the Finance Ministry had moved Bhure Lal into the sensitive post of director, ED. Bhure Lal had been Singh's former secretary in Uttar Pradesh while Dhar's replacement as revenue secretary was Vinod Pandey, also from Uttar Pradesh.

Once Pandey was in place, Singh used him to implement his plans in the CBEC. On June 1, Pandey replaced CBEC Chairman R.C. Mishra with Jyotirmoy Dutta and transferred three board members—P.C. Sarkar, O.O Gangwani and B.B. Jhulka. This was the first time in the board's history that its members were being reverted to their parent departments without being elevated to higher positions. Then followed the large scale shifting of collectors of excise, and customs and revenue intelligence officials in which not a single major city was left out. In a series of orders passed in three days between June 28 and July 3, 1985, newly-appointed Chairman Dutta ordered the transfer of the collec-

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tors of customs and excise of Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore, Madras, Cochin and Ahmedabad, the director of the Directorate of Anti-excise Evasion, the appointment of a new member (anti-smuggling) in the CBEC and a new director-general of revenue intelligence.

Said Singh after his orders were carried out, "I am prepared for the second strike." And he was as good as his word. For he convened a meeting of all the senior officials dealing with revenue and told them that he expected them to generate at least 15 per cent more revenue than the targets fixed in the budget. Thus, the CBDT was given the target of raising an additional Rs 500 crore over and above the budget provision of Rs 4,700 crore. The CBEC was allotted Rs 3,000 crore over and above the Rs 20,000 crore provided in the budget. Said Dutta: "For a department which collects about Rs 65 crore a day, additional collection of Rs 6.5 crore is peanuts. It needs careful planning and choosing the right people for the job." Dutta claimed that in the recent selection of personnel he had done exactly that. For example, all the excise and customs officials posted in Bombay were transferred, to be followed by shifting the officials from Gujarat and Delhi.

The sweeping changes immediately became a target of criticism. The Indian Revenue Service Officers (Income Tax) Association (IRSOA) was quick to protest against the arbitrary transfers and expressed its doubts about the success of Singh's new approach. Said IRSOA in its memorandum to Singh: "On the face of it these transfer orders appear to be arbitrary as there was no indication of such an action." The IRSOA also said that such punitive action would discourage officials from taking risks. The association also pointed out that the ministry had not followed any specific guidelines in 'victimising' some people because they were not holding sensitive posts. Said a senior income tax official: "If the ministry feels that by replacing Tom with Dick and Dick with Harry it is going to close the deficit, it is highly mistaken."

But Singh is unfazed by the criticism, and argued that "the future of the economy cannot be linked with the personal promotional avenues of a few individuals. They are instruments for achieving certain goals and I have the right to choose my own instruments." Only a mid-term review of the budget in September will prove whether Singh is right or whether he is simply another bad workman blaming his tools. —PRABHU CHAWLA

PEICO

Name Game

FOR MANY weeks now, the famous logo and name have been strident in their claims to quality and reliability. "Philips For Television" is the advertisement message, accompanied by a series of slickly-produced newspaper rhymes exhorting the reader to realise "truly how remarkable is life ... when viewed in black and white". The high-profile campaign, estimated to have cost Rs 3 crore, is designed to position Philips "as the most experienced and largest manufacturer of TV sets".

But even as the hoardings went up and the black-and-white sets in three sizes hit shops all over the country, events were taking place in Delhi which could have serious implications for the electronics heavyweight that is Peico Electronics and Electricals Ltd (1984 sales Rs 225.1 crore). Savita Kohli, a journalist-turned-electronics entrepreneur, filed a complaint with a magistrate at the end of May, charging that she had been cheated into buying a 14-inch black-and-white TV set from a Delhi dealer which was supposed to have been made by Philips and was projected as its product. In fact, the set had been made by a lesser known firm. In doing so, said Kohli, "a false impression is being created in the minds of innocent purchasers who are tricked into buying material not manufactured by Philips at all."

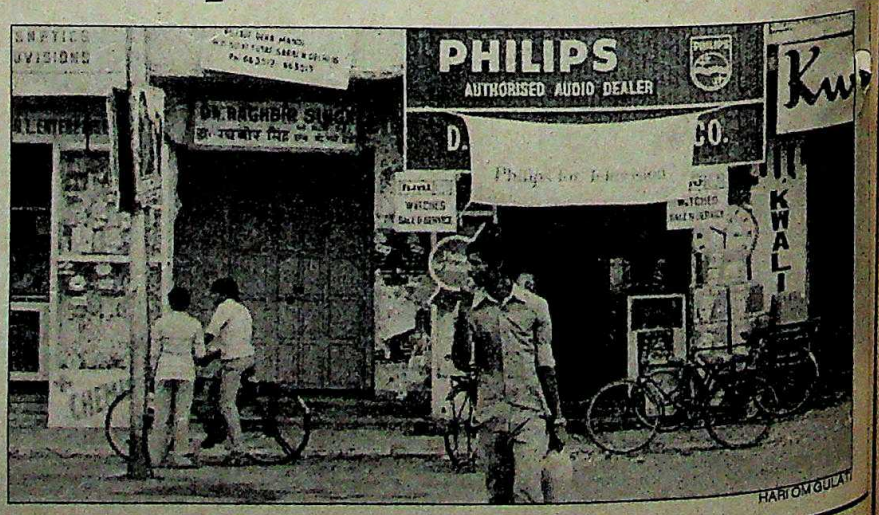
The case is due to come up for hearing before Delhi Metropolitan Magistrate K.C. Lohia in mid-July. Meanwhile, a report filed by Rajkumar Singh of the Delhi police, acting on the basis of the complaint, threw up startling facts. Peico, it turned out, had no right to use the trade mark "Philips" and the logo with three wavy lines and four stars. The agreement between Peico and N.V. Philips Gloeilampenfabricken of Holland for the use of the name and logo had expired in 1983. The police officer's report went on to say that the company's marketing of TV sets not made by it and the use of a trade mark to which it has no prima facie right constitute offences under the notorious Section 420 of the penal code and Sections 78 and 79 of the Trade and Merchandise Marks Act (TMMA) 1958. Moreover, since the sets

HARI OM GULATI

"A false impression is being created in the minds of innocent purchasers who are tricked into buying material not manufactured by Philips at all."

SAVITA KOHLI
electronics entrepreneur

The shop in Delhi where the Philips TV was bought



HARI OM GULATI

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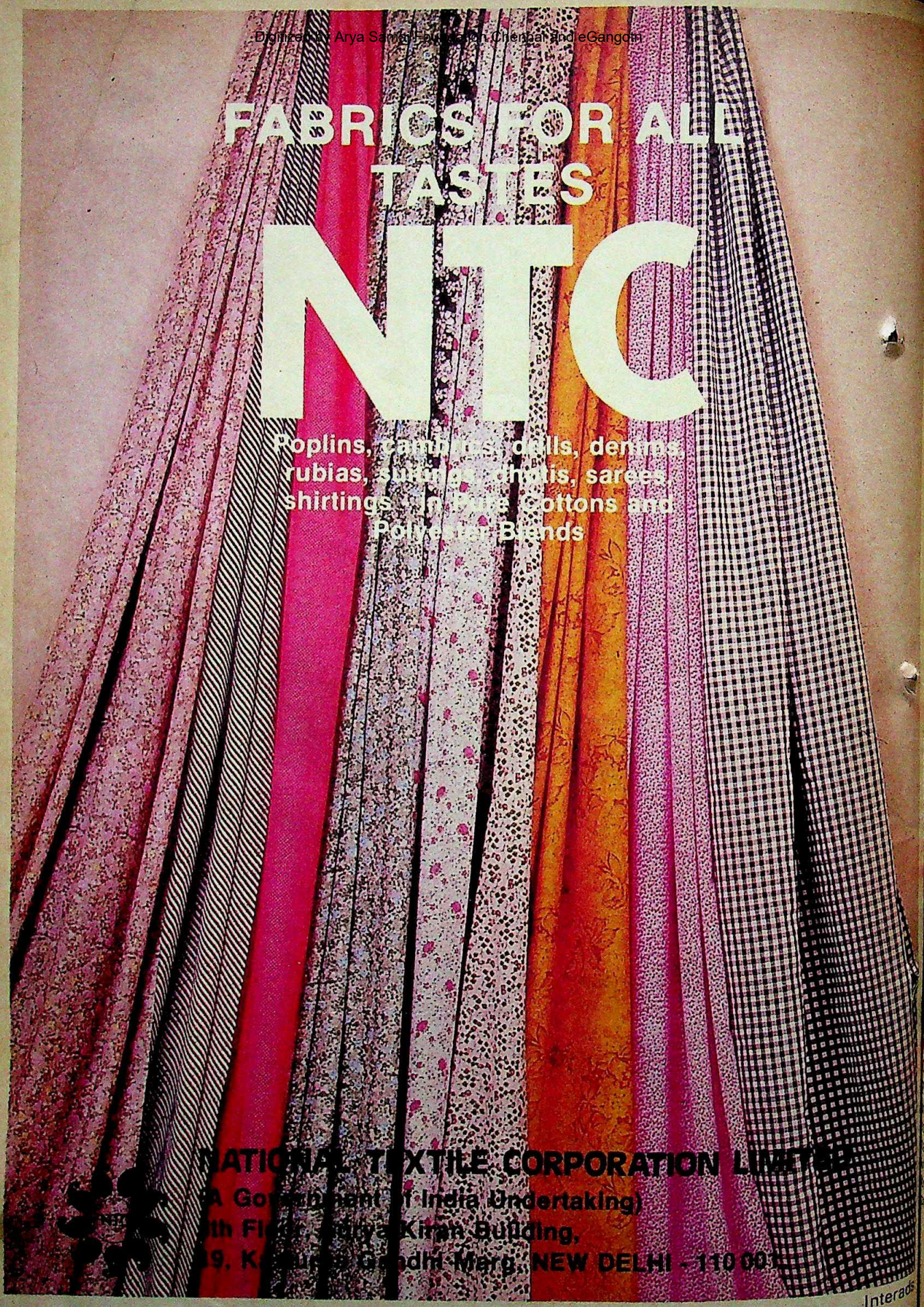

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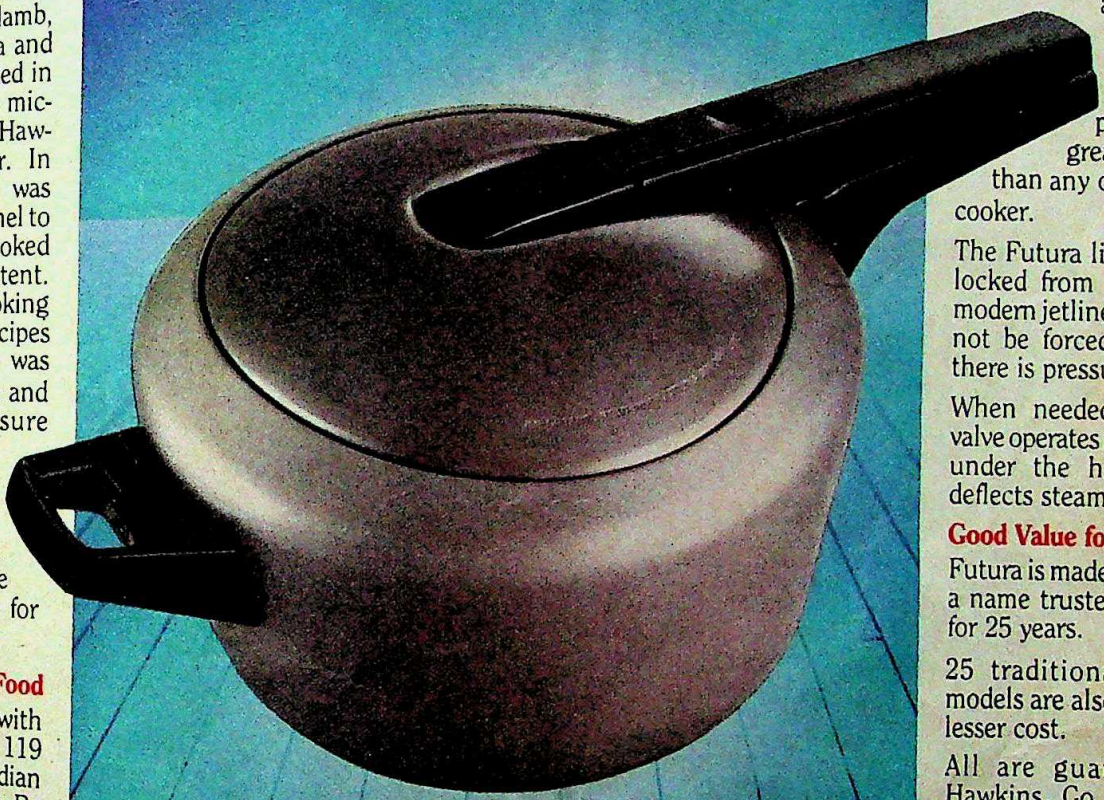
Hawkins

FUTURA

The space-age pressure cooker



46% faster than microwave

Yes, unbelievable though it may sound, it is true! The Hawkins test kitchen undertook a series of comparative cooking trials. 19 recipes from soups to desserts, including fish, chicken, lamb, pork, beef, rice, pasta and vegetables were cooked in equal quantities in a microwave oven and in a Hawkins pressure cooker. In both cases, the food was tasted by an expert panel to ensure that it was cooked to the same proper extent. The total average cooking time for these 19 recipes in a microwave oven was 45 minutes per recipe and in a Hawkins pressure cooker, 24 minutes per recipe.

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were packed in cartons devoid of any name or address, the firms that manufactured the sets and the dealer who sold them are also offenders—the latter is liable for prosecution under the Standards of Weight and Measurements Act.

Further investigations revealed that Peico has no licence to manufacture television receivers, which were actually made by Orient Vision Ltd and Orientronics Ltd at their Hosur complex in Tamil Nadu and sold to Peico for Rs 1,335. Peico in turn sold it to the dealers at Rs 2,050 each.

The sets contained nothing made by Peico being built entirely from components bought by Orient Vision and Orientronics Ltd. Even the packaging material and the guarantee card were made by the Hosur firms owned by none other than the Amritraj family of tennis fame. Orient's own models are named after the three brothers: Orient Vijay, Orient Anand and Orient Ashok. In his statement to the police, G. Rangaswamy, factory manager, Orient Vision Ltd, said: "The models PHX-12 and PHX-14 are designed by me after modification of imported TV sets. The cabinets of the sets are supplied by Supreme Plastics of Bombay and the picture tube, antenna, tuners and other equipment come from different sources in the country. Peico Electronics has nothing to do as far as the quality control is concerned."

The Hosur firms are in addition to three other suppliers who furnish sets of 12, 14 and 20-inch sizes. One of them, Hi-Beam Electronics of Madras, imports components from Philips factories in Taiwan and Singapore and in return is helped with orders, prices and even delivery, shipment and transport schedules. Peico might even loan the firm equipment with which to build the sets. The advantage in farming out work in this manner is obvious: Peico estimates the market for black-and-white TV sets by 1986 at 1.4 million and is hoping to capture a hefty 8 per cent of the market, which works out to 1,12,000 sets.

The price is another factor for farming out work:

- Dugar Electronics of Calcutta makes a mono cassette recorder which it sells to Peico for Rs 377.65 and which Peico sells to the dealer for Rs 715.50. The customer ultimately pays Rs 935;
- Asha Pavro Electronics Ltd, Thane, Maharashtra, makes a two-band two-in-one and sells it for Rs 550 to Peico, in turn sells it to the dealer for Rs 1,035. The customer gets it for Rs 1,275;
- Prakash Electronics of Calcutta makes a battery eliminator which Peico buys for Rs 38 and sells to the dealer for Rs 57. The customer pays Rs 75;
- Precipneum of Goregaon, Bombay, makes a cheap single-band radio for Rs 71. Peico sells it for Rs 122.50 to the dealer and the customer pays Rs 160.

The margins are enormous and also raise the question of whether Peico is a predominantly manufacturing company or is turning into a trading firm intent on getting into as many segments of the fast-growing electronics market as possible. The Philips name is obviously the key factor in the sale. Naresh Kumar, partner in D.K. Radio in south Delhi where Kohli bought her set, admitted to investigating officers that "customers would not have purchased TV sets at the price of Rs 2,475 if they came to know that Philips had not manufactured it in the first place." Customer complaints provided further damning testimony. Air Force employee Keshan Sangwani, who bought a PHX-12 set from the same shop, says: "He (the dealer) told me it was a set made by Philips India. We purchased the set thinking it to be a TV set from Philips. If I had known earlier that this was not a TV set from Philips, I would not have paid such a high price of Rs 1,925."

"The official registered name is PEICO...We use the name Philips India as our trade name. That is quite common and we have the permission to do so."

CEES J. SEELEN
Chairman, PEICO

The case has come up just after the company inaugurated a brand-new electronics complex at Calcutta. At the inauguration ceremonies, Chairman Cees J. Seelen was asked what the actual name of the company was. His reply: "The official registered name is Peico. However, we use the name Philips India as our trade name. That is quite common and we have the permission to do so." But do they?

The Kohli case contains a statement by the examiner, Trade Marks Registry, Mahesh Gupta: "Philips India Ltd, Calcutta, were listed as the registered user of trade mark No. 81808 and 145525, that is the 'Philips' name and insignia up to the period of December 26, 1978, under the provisions of the TMMA. Thereafter, the application form No. TM 29 filed for extension of the period beyond December 26, 1978, was withdrawn by their agent's letter dated November 4, 1982, which says that the registered user agreement whereby Philips Ltd were entitled to use the trade mark Philips was terminated. There is no application pending under Section 49 of the TMMA with this office as per records available."

The licence agreement between the Dutch and the Indian company first came into effect in 1963 and was renewed until 1982 when the company applied for extension. This was later withdrawn. That is why the Company Secretary R.K. Arora says in what could be the most significant statement of the case: "At present we have no licence or consent letter from N.V. Philips to use the trade mark Philips in India." He also says that "after 1982 my company claims to be the owner of trade mark Philips and we have made an application in 1982 for registration of the trade mark in our name and it is pending with the trade marks registry in Bombay."

But even if the company has applied to the trade mark authorities for use of the name and the insignia, the authorities clearly believe that their present use on Peico products requires an explanation. While company executives are quiet on the implications of such allegedly unauthorised use, there is no doubt that Peico could be in deep trouble. Every one of its products, whether made in its factories or outside, carries the Philips label and their advertisements bank on the selling power of the "trusted household name for over 50 years." But the unpalatable fact is now getting known to the general public that neither the products nor the brand name of Philips may belong to the company.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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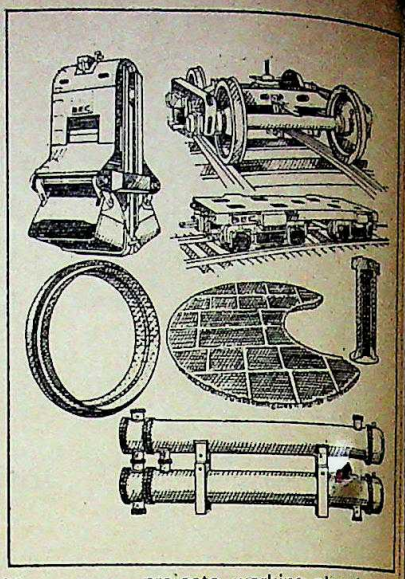

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MEETING THE ENGINEERING CHALLENGES OF CORE INDUSTRIES

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PEPSICO

Losing Fizz

AMONG all the attempts by multinational giants to enter the Indian market in recent years, few have attracted as much front page attention world wide as the bid by Pepsico to introduce its cola and other soft drinks. Carefully packaged with associated offers to export fruit juices from India and to transfer special technologies in such areas as citrus farming, the Pepsi bid has almost become a test case of the Government of India's new attitude to overseas investment in the country.

Yet the Pepsi bid seems to have lost some of its fizz even before the first hopeful consumer can pop open a bottle. For after poring over the Pepsico proposal and following rounds of discussions with the American giant's representatives, government officials have come up with several objections and some questions. And unless the Cabinet decides to take a "political" decision, keeping in mind the possible fall-out that a thumbs down sign can have on other overseas companies seeking to invest in India, the Pepsi bid may soon be given short shrift.

The Department of Science and Technology has opposed the Pepsi proposal, apparently on the ground that the technologies offered are already available in India. Informed sources say that the Departments of Food and Technical Development as well as the Commerce Ministry have also turned down the Pepsico offer. But a spokesman of Agro Products Exports India (APEI), the Indian company that has proposed the tie-up with Pepsico, said last fortnight that as far as he knew most of these departments and ministries had not yet made up their minds, while one wing of the Government had declared that the technologies offered by Pepsico were required by the country.

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Pepsi has run into various roadblocks. Government officials have pointed out that the APEI-Pepsico proposal runs counter to the country's import policy. The proposal envisages exporting fruit juices from India, in return for which Pepsico will be allowed to import cola concentrates worth one-third of the foreign exchange it earns on fruit exports. In Commerce Ministry jargon, this amounts to asking for an import replenishment entitlement of 33 per cent. But, as the officials point out, the import policy allows only a 10 per cent import replenishment against fruit juice exports; and further, only 10 per cent of this 10 per cent can be used to import soft drink flavourings. In other words, the policy says that only 1 per cent of the money earned on fruit juice exports can be used to import soft drink flavourings; Pepsico wants 33 per cent.

Officials have also questioned the basic arithmetic in the Pepsico proposal, and argued that the foreign exchange implications of the proposal are less favourable than indicated by APEI and Pepsico. Thus, the licence application for the proposal says that while fruit juice exports in the first year will amount to Rs 3.6 crore, the import of cola concentrates will amount to Rs 1.2 crore, giving an export-import ratio of 3:1. However, the fruit juices to be exported will be contained in imported special aseptic packages, costing another Rs 88 lakh, so that the total import bill actually goes up to Rs 2.08 crore. The actual export-import ratio, therefore, is less than 2:1. Some officials have even questioned a few of the assumptions made in the licence application, and argued that the foreign exchange balance could work out to be negative.

A third point has been made by those who have scrutinised the APEI-Pepsico proposal. The actual fruit content in the exports of fruit juice will be no more than Rs 18 lakh, constituting only 5 per cent of the final export value. And since this Rs 18 lakh will be earned from 1.12 million kg of fruit, the price per kilogramme of fruit works out to Rs 1.60. If Pepsico does manage to get fruit at that price, the fruit farmer will be getting very low returns. And the imported cost of the packaging material will be almost five times that of the fruit whose juice will be exported.

A reliable source indicated that a committee of officials had met and decided to reject the Pepsico proposal on these grounds. But it is likely that this will not be the last word on the subject, which is almost certain to go up to the Cabinet for a final decision. The APEI spokesman said that some of the officials' objections had been anticipated, that the proposal does call for a change in the import policy, and that even if officials come up with such objections there is always room for further discussions and suitable amendments to the original proposal.

Meanwhile, lobbying for and against the Pepsi package has intensified in Delhi. Some members of Parliament have stepped into the act on both sides, and Ramesh Chauhan of Parle Exports (which makes the Thums Up cola) has written to Rajiv Gandhi requesting a hearing before a final decision is taken.

Pepsico has already had its chance to try and convince Rajiv Gandhi. The company's president was present at four different functions attended by him during his visit to the US last month, and on at least one of these occasions managed to talk to the prime minister about his company's proposal to enter the Indian market. Rajiv Gandhi is described as having been a good listener through these meetings, taking notes but remaining noncommittal.

Meanwhile, the Government could find itself facing unwanted media publicity on this proposal if the final verdict is negative. The Pepsi bid has received considerable world-wide media attention, and has been viewed as a test of whether the Government of India has changed its stand since the days when Coca-Cola was thrown out of the country in 1978. This may not be a fair test, but there is little doubt that this is the way the foreign media will present the issue, especially when both China and the Soviet Union, apart from quite a few other socialist countries, have allowed Pepsi to enter their home markets. Conversely, however, a decision to allow Pepsi into India, overridding the objections of officials in some of the concerned ministries, could lead to media and parliamentary criticism at home. Either way, the Government is on a sticky wicket just now, and which way it will finally go is anybody's guess.

—T.N. NINAN

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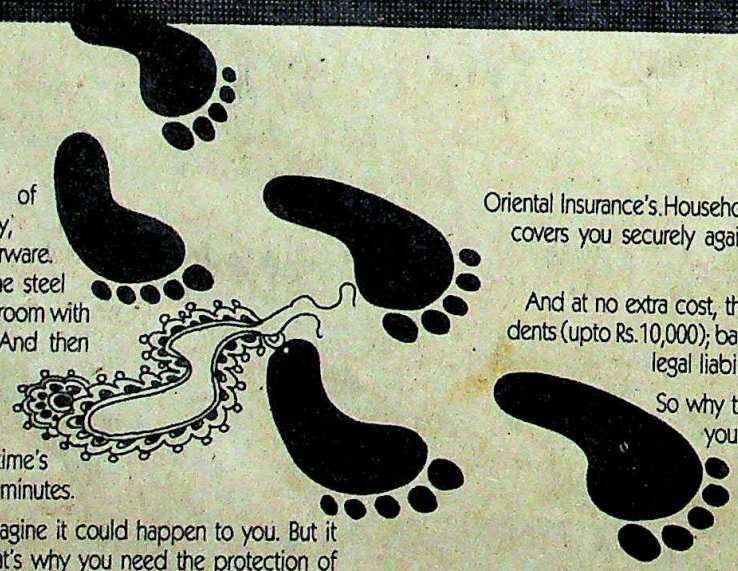
The windows were locked. The burglar was not.



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KERALA

Hotel Happy

IT WAS not so very long ago that even Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala could boast of only three good hotels and a total room capacity of a mere 150 rooms. But all that has changed. Today there are at least seven new hotels in the capital and room capacity has gone up to at least 650. That number is slated to go up even higher by the end of the year when four more hotels are opened. All this has happened in spite of soaring construction and real estate costs.

And the hotel boom is not restricted to just the state capital, or to just five-star hotels. Throughout the state there has been hectic hotel construction activity. On the national highway between Trivandrum and Kasargod on the northern most tip of the state there is, on the average, one hotel with a bar and restaurant every 10 kilometres. On the 75-km stretch between Cochin and Trichur there are at least 40 hotels with huge neon signs advertising their hospitality. In their enthusiasm the advertisements sometimes throw truth to the winds. In Ambalur, near Trichur the Elite Hotel, sited rather incongruously in the middle of a paddy field proudly proclaims that it has a revolving restaurant. On closer inspection it is apparent the restaurant does not revolve, but it is circular and perhaps after a long enough tipple, some of the guests might even persuade themselves that the scenery moves.

The irony is that many of new hotel rooms lie empty. Says Babu Thomas, a pioneer in the hotel trade in Kerala who sold his flagship Hotel Luciya Continental in Trivandrum last month: "Everybody who is somebody started building hotels in Trivandrum after it became an international airport. Today there are more international flights than ever but no tourists, and our occupancy is as low as 40 per cent." Thomas' Luciya Hotel in Trichur has an even more abysmal occupancy rate of 5 per cent and he says that he is trying hard to sell it off.

Other hotel owners in Trivandrum too are perturbed. Laments liquor baron Mohan Das, owner of the soon-to-be opened Hotel Surya: "Unless I have a tie up with a major hotel chain, it will be very difficult for me to break even."

Nonetheless there seems to be no let up in the boom. Sajen Varghese, the financier who bought Thomas' Luciya Continental is planning to upgrade it to a five-star hotel. In Calicut P.V. Chandran, a business tycoon of Malabar, is all set to launch the area's first five-star hotel next year and in Cochin some leading shrimp exporters are putting their money into luxury hotels with shopping complexes on the premises. Indians in the Gulf are also putting their money on hotels, and says a spokesman of the Kerala Financial Corporation: "There is a long queue outside our offices asking us to finance hotels from cities to remote villages."

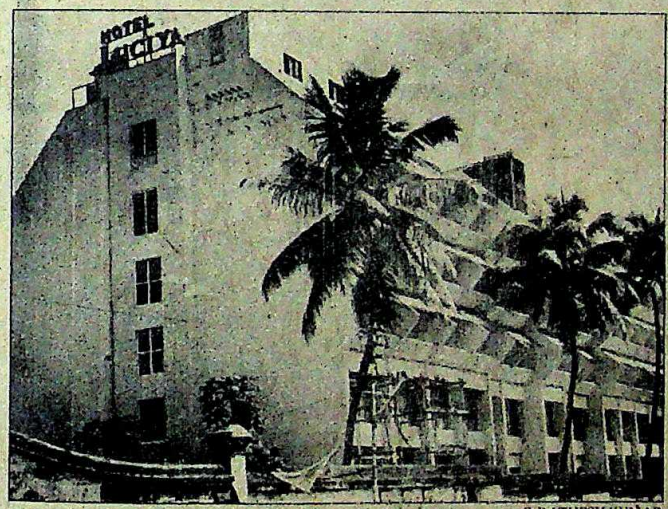
The question is: why? Sajan Varghese feels the real estate value of his hotel is bound to go up. But five-star hotels aside, one likely reason for the plethora of more modest but nonetheless well fitted hotels, motels and inns is the excise policy of the Kerala Government. To get a bar licence in the state, a proposed hotel must have 10 rooms, of which two must be air-conditioned. So it would seem that all the hotels that line the national highway are just well outfitted bars. Says M.P. Manmathan, a Gandhian prohibitionist who successfully agitated a few months ago to close an arrack shop in Cochin: "Kerala is the only state in India which has made it necessary to have air-conditioned hotels to get bar licences. This has brought air-conditioned bars to villages and encouraged drinking."

Liquor barons in the state have certainly benefited. Several of them have at least three such bar and restaurant outfits each, many in the same area in which they used to have their retail liquor vends. The bar and restaurant business allows them to sell liquor in pegs. Though initially, according to a leading liquor dealer, the hotels were merely a modest ploy for getting around the excise laws, they have now turned into gold-mines compared to retail outlets, the success of which depended to a great extent on the whims of the Excise Department.

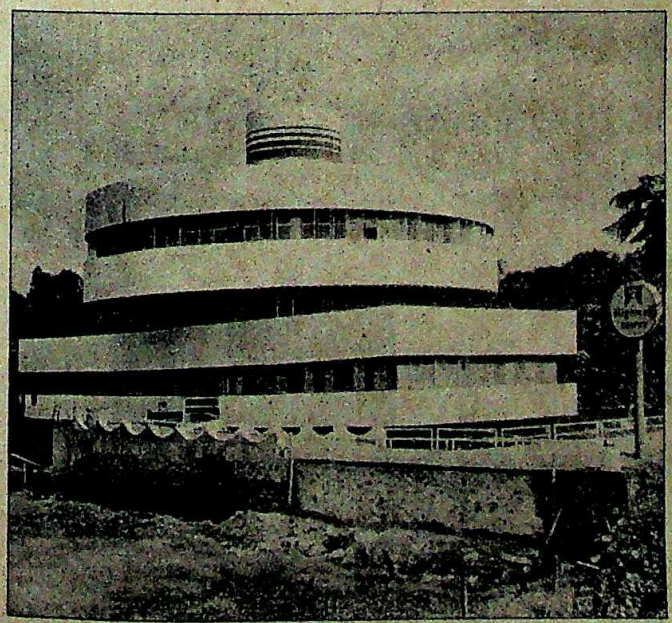
Legitimate hotel owners are also trying to do what hotels should be doing in the first place: draw in the tourists. Besides trying for tie-ups with foreign tour operators avidly, they are lobbying with the state Government to treat tourism as an industry. The Sri Lanka tourist trade which has been disrupted could be made to fall in Kerala's lap, they say. As and when the tourists do start flocking into the state, there will be no dearth of hoteliers offering them hospitality.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

A new hotel in Cochin (below) and; the Luciya in Trivandrum



C. RATHESH KUMAR



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BIOTECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE

Abstract of speech delivered by Dr. A.S. Ganguly, Chairman, Hindustan Lever Limited, at the Annual General Meeting held in Bombay on Tuesday, 18th June, 1985.

Among the economic priorities of the country is determining the choice of future technologies. Development is no longer leisurely and chronological. The first industrial revolution was fuelled by coal and steam power and the second by the chemical and electrical industries. Now change is being catalysed by the micro-processor on the one hand and genetic engineering on the other. These are the frontier areas of development which will usher in the next century.

The choice is not between the two, but on what priorities should be given to each one of them so that the country would be optimally served. The 'Green Revolution' was the beginning of agri-biotechnology application in its early days in India. The spread of satellite communications, weather forecasting and the extension of the television network over the last three or four years is an indication of the magnitude of manageable change.

India, compared to many nations of the South, is better equipped to undertake work in these areas which require a science and engineering base. While much is being written and discussed about electronics and telecommunications, the scope and potential of biotechnology in improving agricultural productivity needs to be brought into focus as well. Rapid advances have already taken place in Western Europe and the U.S.A. in this field. However, we know that exclusive dependence on imported technology has its own drawbacks since a certain level of national technology competence is necessary for more economical and acceptable global interaction.

As far as agricultural productivity improvements are concerned, the commendable advances which started in the sixties must continue. These include increase in fertilizer production and the use of new dwarf varieties of seeds, increased irrigation and cropping intensity, and specific inputs for dryland and marginal land farming. The quality of agricultural research in universities, and the transfer of information from laboratory to land have made phenomenal progress and must be further intensified. This has been matched by the response of farmers in adopting new methods and technologies. Several chemicals which have greatly enhanced field productivity are likely to improve in safety, versatility and effectiveness in the coming years. There are also areas of concern. The production of pulses and oilseeds has remained static; so has milk and fish output. Some of these represent critical deficiencies in the national dietary.

NEW FRONTIERS

For today's address, I have chosen a few areas of the application of science to agriculture. The topic is of interest to the Company and is also a national priority. These frontier areas of science are likely to supplement the stupendous national effort being made to increase agricultural output. It is necessary to reiterate the term 'supplement', because the bedrock of the agricultural economy has been well established by a series of technological and economic measures; we will have to continue to improve their effectiveness and extend them. As satellite communications are unlikely to replace surface mail in India, it would be unwise to expect that the application of 'new biology' will overtake traditional and well-tested methods in agriculture.

There are certain lessons to be learnt here from the West. With the discovery and production of Interferon over ten years ago and subsequent discoveries in genetic engineering and monoclonal technology, there grew a belief that traditional techniques of treating human disease would undergo a radical change. In spite of these explosive developments, progress has been less enchanting in business terms. There is, however, no doubt whatsoever that many of these dreams are likely to be realised before the turn of the century. In the meantime, traditional organic chemical drug therapy continues to make spectacular advances. In the final analysis it will be an interweaving of the traditional with genetic engineering techniques which will emerge in the battle against major diseases. Similarly in agriculture, it will be a combination of the well-tested with new scientific inputs which will usher in the next era of progress.

Hindustan Lever's history of the application of science and technology in its business is well-documented. Following the successful use of chemistry and technology to further traditional areas of business, new vistas are now being explored as part of our agri-business strategy. In this area, the achievements of Unilever research are very impressive indeed. It is this combination of a local science base and access to global developments which places the Company in a unique position for venturing into this area.

Biotechnology research has been in progress in a few laboratories in the country and more is planned, including a very ambitious national programme in collaboration with international agencies. But in order to be in the forefront of the fast developments that are taking place, greater coordination is necessary. I believe that industries dealing in agricultural products have a unique role to play both in the contribution they can make, and for the enormous opportunity they can provide in the longer term.

We recognise that an unassailable and strong agricultural economy is going to be a major factor in ushering in a more prosperous and confident future. Neither industry nor agriculture can thrive in isolation in this scheme of things. Nor will the developments envisaged follow the patterns long established in the well-endowed, sparsely populated and prosperous parts of the world. As in many other areas, development will have to match local conditions. In Hindustan Lever, we believe that there is now a growing interface between the agro-industry and agriculture which provides exciting opportunities for growth.

In the rest of this paper, I have dealt with broad issues associated with accelerating the application of frontier areas of science and technology research to agriculture and have cited specific areas of research and application which are important for successful agri-business development and growth in the Indian context.

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BIOTECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE

PRESENT POSITION

Improvements in agricultural productivity, particularly during this century have been science-led. Nowhere have the developments been as spectacular as in the U.S.A. The establishment and contribution of the Land Grant Colleges in that country was a consequence of the science pull in agricultural development. After World War II, these developments rapidly spread to Western Europe and certain other parts of the world. Advances took place in crop agriculture as well as in animal husbandry and pisciculture. This has created enormous surpluses of agriproducts, milk, fish, animal protein and edible fats.

In India, change began after Independence, first through import substitution, and then through the 'Green Revolution'. Education in agriculture, extension programmes, block development, increasing use of dwarf hybrids, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, and progressive coverage through irrigation all helped in these efforts. In spite of all this, agro-productivity is still predominantly monsoon-dependent.

As a result of intensive scientific research undertaken in the sixties, the industrial use of non-conventional oils such as ricebran, castor, kusum, mowrah, sal, neem and karanja increased and released the pressure on edible oils to some extent. However, per capita availability of indigenous edible oils has steadily decreased in spite of several steps taken, and imports have continued to increase. In 1984 a seminar was held in Delhi under the auspices of the Hindustan Lever Research Foundation (HLRF) at which eminent agricultural scientists from all over the country discussed the steps required to overcome this major problem.

An earlier HLRF seminar in 1982 discussed the problems of pulse production in India, which has been more or less stagnant for the last decade, thus reducing the per capita availability of protein to our largely vegetarian population.

The production of paddy, wheat and sugar has increased spectacularly through the application of scientific agriculture, and the progressive increase in the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. These have been supplemented by increasing investment in irrigation, storage and distribution facilities. But there are signs of levelling off and decrease in the value of incremental output compared to input costs.

Milk availability has increased modestly through cooperative dairies and government milk schemes in larger towns and cities. The introduction of crossbred cows has had limited success and the buffalo continues to be the main milch animal.

As for availability of animal protein, goat and lamb meat has been supplemented by increase in poultry farming. But per capita fish availability is steadily decreasing every year, which in turn is reflected in prices increasing much ahead of the general level of inflation.

Thus, in spite of many noteworthy achievements, there are several areas of concern as well. I believe that further strengthening of proven technologies and interweaving these with selective application of biotechnology will be the catalyst to improve agricultural productivity in India.

BIOTECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURE — A PRIORITY ACTIVITY

I mentioned earlier that there is a lot to be learnt from the experience of new biology in Western Europe and the U.S.A. During the last twenty years, there has been a veritable explosion of discoveries comparable only to what happened in particle physics and wave mechanics earlier in the century. The development of the atomic bomb was rapid, but peaceful applications of the new physics came much slower. Witness the controversy about nuclear power plants all over the world. Similarly, the commercial exploitation of the new biology has been slow. The noteworthy exception is the development of human insulin by the genetic manipulation of bacteria. As with all major dicoveries, we are passing through a phase of greater hopes than results. While it is necessary to take a cautious view of the speed with which the new biology will yield results, there can be no debate that our country has to plunge into it as an act of faith. We cannot afford to miss this unique opportunity to develop competence in a vital field which will soon be a major factor in geo-economics. It is also important to realise that as in any other scientific endeavour, global cooperation will be imperative. In order to participate in these developments of the twenty-first century, we have to prepare ourselves as partners rather than as supplicants.

As a result of the already high level of agricultural productivity and surpluses in the western world, biological and genetic research will continue to be predominantly devoted to human health in preference to agriculture. Furthermore, scientific applications in agriculture are not readily transferable unless there are suitable receiving agencies. Differences in agro-climatic conditions and plant types are also important factors.

With our limited resources, the choice of frontier areas of science for application, particularly to agriculture, must be selective. However, even within a limited scope, the costs and risks are going to be enormous and an exceptional order of skills required; so it is necessary to approach the issue as one having economic pre-eminence in the country's list of priorities. It would be my plea that all scientific and technological activities which lead to increased agricultural productivity should be considered to be of Core Economic Priority, not unlike many other areas where progress came only after such priority was given. In India, we have a well-established system of signalling economic priorities in the form of policy declarations and notifications. This has happened because major activities are state-funded, and especially as the scope of work and its costs would be beyond most university laboratories and many private industries.

Currently, the only activities meant exclusively for agricultural output and recognised as core industries of economic priority are inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. They happen to be included in their own right as inorganic chemicals and heavy organic chemicals. The list now needs to be extended to include hitherto unconsidered activities related to agro-productivity which require modern techniques of biology, genetics and biotechnology.

AREAS OF RESEARCH

Biotechnology is sometimes erroneously thought to refer to genetic engineering. While genetic engineering is the specific technique of transferring gene expression through laboratory intervention, biotechnology involves converting discoveries in new biology into industrial and agricultural applications. These include a whole series of disciplines such as biofuels, nitrogen fixation, fermentation, plant hydrocarbons, antibiotics, vaccines, microbial insecticides and biomass production. In India the National Biotechnology Board has chosen genetic engineering, photosynthesis, tissue

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culture, enzyme engineering, alcohol fermentation and immunotechnology as areas of immediate interest.

It is, however, important to realise that although the potential is unlimited, the scientific and technological infrastructure required to exploit this vast field is equally formidable. Fermentation and enzyme technology or bio-catalysis have possibly made the greatest advances in industrial terms. This is manifest more in Japan than anywhere else. As a matter of fact, Japan regards biotechnology as the 'last major technological revolution of this century'.

In India we already have a reasonable base to produce fermentation products such as antibiotics and organic acids, and in spite of the resource constraints in the country, the scope is indeed unlimited. For example, the use of enzyme technology to produce a number of high value fine chemicals and developing energy conservation processes has hardly been looked into. There is one particular area in which HLL scientists have achieved considerable success. Oils and fats are the major raw materials of our business. While new avenues for enhancing output continue to be explored, we investigated the question of using genetically modified bacteria to produce edible quality oil and glycerine for industrial use. Economically, such a proposition can only be of interest to a perennially oil-short country like India.

Although the developments are still at an early stage, the results are encouraging. Scientists in our laboratory have manipulated genes of two edible varieties of yeast to produce a hybrid cell capable of not only producing and accumulating high amounts of fats of the order of 50% of the biomass, but also capable of utilising sugar at high rates and producing fat within 3-4 days. This unique feat has been accomplished by a novel technique of protoplast fusion and gene technology. Our chemical technologists have succeeded in growing this newly engineered species of yeast in pilot fermenters and successfully extracting good quality edible fat from the biomass. Although the investments in industrial scale-up are rather high, our scientists estimate that we could one day produce good quality edible fats from molasses at a cost of Rs.9000 — 10,000 per tonne.

We are also engaged in the production of a number of other chemicals via this route, although progress, by its very pioneering nature, is slow and the high costs of scale-up make it imperative to evolve cost-effective engineering design. The work of selecting and modifying micro-organisms to produce a whole series of highly valuable chemicals economically will become one of the primary foci of biotechnology research and development programmes in this country. This is also true of the development of enzyme technology where a beginning has yet to be made. Our initial forays into this field appear promising but will have to await successful industrial scale-up.

SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS

To us in India, agriculture-related biotechnology is of exceptional importance. This encompasses key areas ranging from bio-insecticides, growth promoters/regulators and photosynthesis improvers to tissue culture, hybrid seeds production, genetic engineering and others including augmentation of edible fats and milk output and fish farming.

India owes its dramatic increase in cereals output to new hybrids such as the cross between Mexican dwarf and the Indian varieties. Indeed hybrid seeds today represent a big business opportunity in the country. The result of the union of two genotypes, hybrids are more efficient than their parents under a variety of agronomic conditions. Developed on systematic lines on a large scale, the spread effect and economic outcome will be quite significant. India is the first to produce hybrid cotton seeds by the novel 'hand pollination' method, evidence that the country has the capability to successfully forge ahead in this field.

Tissue culture is the tool in the propagation of true progenies of the parent plant with uniform growth and productivity characteristics for each species in a given agro-climatic environment through successive generations. The advantage of the technique in ensuring that commercial crops such as oil palm give the best possible yields is obvious. Unilever has achieved a breakthrough in the clonal propagation of oil palm. Begun 15 years ago, it is a successful commercial reality today. At Hindustan Lever's Laboratories, research is progressing with coconut palm. The tissue culture method, unlike the conventional methods of breeding, leads to obtaining increased genetic variability relatively rapidly. Fusion of cultured plant cells permits the development of unique hybrid plants. The technique could be valuable in achieving a breakthrough in the production of pulses and oilseeds.

Can the cells of cereal plants be genetically so altered that they use atmospheric nitrogen and thus become more productive? Can they be made to yield more with lower use of fertilizer? Can they thrive under conditions of moisture and salinity stress? Scientists are convinced that these will be achieved. Another area is the use of micro-organisms to aid the farmer harvest a better crop. Researchers know that symbiotic nitrogen-fixing bacteria boost yields of pulses and certain oilseed crops. Attempts must be now made to enhance their nitrogen-fixing ability severalfold through genetic manipulation and also make them crop -and soil-specific. This is a highly sophisticated scienfitic field. HLL's scientists have carried out research work and field tests with encouraging results for pulses and oilseeds.

95 per cent of the weight of plants come not from the soil but from atmospheric carbon dioxide and water. Apart from the genetics of plants, the major criterion determining the dry weight of the plant and the yield of the crops is photosynthesis. Scientists of Hindustan Lever have discovered a mixture of organic compounds which even in one ppm doses increases photosynthesis by 100 per cent or more. They believe that this route of enquiry is not only unravelling many new aspects of plant physiology but may yield other compounds which can be more readily transferred to farm practices. Besides photosynthesis improvers, growth promoters/regulators are assuming considerable importance in the U.S.A. and Europe and even in South East Asia. Most of these mimic the natural substances present in plants such as hormones and oxins. Norms for manufacturing and using these unique chemicals are being constantly revised to ensure their overall safety. We must adopt the latest technology in this sphere, the cost of which would be insignificant compared to the benefits to be derived.

Another new field is bio-insecticides which are of bacterial, fungal or viral origin. These, and pheromones — insect sex hormones, many of which are synthesized — if adopted, will be of considerable benefit to India's agriculture. Our researchers have succeeded in synthesizing certain pheromones and these are being tested.

CONCLUSION

The discoveries in new biology are spectacular. Like the micro-p-

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BIOTECHNOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE

processor and the computer revolution, they hold out enormous promise. Countries around the world are busily engaged in preparing their base to move into the forefront of what has been described as the 'technology of the next century'. After the initial euphoria there is a sense of cautious optimism. The conversion of laboratory discovery into commercial success has turned out to be more tortuous than anticipated. Nevertheless progress has been made.

While we gear ourselves to catch up in computers and telecommunications, biotechnology is a new challenge at the starting line. We have the science base to undertake this exciting journey and our need is also great. While I believe that increasing traditional inputs will further improve our already spectacular achievements in agricultural production, the application of biotechnology will be the catalyst for the next leap. Shorter term gains are to be had in areas where progress has been lagging, e.g. oilseeds, pulses and fish farming.

In a resource-short country like India, biotechnology has a major contribution to make. This has been demonstrated successfully in Japan. Secondly, while much of global biotechnology will be engaged in tackling problems of human health and disease in the more affluent nations, agricultural productivity will be the prime concern of the developing countries. Even here, once a research base is set up, the fallout could be significant in areas other than agriculture. For example, some useful work has already been done in India on the application of immunobiology in the detection of disease; future applications could be in treating diseases such as hepatitis, leprosy and malaria, and even for contraception.

The economic importance of research in new biology cannot be overstated; at the same time, there is the danger of understating the problems associated with it. The National Biotechnology Board has formulated certain schemes. Private industry has begun exploring opportunities. What is needed is a unified national approach interweaving the plans of the government and private industry into a tapestry of national goals. The tasks are too complex and the stakes too high to attempt any piecemeal approach. Only large goals and efforts are likely to produce results that bring real benefits as well as recognition in the international community in order to enable exchange of ideas and sharing of discoveries. This is how the great technology of the future is likely to evolve. We are ideally placed to ride the crest of this wave into the future. In recognition, this group of technologies must be accorded a place amongst the list of top economic priorities of the country.

Biological research and commercial application is a major strength of Unilever. In Hindustan Lever Limited, work on biochemical and agricultural research has been under way for several years. Some of the first discoveries are now entering the market place. Much more remains to be done. It is the combined strength of Unilever's global reach and HLL's scientific record which gives us the confidence to commit ourselves to the application of biotechnology to agriculture as a part of the Company's long term strategy.

Note: This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

The full text of this speech is available in booklet form. Anyone who wishes to have a copy may please write to: Communications Department, Hindustan Lever Ltd., P.O. Box 409, Bombay 400 001.

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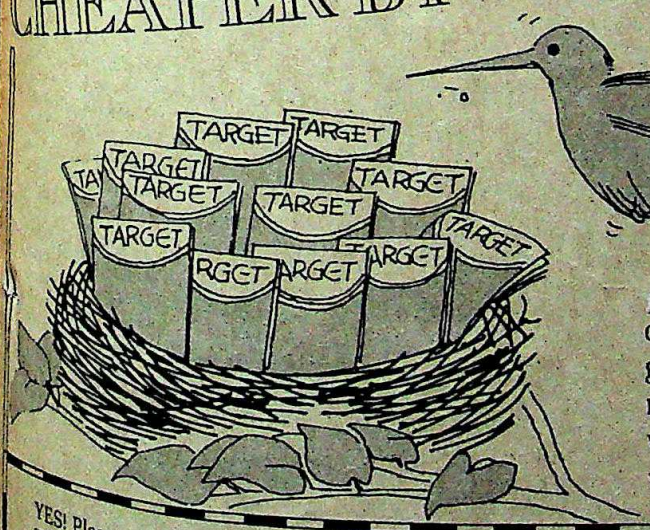
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN



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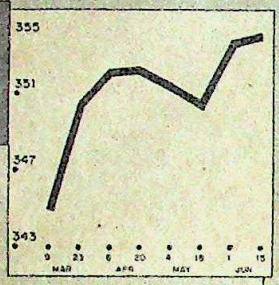
Prices have once again stabilised as money supply conditions remain extremely tight. Despite the continued boom in share prices and the optimism prevalent in industrial circles, manufacturing output shows signs of stagnation. An improved performance by hydel power stations may ease the power situation, though the sharp fall in nuclear power generation is cause for concern.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of the last six month's data to which a regression is fitted.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend **6.8% p.a**

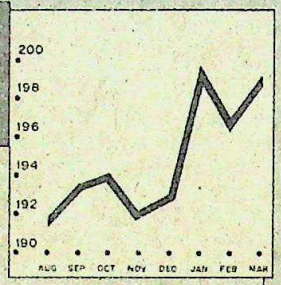


Prices stabilised again after an ominous increase last month. Last fortnight saw a rise of only 0.1 per cent, well below the current trend.

Industrial Production Index

1970 = 100

Current Trend **8.0% p.a.**

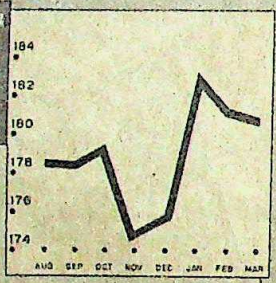


Industrial production picked up last month by 1.1 per cent. Machinery and mining industries did better than the rest.

Manufacturing Output Index

1970 = 100

Current Trend **6.6% p.a.**

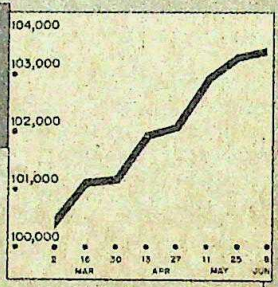


Manufacturing industries' growth recorded a drop of 0.2 per cent mainly caused by a fall in chemical and food manufacturing.

Money Supply-M3

Rs Crores

Current Trend **13.5% p.a.**

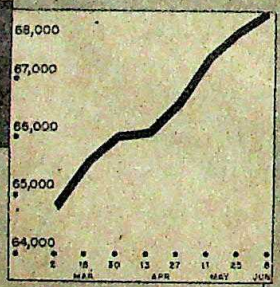


Money supply was under tight control with a sharp drop in the growth rate last fortnight, mainly on account of a fall in exchange reserves.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crores

Current Trend **16.4% p.a.**

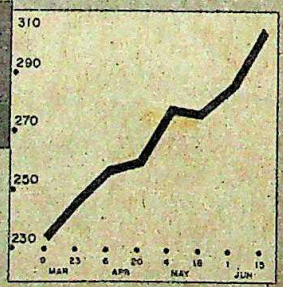


Commercial credit conditions tightened sharply last fortnight with an increase of only 0.3 per cent—well below the current trend.

Share Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend **64.0% p.a.**

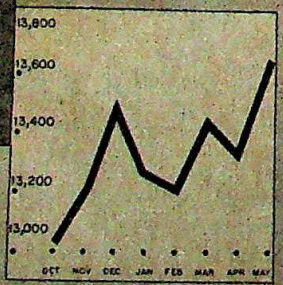


The unprecedented boom continued till mid-June—share prices rose by 6.9 per cent—paper, silk and transport shares performed best.

Power Generation

Million kwh

Current Trend **2.9% p.a.**

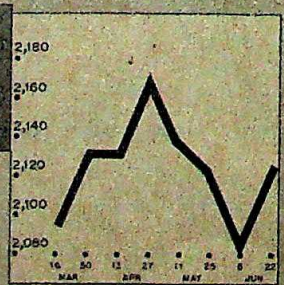


After six months of stagnation, electricity generation increased by 2.2 per cent last month. Hydel generation rose but nuclear power dropped.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs. per 10 gms

Current Trend **22.0% p.a.**



Gold prices showed an upward trend last fortnight—rising by 1.8 per cent—after several weeks of bearish trading.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Items with maximum growth in February 1985

	% Growth
Tea Machinery	210.9
Metallurgical Machinery	96.68
Shipbuilding & Repairing	39.20
Ferro-Alloys	31.88
Sugar Machinery	29.92
Tea	25.49
Glue & Gelatine	24.68
Linoleum	23.47
Insecticides	21.64
Airconditioners & Refrigerators	20.33
Steam Generating Plants	18.83
Paints, Varnishes & Lacquers	14.31
Soaps & Glycerine	13.70
Air Compressors	[illegible]
Rubber Footwear	12.83
Storage Batteries	12.63
Cotton Fabrics (Decentralised Sector)	12.55
Buses, Trucks & Jeeps	11.64
Power Driven Pumps	11.39
Newsprint	10.18
Motor Cars	9.86
Manufacture of Jewellery	9.58
Inorganic Chemicals	9.09
Iron & Steel Pipes	8.90
Cotton & Blended Fabrics	8.79
Miscellaneous Ware	8.72
Nuts, Screws & Bolts	8.28
Motorcycles & Bicycles	7.89
Confectionery	7.76
Coffee Curing Works	7.74
Special Steels	7.73
Cotton & Blended Yarn	7.37
Photographic & Optical Goods	7.16
Petroleum Coal & Products	6.77
Electrical Lamps	6.69
Paper	6.55
Agricultural Machinery	6.15
Paper Machinery	6.12
Internal Combustion Engines	5.92
Hollow Ware	5.50
Tiles	5.44
Plastics & Synthetic Resins	5.27
Watches & Clocks	5.20
Organic Chemicals	5.14
Weighing Machines	5.00
Electrical Machinery	4.55
Sanitary Ware	4.16
Beverage Industries	4.07

Of the 119 important commodities considered, 73 with a weight of 41.4 accelerated while 46 with a weight of 55.8 decelerated.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Fertilizers Thousand Tonnes, May	401	352
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, May	2468	2440
Petroleum Refinery Production Thousand Tonnes, May	3453	2775
Thermal Plant Load Factor, May	53.7	50.2
Call Money Rate Per Cent, May	10.00	9.68

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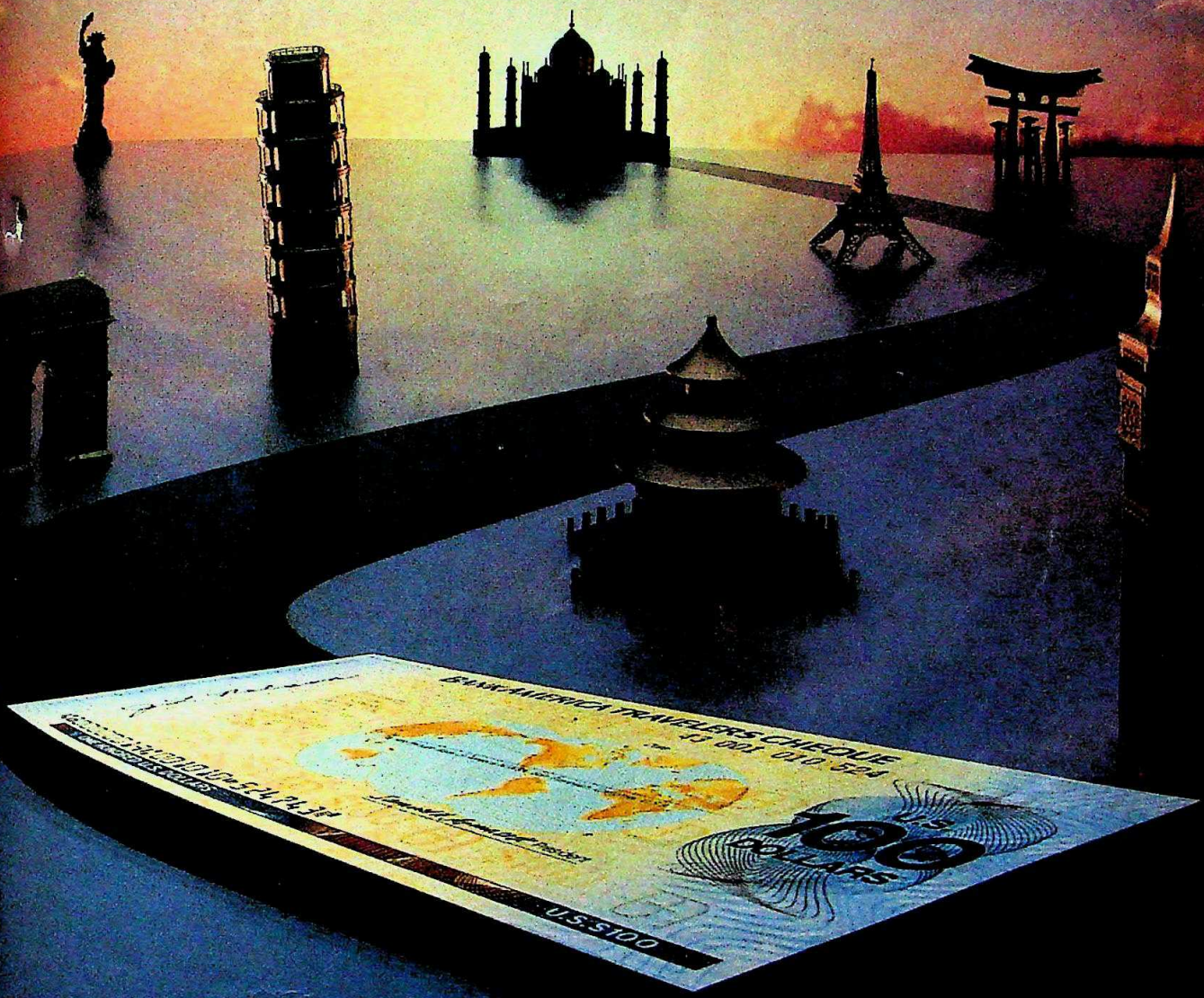
WORLD MONEY.®



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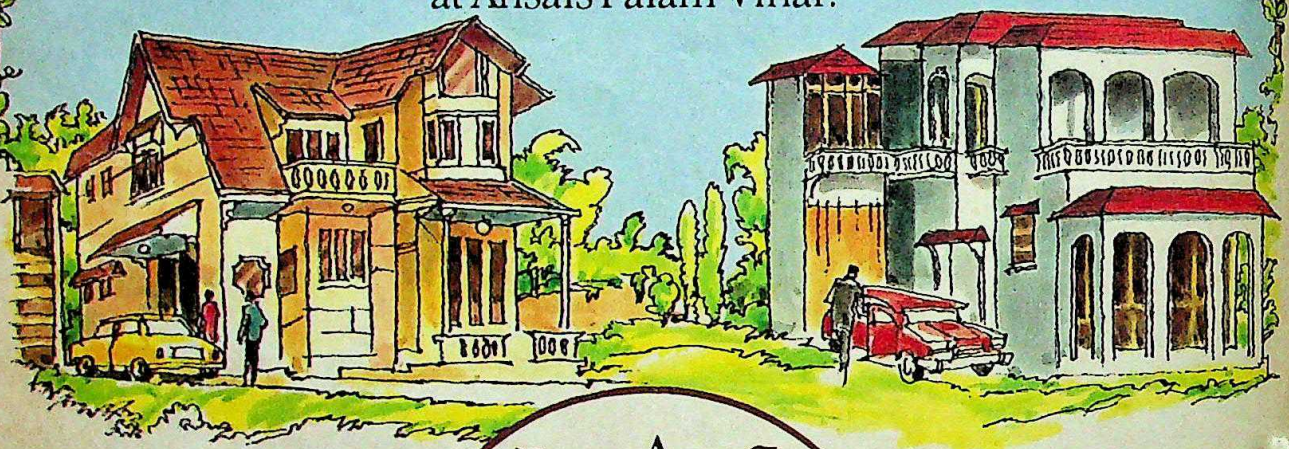
Most houses are built around a common way of life. A few are a way of life themselves.

The French Villa and the Continental Villa at Ansals Palam Vihar.



A flavour of France

The French Villa at Ansals Palam Vihar. It has a French touch to everything. Sloping red roofs, beautiful bay windows, quaint balconies and lofts. Elegant staircases with carved balustrades and verandahs with old-style columns. And to complete the picture, a lovely landscaped garden out front. Tinted glass entrance doors lead you into the house from the wide verandah. A decorative wooden ceiling adds warmth to the house. And if you wish, you can have a wooden parquet floor to lend it a truly French flavour.

Plot Size: 800 sq.yds.
Built-up area: 2900 sq.ft.
PRICE: Rs.9,85,000/-

A life of luxury

In Ansals Palam Vihar, you'll be living in the lap of luxury. This entire colony has been specially designed to meet the needs of 50,000 cosmopolitan people. Every facility like schools, hospitals, postal services, police stations has been provided. And sensitive attention has been given to environment and entertainment. Which is why Ansals Palam Vihar is full of lush parks and a number of clubs, pools, cinemas and playgrounds. In fact an entire wood has been created and a special jogging track laid out. And an exclusive shopping-cum-office complex **Palam Vyapaar Kendra** — provides all necessary amenities.

A touch of European elegance

An exquisite combination of splendour and style creates the elegance of the Continental Villa. Exquisite architraves over doors and windows, balconies with sculptured railings and spacious sit-out verandahs overlook a lovely landscaped garden. Continental style wooden doors with ornamental fittings give it a European touch of class.

Plot Size: 520 sq.yds.
Built-up area: 2595 sq.ft.
PRICE: Rs.7,90,000/-

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With their experience of over forty years, Ansals have understood good living as few others have. Which is why they bring you this unique opportunity. And if you're wondering what living in style is all about, just visit the site or contact the Sales Department.

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THE MARKETS

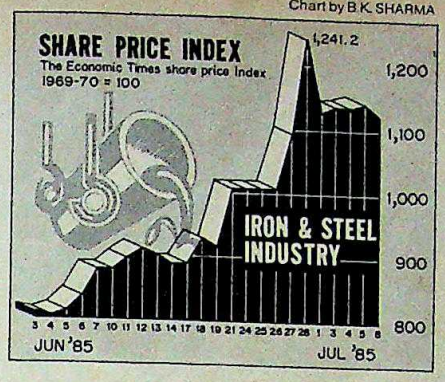
Bullish Trend

AT LONG last, and with some hesitation, the laws of gravity have reasserted themselves on the stock-market. After several months of continuous rise, share prices finally dipped with the onset of July and helped put an end to the growing disbelief about the behaviour of the market.

The tax man played his role too, with share-brokers becoming the target of raids for the first time in recent memory. But, oddly enough, prices ruled steady within a couple of days of the raids. For a while, this seemed like continued market bravado, but it soon became clear that the raids had not really been meant to unearth the use of black money in share transactions. Instead, the taxmen nabbed only those brokers who were engaged in business on behalf of investment companies.

The most notable feature of the fortnight, therefore, was not the raids but the behaviour of the share prices. There has been no sharp fall in price levels, as some had feared, but it seems entirely likely that the market adjustment that started in early July is not yet complete and that a further drop in share values will take place in the immediate future.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The other element in the situation predicating a drop in share prices is the stand taken by the controller of Capital Issues, the executive director of the Bombay Stock Exchange and the members of the exchange governing board that there must be a reduction in the amount of speculative business conducted on the exchange. Since much of the business continues to be in the form of purchases and the carryover charges on the settlement are continuing to increase, the new fiat from the authorities could mean a liquidation of purchases.

Against this, however, investors must reckon with the fact that the underlying sentiment of the market remains bullish, and that there is no end to the basic optimism that led to the equity spurt in the first place. And once the technical correction takes place on the market, this bullish sentiment could well assert itself once again. In ACC, for instance, the company may announce a bonus share issue that was held back at the last minute last year. Great Eastern may also witness a spurt with the prospect of the company returning to the dividend list, and Orkay could get a boost because the company is readying to enter the capital market once again.

The key question right now is how long and how sharp will be the reaction on the market before the bullish trend reasserts itself. Since D.R. Mehta is due to relinquish office as controller of Capital Issues in mid-July, and since he is known to be the man most intent so far on bringing some stability to the market, his exit could well provide the signal for a fresh spurt on the stock exchange.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 5.7.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	53.00	29.00	47.50	10.25 +
Associated Cement	573.00	385.00	573.00	145.00 +
Atlas Copco	70.00	37.50	63.00	2.00 –
Avery India	74.00	56.00	72.00	nil
Bajaj Auto	1820.00	855.00	1675.00	35.00 –
Balarpur	51.00	45.00	47.00	0.50 –
Baroda Rayon	420.00	281.00	378.00	14.00 +
Birla India	88.10	48.00	80.00	1.00 –
Bayer	430.00	305.00	425.00	25.00 +
Best & Crompton	115.00	61.00	110.00	2.00 +
Bharat Forge	95.00	36.50	80.00	4.00 –
Blow Plast	71.00	36.50	57.00	9.50 –
Blue Star	72.50	33.00	70.00	1.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	147.00	66.00	123.00	nil
Bopike Bond	76.50	47.50	71.00	4.00 –
Cat Tyres	260.00	180.00	260.00	30.00 +
Century Spinning	1040.00	810.00	980.00	15.00 –
Chloride India	91.00	56.90	86.00	3.50 –
Chingia	65.00	32.25	53.50	8.50 –
Colgate	318.00	147.00	188.00	14.00 –
Cyanamid	90.00	33.00	67.00	11.00 –
DCM	62.00	18.00	52.00	2.00 –
Dunlop	38.60	22.30	33.00	1.00 –
Hecon	103.00	54.00	90.00	10.00 +
Escorts	95.00	49.87	87.00	1.00 –
Finolex Cables	41.00	23.00	33.00	8.00 –
Food Specialities	215.00	86.00	190.00	25.00 –
Garware Nylon	52.00	24.50	42.00	3.00 –
Glaxo	68.00	24.00	56.00	5.00 –
Gujarat St Fertilisers	770.00	537.00	695.00	25.00 +
Gwalior Rayon	66.00	53.75	62.00	nil
Hindustan Lever	122.00	51.25	105.00	3.00 –
Hindustan Motors	70.00	37.50	62.50	3.00 +
Indian Cable	35.50	21.75	34.00	1.50 –
Indian Explosives	69.50	33.00	60.00	0.50 –
Indian Hotels	130.00	76.00	122.50	7.50 +
Indian Organic	109.00	50.50	99.00	8.00 +
Indian Rayon	98.00	66.00	92.00	8.00 +
Indrol	210.00	90.50	180.00	4.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	315.00	162.00	300.00	nil
ITC	47.00	29.00	43.50	2.50 –
J K Synthetics	90.00	52.75	81.00	2.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	355.00	128.00	305.00	10.00 –
Kirloskar Oil	38.00	23.00	30.00	1.00 +
Lakme	145.00	74.00	125.00	5.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	159.00	72.00	145.00	7.00 –
Lipton	57.00	26.50	55.00	nil
Lohia Machines	64.00	42.00	60.00	5.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	84.00	48.00	72.00	10.00 +
Motor Industries	625.00	321.25	600.00	70.00 +
National Organic	550.00	240.00	475.00	55.00 –
Nirlon	59.00	37.75	55.00	5.00 +
Otis Elevator	195.00	87.00	190.00	nil
Pelco Electronics	89.00	38.40	80.00	1.50 –
Premier Auto	540.00	322.00	515.00	40.00 +
Ranbaxy	127.50	49.00	115.00	nil
Raymond	109.00	59.00	101.00	nil
Reckitt & Colman	95.00	57.00	90.00	nil
Reliance Textiles	228.00	120.00	210.00	7.50 –
Sandoz	82.00	31.00	73.00	1.00 –
Shriram Fibres	77.50	34.00	67.00	6.50 +
SPIC	120.00	43.50	107.00	1.00 –
Tata Steel	995.00	381.00	890.00	177.00 +
Telco	880.00	409.00	840.00	124.00 +
Vulcan Laval	125.00	64.00	112.50	9.50 –
20th Century Leasing	84.00	31.50	65.00	3.00 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.3707	8.2806
Austria	Schilling	100	58.4121	57.7018
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.6218	33.6013
Bangladesh	Taka	100	48.8123	47.7013
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1731	9.08661
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1417	1.1334
Egypt	Pound	1	15.2013	15.1001
France	Franc	1	1.3504	1.3253
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6099	1.5964
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.1222	1.0923
Iran	Rial	100	13.8012	13.1942
Italy	Lira	100	0.6391	0.6317
Japan	Yen	100	5.1000	4.9500
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7863	0.7859
Kuwait	Dinar	1	41.6532	40.9222
Malaysia	Dollar	1	5.0129	4.9350
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.7813	0.7791
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6532	0.6498
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.6428	3.6105
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7532	0.7401
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.5604	5.5091
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0631	0.0601
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4593	0.4580
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4254	1.4106
Switzerland	Franc	1	4.9021	4.8559
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7185	0.7180
Thailand	Baht	100	46.3813	45.9225
UK	Pound	1	16.3961	16.2469
USA	Dollar	1	12.4925	12.4675
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4253	3.4017
USSR	Rouble	1	14.8530	14.8032
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.1011	4.0629

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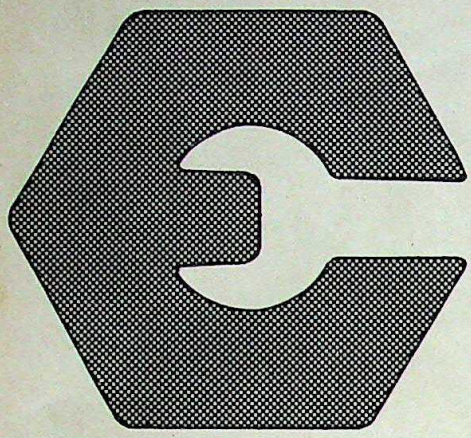

An excellent investment opportunity from an enterprise that takes pride in the pursuit of excellence

The Company

Escorts Limited is the seventh largest engineering company in the country. It is a market leader in the manufacture of agricultural tractors, motorcycles, shock absorbers, pistons, self propelled mobile cranes, tractor mounted elevators, loaders; air-brake systems, centre buffer couplers for railways; industrial and domestic heating elements and power generation equipment; electro-medical and industrial X-Ray equipment. The Company's plants are located in different States in the country employing a total work force of about 16,000 persons.

Exciting Future

Escorts is poised for an even brighter future.

Its Rs. 32 crore project for the manufacture of 1,50,000 — 100/150 cc. YAMAHA motorcycles in technical collaboration with Yamaha Motor Company of Japan is nearing completion at Surajpur, (U.P.) and the first motorcycle is expected to roll out by October, 1985.

Expansion programmes for doubling the existing capacities of piston assemblies at Patiala and shock absorbers are under implementation. Escorts also proposes to increase production of its premium products which have the highest industrial market share.

Escorts has recently obtained government approvals for manufacture of gas pressure shock absorbers in collaboration with the world renowned BILSTEIN AG, West Germany and for hydraulic mobile cranes with lifting capacities upto 40 tonnes with FAUN of West Germany. Letters of Intent for manufacture of B/W Picture Tubes, telecommunication equipment are being implemented in technical collaboration with leading Japanese and German companies.

With the commissioning of India's first and the world's most modern floating Dry Dock at a cost of over Rs. 22 crores, Escorts has made an entry into the ship repairing industry and proposes to manufacture equipment for off-shore drilling also.

Excellent Track Record

Escorts has an excellent track record of consistent growth.

Its turnover has increased from Rs. 62 crores in 1974 to Rs. 328 crores in 1984 — an average growth rate of 5.3% per annum. Reserves have increased from Rs. 4.4 crores in 1974 to Rs. 42.9 crores in 1984, despite Bonus Issues in the proportion of 1:2, 3:5 and 3:5 in 1974, 1977 and 1979 respectively. Gross Assets have increased from Rs. 14.45 crores in 1974 to Rs. 125.28 crores in 1984. The Book Value of the Company's Rs. 10/- paid up Equity Share is Rs. 42.03.

Rich Rewards to Shareholders

Since 1964, the Company has made seven bonus issues. The present Equity Capital of Rs. 13.38 crores includes Bonus Issues of Rs. 11.41 crores. On 100 Equity Shares held in 1961, members have so far received 2029 Bonus Equity Shares and 251 Right Equity Shares besides consistently handsome dividends.

Board of Directors

Mr. H.P. Nanda
Chairman and Managing Director

Mr. Rajan Nanda
Vice-Chairman and Mg. Director

Mr. Anil Nanda
Joint Managing Director

Dr. Ing. Christian Irmler
Mr. D.N. Davar
Mr. S. Hariharan
Mr. K.N. Atmaramani
Mr. S. Shankar
Mr. S.A. Naik
Mr. C.O. Parikh

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

(Rs. Crores)

Financial Year	1974	1977	1979	1982	1984
Sales & other Income	61.71	106.15	188.09	228.83	327.93
Profit before Depreciation	5.21	10.28	20.96	17.33	21.70
Profit before Tax	4.29	8.03	16.63	11.92	13.22
Gross Block	14.45	28.04	45.13	70.82	125.28
Equity Capital	5.23	8.36	13.38	13.38	13.38
Reserves	4.39	8.06	12.16	26.02	42.86
Shareholders' Funds	10.42	17.23	26.34	40.20	56.78
Dividend %	12%	16%	20%	20%	22%
Bonus Issues (Ratio)	1:2	3:5	3:5	—	—
Book Value per share (Rs.)	18.40*	19.66*	19.06*	29.45	42.03

* After Bonus Issue

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ESCORTS SECURED DEBENTURES

The Issue

Escorts Limited is offering 20,00,000 — 15% Secured Non-Convertible Redeemable Debentures of Rs. 100/- each, for cash, at par, aggregating Rs. 20 crores on Rights Basis to its Indian Resident Equity shareholders with a view to augment the long-term resources of the Company for working capital. The Debentures remaining unsubscribed, if any, will be disposed of by the Board of Directors in such manner as it may deem fit.

A Return of 227.55% under the Cumulative Interest Scheme

Under this Scheme, interest at 15% p.a. is accumulated with half yearly rests until redemption when all such accrued interest will be paid. The Debentureholder is guaranteed a return of 227.55% in 9 years as below:

Period from the date of allotment		(For a Debenture of Rs. 100 face value)		
	Face Value of Debenture to be redeemed	Pro-rata accumulated gross interest due and payable thereon.	Premium on Redemption	Total amount payable on redemption.
	(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)	(Rs.)
7th year	30.00	52.57	5.00	87.57
8th year	35.00	76.33	—	111.33
9th year	35.00	93.65	—	128.65
	100.00	222.55	5.00	327.55

Guaranteed Buy Back at Par at Bombay and Delhi

Escorts guarantees to buy back at Bombay and Delhi the Debentures at par (under both schemes), together with interest till the date of payment from any Debentureholder whose holding does not exceed the face value of Rs. 40,000 and the Debentures have been held continuously for one year.

Under this Scheme, for every Rs. 10,000 invested, eligible Debentureholder exercising the buy back option will receive the principal amount and interest as shown below:–

At the end of	Face Value Rs.	Accumulated Interest Rs.	Total Amount Payable Rs.
1st Year	10,000	1,556	11,556
2nd Year	10,000	3,355	13,455
3rd Year	10,000	5,433	15,433
4th Year	10,000	7,835	17,835
5th Year	10,000	10,610	20,610
6th Year	10,000	13,818	23,818

ISSUE OPEN FROM 1ST JULY TO 9TH AUGUST, 1985

- Choice between Cumulative and Non Cumulative Interest Schemes
- Interest from day one
- Review of interest and other monetary benefits
- 15% p.a. interest payable half yearly under the Non-Cumulative Scheme
- Guaranteed buy back at par after 1 year at Bombay and Delhi
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- 5% Premium on redemption
- Flexibility in Tax Planning
- Fully Secured
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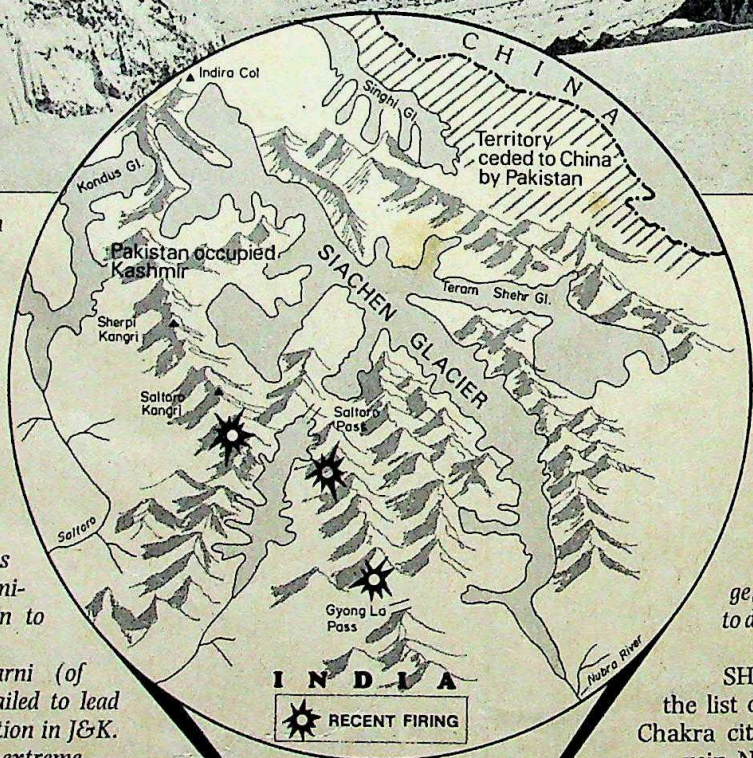
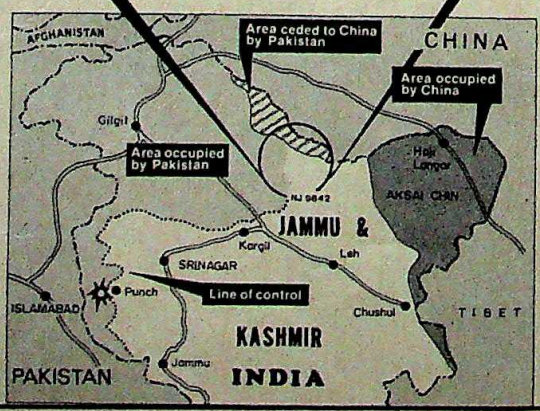
JAMMU & KASHMIR

Gunfire on the Glacier

View of the Karakorams from Sia Kangri: grim scenery





Map by B.K. SHARMA

"MAJOR Ajay Nath Bahuguna (of J&K Rifles) undeterred by awe-inspiring odds successfully led his men in extremely high altitudes in conditions of high velocity winds, heavy snow and blizzards and accomplished a difficult assignment in one of the forward locations in J&K.

"Major Bahuguna thus displayed leadership, determination, courage and devotion to duty of a high order."

"Captain Sanjay Kulkarni (of Kumaon Regiment) was detailed to lead a task force in a forward location in J&K. Despite the very high altitude, extreme cold, heavy snow, high velocity winds and blizzard conditions, he accomplished his mission successfully.

"Captain Sanjay Kulkarni thus displayed leadership, determination, courage and devotion to duty of a high order."

"Lance Naik Ramesh Singh of Kumaon Regiment was a member of a group assigned to construct a helipad in one of the forward locations in J&K. Due to extremely high altitude he was affected by a[illegible]xia. Unmindful of his p[illegible]sonal safety Lance N[illegible] Ramesh Singh refused [illegible] leave his place of duty [illegible] the completion of the [illegible] and eventually laid d[illegible] his life at his post.

"Lance Naik Ram[illegible] Singh thus displayed cou[illegible]ge, determination and devo[illegible] to duty of a high order."

SHORT, TERSE, cryptic and co[illegible] the list of Kirti Chakra and Shaur[illegible] Chakra citations goes on in the [illegible] vein. Not even once is the area of [illegible]rations or the nature of the op[illegible]tions mentioned. Nor is there [illegible] mention of the enemy. But doze[illegible] citations for gallantry awards m[illegible] in recent months talk similarly [illegible] bravery in the face of blizzards, [illegible]lanches and subarctic conditions.

This secrecy itself explains [illegible] nature of warfare waging for ov[illegible] year now in the country's northw[illegible]tern extremities where neither [illegible] nor beast treaded till a year ago. [illegible] thousands of troops, Indian [illegible]

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Pakistani, stand muzzle-to-muzzle in the upper reaches of Karakoram along Siachen, which at 73 kilometres is the second biggest glacier outside the polar region.

The elements are daunting, but cold is by no means their only enemy. There are incidents of firing almost every week, spilling blood on both sides. "What surprises us", says an Indian army officer in Srinagar, "is that the happenings in Siachen just do not seem to be affected by anything that happens at the diplomatic level." There can hardly be a better illustration than the bloody incidents of firing that broke out last fortnight just when the *Indo*-Pak joint commission was winding its second meeting in Delhi.

The incidents came after a period of relative calm. Near Gyangla in the region radiating southwards from Bilafondla (*see map*), a small detachment of Indian troops suddenly woke up to find itself under a rain of mortar shells. In a short spell of firing nine mortar shells landed perilously close to the post damaging some of the Indian bunkers and snow-shelters though no one was hit in the attack. The Indian troops retaliated with medium machine-gun and rocket fire. A Pakistani bivouac was momentarily caught in the open and later the Pakistanis were seen collecting their wounded. The incident triggered off a chain reaction with a few other posts scattered along the glacier exchanging sporadic bursts of fire but a conflagration was avoided.

Indian defence and diplomatic sources say the sudden firing was not so much a probing mission as an effort to keep tension alive in the region. Said an official: "After Benazir Bhutto's statement in London last week that Zia has surrendered the Siachen glacier to India the Pakistan Government is under pressure to prove to its people that it has not given up its claim on the area. We see the new incidents in that perspective."

The current spate of violence, in any case, is part of a persistent Pakistani campaign to retrieve lost ground. Over the last six months Pakistani troops have persistently launched probing missions aiming to outflank the Indian positions. The campaign peaked in May when a company of Pakistani troops tried to cut off the supply lines of an Indian post near Bilafondla. But an Indian patrol spotted the movement in time and the Pakistani detachment was ambushed. The Northern Command at Udhampur now presents a few Pakistani tents and equipment captured soon after the clash, with pride.

Indian officers involved in the operation say it was this failure that led the Pakistani commanders to embark on aerial photography of the glacial region with the intention of mapping out the Indian positions. The formation of six Pakistani aircraft, two Mirage Vs (reconnaissance version) and four MiG-19s as escort was spotted first by an Indian shorthaul transport aircraft on a routine drop-sortie in the region. The Pakistani aircraft hovered over the area for five to six minutes which, according to Indian spokesmen, was too short a period for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to scramble interceptors from Srinagar or Avantipur, the nearest bases.

The area radiating eastwards from Siachen is among the most inhospitable in the world. That is perhaps why both India and Pakistan had so far shown no inclination to demarcate the borderline here.

In fact, in its July 6 issue the reputed *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that India had shot down a Pakistani helicopter over Siachen. Sources in Delhi, however, say that troops in Siachen have often fired at low-flying helicopters and reported hitting at least two. But none has been seen crashing and no wreckage has ever been found.

In terms of the toll it is taking on human and financial resources, the conflagration in Siachen is prohibitively expensive for both sides. Says an Indian commander: "Ultimately, you feel sorry for the poor fellows from both sides fighting at those heights. Even the healthiest soldier is prone to developing all kinds of diseases, from pyorrhoea to piles and hypertension to rheumatism in those conditions. The military hospital in Leh has had a busy time treating casualties from high altitude exposure."

There have also been serious problems of logistics and supplies and the army and the air force, which maintains the Siachen garrisons, have had to do the ultimate in ingenuity and improvisation. The army, for example, found itself exposed to howitzer fire from the Pakistani positions and decided that it had to have heavy guns of its own. While dismantled howitzers were airlifted to the region with great difficulty, the gunners then said they needed cranes to put the guns together. Even these were ultimately improvised from the meagre technical infrastructure available on the spot and the fire-power balance was restored.

Similarly the IAF is rewriting record books. Most of its helicopters, the Cheetah (Allouette III) and Mi-8 have a service ceiling of just about 18,000 feet. But supply and casualty evacuation missions in the region imply having to constantly fly above terrain higher than 18,000 feet. As a consequence helicopter pilots are forced to fly merely 5-10 metres above the jagged terrain. One helicopter pilot, Wing Commander Tajinder Pal Chhatwal, created a record of sorts by flying 42 such sorties in a day to supply advance pickets and earned himself a Shaurya Chakra. The IAF-men make particular mention of a bleak day in May 1984 while the operation was just being launched, and two Cheetah helicopters got into trouble almost simultaneously. One force landed at 18,000 feet and the other crash-landed 700 feet below. After three months of preparation Corporal Charivukalayil Govindan Soman, an air-frame fitter trekked to the area, dismantled the helicopters and made their retrieval possible. His reward too is a Shaurya Chakra.

Both India and Pakistan justify this rather exaggerated build-up in such desolate country in terms of their own strategic perceptions which put a heavy premium on the control of Siachen salient. The Indian view is explained by a general who says: "The strategic Tibet-Sinkiang road passes through territory captured by China east of Siachen. Northwards we have the new road from Pakistan going through the Khunjerab Pass. These form a noose round India's jugular. If they took Siachen, they would be holding a dagger to our backs in the Nubra Valley."

But what surprises military observers is the apparent suddenness of this strategic realisation. The area radiating eastwards from Siachen is among the most inhospitable anywhere in the world. That is perhaps the reason why both India and Pakistan had so far shown no inclination to demarcate the borderline here. The 1949 Karachi agreement as well as the Simla agreement agreed on a borderline terminating at point NJ 9842 on the map. The rest was left undecided, a kind of forbidden land no man was ever likely to claim. But things changed with changing technologies and geopolitics and after the 1971 war, Pakistan began showing an increasing interest in the area. It had better contiguity with the area which it flanks from west and the north and to the east

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CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH

UNITED INDUSTRIAL BANK LIMITED

STATEMENT BY
SHRI J. N. BISWAS
CHAIRMAN
UNITED INDUSTRIAL BANK LTD.
AT THE FORTY-FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE BANK
HELD IN CALCUTTA
ON JUNE 21, 1985.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you to the Forty-Fifth Annual General Meeting of your Company.

Before dealing with the formal business today, I feel it is only appropriate for me to refer to the tragedy faced by the nation in the assassination of our late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, in October last year. Smt. Gandhi's outstanding contribution to the cause of socio-economic development of India as well as other third world countries will always be remembered with gratitude. I am sure you will all join me in paying our humble tribute to her memory.

Economic Environment

It is heartening to note that the Indian economy has attained a reasonably strong position at a time when we have just launched the Seventh Five Year Plan. According to the latest available estimates, in 1984-85. Gross National Product at constant prices has gone up by 4% with agricultural production registering a modest increase over the peak of 1983-84 and industrial production rising by 7%. Infrastructural services have shown marked improvement and price rise has been moderate.

The outlook for 1985-86 is, on the whole, good. While production growth and improvement in infrastructure are distinctly favourable indications, the possible areas of concern relate to prices and balance of payments. In West Bengal, the economic trend is quite encouraging, particularly with a new wave of industrial ventures being initiated in the joint sector. Also, there has been a commendable progress in the revival of sick industrial units in the State. Thus, with a favourable industrial climate in West Bengal where a major part of our banking operations take place, United Industrial Bank is poised to contribute towards rapid growth of the region.

Trends in Business

During 1984, despite a marginal increase in number of offices, your Bank's year-end deposits increased from Rs. 140.67 crores in 1983 to Rs. 180.06 crores in 1984, registering a 28.0% growth as against 14.0% growth in deposits of all scheduled commercial banks.

Similarly, your Bank's advances recorded a 34.0% growth in 1984 which compared favourably with a 16.1% growth in advances of all scheduled commercial banks.

It should also be mentioned that in 1984 advances to priority sector activities such as agriculturists, small-scale industrialists, transport operators and retail traders aggregated Rs. 29.33 crores and the beneficiaries in such priority sector loan accounts have demonstrated an encouraging performance in their respective areas of business.

Better Service and Greater Efficiency

In its continuous and consistent pursuit of offering better services to the existing as well as new customers your Bank has initiated the following measures:

1) Special emphasis on reaching out to people by opening new branches; so far in 1985 the Bank has received licences for opening 18 new branches.
2) To introduce staggered banking hours to cater to the requirements of customers in primarily residential areas.
3) To introduce teller system to speed up payments to depositors.
4) Introduction of exclusive banking counters for children, the future citizens, to inculcate banking habits in them. Introduce exclusive banking counters for ladies to mobilise household savings.
5) To set up international division to facilitate foreign exchange operations.
6) To offer special assistance to industrial units and priority sector borrowers in terms of counselling and extension services.

In order to offer better and efficient services, the Central Office of the Bank has been set up in 1984.

Growth and Diversification

As an organisation, your Bank has always responded successfully to the newly emerging challenges of business. With a keen sense of dynamism, the Bank envisages new areas of growth and is planning to undertake a major diversification in the form of merchant banking.

Recognising the growing needs and the complexity of raising resources for industrial projects, your Bank has decided to set up a merchant banking division to offer specialised services to our customers, existing and prospective, which include project counselling, loan syndication, management of public issues, etc.

It is expected that the division would start functioning shortly.

Banking Policies

Banking in India has made rapid strides since the nationalisation of major scheduled commercial banks in 1969. Today, Indian banking system is recognised universally for the volume and complexity of its business operations and for the resilience it has demonstrated while combining traditional business with emerging social priorities.

The Reserve Bank of India, too, has its own pride of place among the Central Banks of the world for successfully monitoring and guiding the evolution of Indian banking system. In 1984, the Reserve Bank of India credit policy was guided by the objective of deploying bank resources to support public sector investment and to meet increased demand for credit from the commercial sector following expectations for higher food procurement and industrial growth. At the same time due priority was accorded to ensure control on inflationary pressures through bringing about a deceleration in the growth of money stock and regulating liquidity of the banking system. Raising of Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) has been the most important policy measures in this regard.

Thrust of the new Government headed by a young and energetic Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, is towards relaxation of unnecessary controls and doing away with red tapism. It is hoped that in tune with this new trend of thinking the Reserve Bank of India will give more freedom and greater operational flexibility to the Banks so that they can substantially contribute towards the achievement of the national objectives.

Some suggestions

I feel, there should be closer coordination and greater understanding among the institutions involved in financing projects. In this regard, I put forward the following suggestions:

1) Insurance Companies must expedite settlement of claims because delay in such settlements leads to difficulties for the banks.
2) Deposit insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India must review their policies and try to reverse the trend of reducing the extent of coverage of loans. DICGCI should expedite settlement of claims.
3) In view of the multiplicity of borrowal accounts, particularly in rural branches with limited manpower, the limitation period under the Limitation Act be extended in case of Bank's dues.
4) Industrial Development Bank of India and National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development should raise the limits for automatic refinancing fixed long time back as has been generally done in other cases.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the employees but for whose sincere efforts there could not have been harmony in industrial relations and a sustained move to improve productivity.

I would also like to place on record my appreciation to my colleagues on the Board for their support, encouragement and guidance and our thanks to our innumerable customers and well wishers both home and abroad for their patronage and to the Government of India, Reserve Bank of India and Government of West Bengal and other State Governments for consideration shown to the Bank. Before I conclude, I must thank all the shareholders for their faith and confidence to the Institution.

Thank you all.

Note: This does not purport to be the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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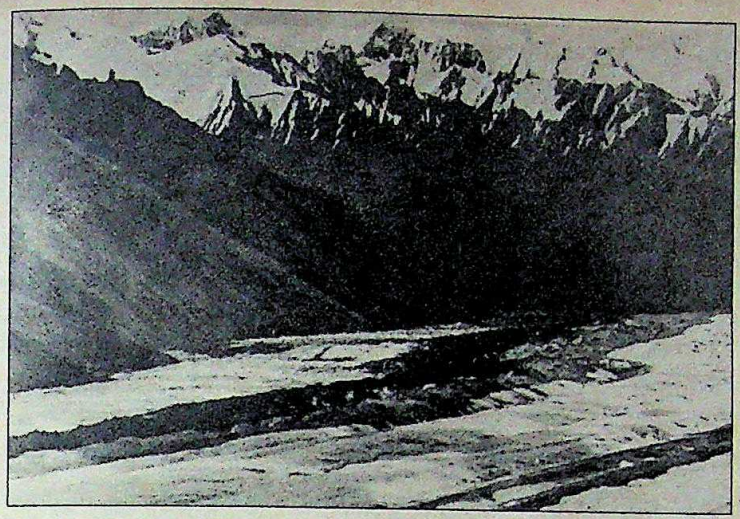
lies the territory in occupied Kashmir which Pakistan has ceded to China.

The Pakistani plan was simple and effective, to establish control over the region by sponsoring foreign expeditions to the virgin peaks here and thus having the territory listed as Pakistani in reputed international journals. To begin with it succeeded and Pakistan went merrily sending mountaineering expeditions across the glacier without as much as drawing a diplomatic protest note in return. For over a decade, most international mountaineering journals had been listing these as expeditions carried out in Pakistan. On the face of it, it seems, the Indian army operations directorate reacted with alarm after seeing maps of the region in reputed foreign mountaineering journals showing Siachen in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.



The Siachen glacier: protracted battle

THE INITIAL Indian response was sporadic patrolling of the area, much in the fashion of the anaemic effort that had met the Chinese claims over Aksai Chin in the '60s. In the late '70s the Indian army also launched a few expeditions into the area. This peaked in 1981 with Colonel N. Kumar, the renowned climber, leading a large team from the Sonmarg-based High Altitude Warfare School across Siachen. The group scaled, among other peaks, the formidable Sia Kangri and Saltoro Kangri, both overlooking Siachen from perches higher than 7,000 metres.

Intelligence sensors were soon abuzz with the reports that this had caused consternation in the Pakistani General Headquarters. They were planning to raise a special high altitude warfare force to take over the area militarily. This led to discussions at the prime minister's level and Mrs Gandhi gave the army the authority, some time in late 1982, to go shopping. A frenzied race followed with the Indian and Pakistani military delegations often finding themselves in the same cities of Europe and scouting for similar equipment at the same firms. But India pipped Pakistan at the post and in an operation masterminded by the then XVI Corps Commander Lieutenant-General P.N. Hoon in May last year elements of the 4th battalion of Kumaon Regiment hoisted the tricolour in the region in spite of heavy losses due to avalanches. Indian officials now admit to losing at least 40 lives to various "operation-related" causes around Siachen. Besides many more have been wounded, frost-bitten or taken ill due to exposure. Lt-General M.L. Chhibbar, GOC-in-C Northern Command estimates the Pakistani casualties to be close to a hundred.

While attention has lately been confined to the glacial region there has been trouble elsewhere too. Last fortnight there were frequent reports of mortar and small arms fire in the central and north-western sectors in Kashmir. The incidents were concentrated in the area between Rajauri and Poonch and included intermittent firing from the Pakistani post of New Nali over Indian border outposts and firing from the Pakistani post of Lanjot near Poonch river over the Indian positions held by the 6th battalion of Sikh Light Infantry.

BSF officials say the Pakistani intentions seem to be mainly to provide a cover to their civilians who often infiltrate across the border in search of drinking water. "We try to prevent this by firing in the air", said an official, adding, "the standard Pakistani response is a heavy fusilade, with a generous mix of tracers meant to set the dry grass on fire so that our troops have to withdraw for the time being." But all security planners in South Block do not dismiss these incidents as of no consequence.

They point out that these incidents are taking place along the section of the Line of Control where the Pakistani troop concentration is most daunting. Between their I Corps at Mangla and X Corps at Rawalpindi the Pakistanis have at least five divisions of troops facing the Pir Panjal ranges. These are buttressed by at least six brigades of so-called "Azad Kashmir" troops. Intelligence sources also report the raising of at least three new battalions of "Azad Kashmir" regiment at a place called Mansar along with the new recruitment in Mujahid battalions. "Immediately, we have no evidence to say that the new raisings will necessarily lead to a misadventure, but it hardly augurs well for us," says an official.

Defence experts say that in case a conflict takes place with Pakistan in future, both sides will concentrate on Kashmir since permanent territorial gains are possible only across the Line of Control. From the Pakistani point of view India has already "gained" nearly 3,000 square kilometres of territory in the Siachen region.

In South Block meanwhile, a firm decision has been taken to hold the glacial region even if it leads to repercussions elsewhere on the borders. The defence forces have been given a virtual carte blanche on purchasing the latest equipment in high altitude warfare from wherever it is available in international markets. One indication of this resolve last month was a government notification throwing open 15 of the better known peaks around Siachen to international expeditions on the condition that each group will be led by an Indian. And an Indo-British expedition is, accordingly, likely to be in the region this fall. This is bound to upset Pakistan. It is reasonably logical to presume that their next move would be to keep the tension alive by firing here and there.

But the Indian perception is that this kind of tension is a worthwhile price to pay for cementing India's claim over the territory. Said an officer: "We take Siachen as a test case. We want to assert that the Indian strategic doctrine of the '80s goes way beyond the docility of the '50s and '60s, that it is no longer possible to gnaw at our far-flung territories and then get away with no more than filibustry at the United Nations." It goes without saying that his counterparts across the line of control understand the message perfectly well. Their response too would be far from docile. And that will only ensure more blood-letting in the desolate Karakoram wastes. —SHEKHAR GUPTA

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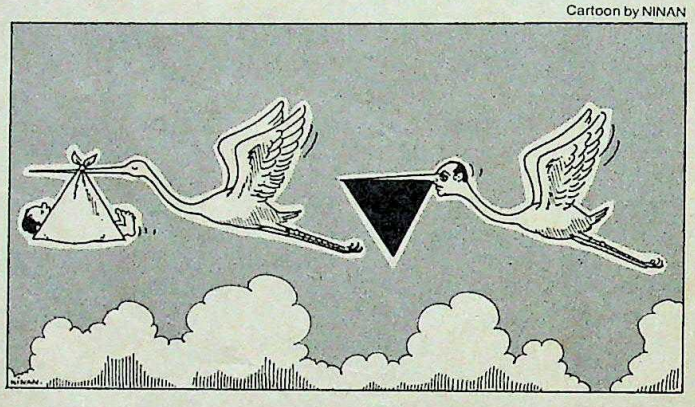
FAMILY PLANNING

Reviving the Battle

THE AGE of the red triangle is born again. Those who recall witnessing the 1970s blitz of publicity followed by the massive politicisation of the family planning programme that led, eventually, to the Congress defeat in the 1977 elections will also remember subsequent governments giving short shrift to the programme. Almost overnight family planning disappeared from the public eye, sterilisations became a dirty word and the ministry of family planning was even renamed family welfare. Some of those revisionist policies are at present undergoing another set of revisions in reverse gear, so that family planning has emerged, in the new Rajiv Gandhi age, as Priority Number One for the Government. Repeatedly on his American tour, the prime minister emphasised the magnitude of India's population problem; on his return he was closeted for several hours last fortnight not only with officials of the Health Ministry but a variety of experts, among them demographers, social scientists and members of voluntary agencies to understand the complex issues at stake. And at his press conference last week he admitted the present deficiencies in the programme, promising that major policy changes will be presented in the "next week or two".

Consequently, a flurry of activity has lately become evident in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, with officials falling over one another to produce new charts, refute statistics and evaluate new strategies to give the programme a much-needed shot in the arm. Among the new proposals is a USAID-mooted scheme to delink the social marketing of family planning aids from private and public sector agencies by the setting up of an autonomous non-profit society known as the Contraceptive Marketing Organisation (CMO). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in fact, in 1983 commissioned Price Waterhouse, well-known company of management consultants, to prepare a study of the feasibility of such an organisation; their report, made available to INDIA TODAY, strongly recommended the establishing of an organisation which would combine the "flexibility and speed of decision of the private sector and some of the authority of government". The CMO, as a result, came officially into existence last September and the Health Ministry has recently advertised for a highly-paid chief executive to head it. Says Serla Grewal, secretary in the Health Ministry: "Our effort in the social marketing of contraceptives has had limited success. We find that spacing techniques for birth control, that is, the use of condoms, IUD's, the pill and so on, are in future likely to be more important than terminal methods. And a significantly expanded distribution of contraceptives can only be achieved as part of an overall marketing programme. We want to try out, with greater freedom, new techniques in social marketing and use of the information media in an unfettered manner."

Cartoon by NINAN



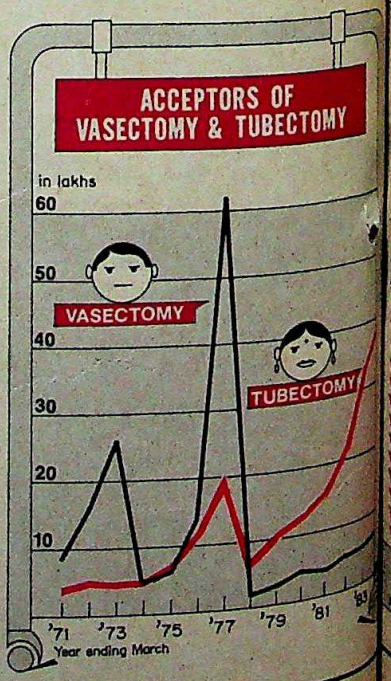
As soon as the CMO gets going, its first job will be to take over the marketing and distribution of conventional contraceptives (condoms, pills, and so on) which till last year were partly handled by private sector corporations with an established marketing network. Some 210 million condoms were distributed free in 1984-85, and nearly half through commercial agencies. Says R.P. Kapoor, additional secretary in the Health Ministry and commissioner, family welfare: "The idea is that the CMO will initially take on social marketing of contraceptives and later move into promoting other non-clinical methods of birth control."

The Price Waterhouse report emphasises the autonomous nature of the organisation, commercial in outlook, compact in size and structure and capable of serving as a lead institution. Broadly, its functions would entail:

- direct procurement of contraceptives from manufacturer and maintenance of quality control;
- free or subsidised distribution planning and implementation, starting with condoms;
- information, education and communication activities to complement particularly in the area of training the efforts of existing bodies;
- introducing advertising and promotion campaigns through professional agencies and monitoring the contraceptive marketing programme regularly through market research and information systems.

The CMO will be attended by a governing board, made up of secretaries to the Government, its own directors and representatives of manufacturers and others as well as two advisory councils: the first will be made up of specialists from interested groups involved in the organisation and the second, more important, by a marketing advisory panel consisting of eminent marketing professionals. The report recommends a decentralised organisation functioning through five regional offices with a total staff strength of about hundred people drawn from the field of consumer marketing, the pharmaceutical industry and professional management, and puts the organisation costs at about Rs 15 crore.

The idea behind the CMO, to sell family planning aids as widely and expediently



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as soap or any other consumer product, is part of the Health Ministry's search for new strategies. The second proposal is to implement cash incentives for couples undergoing sterilisation after two children: stipends of Rs 50 a month or a bond of Rs 1 lakh, encashable after 20 years, if the two children happen to be girls.

While Grewal and other ministry officials testify to a keen interest on the part of the new Government to closely examine the present family planning programme and, wherever possible, reinforce it. This is because, in the words of the prime minister himself, the programme's "dividends have not been commensurate with the investment."

The statistics for the last few years paint a depressing picture and hardly indicate the transformation of the programme into the people's movement that policy planners speak of. According to census figures, India's annual population growth rate has remained stationary at 2.2 per cent for the decade 1971-81; the decline in the birth rate has not kept pace with the decline in the death rate, staying at 3.7 per cent for the same period; and the Sixth Plan target of covering 36 per cent of eligible couples with contraception has fallen short by 4 per cent. The number of eligible couples using contraception in India went up from about 22 per cent in 1980 to 32 per cent in 1985, whereas in other developing countries, the figures for a similar five-year span show galloping increases: from 13 per cent to 40 per cent in Mexico, from 15 per cent to 37 per cent in the Philippines and from 31 per cent to 46 per cent in Colombia. In other words, the baby boom in India continues unabated, with an average of 24 million births annually or 48 births each minute of the day and night.

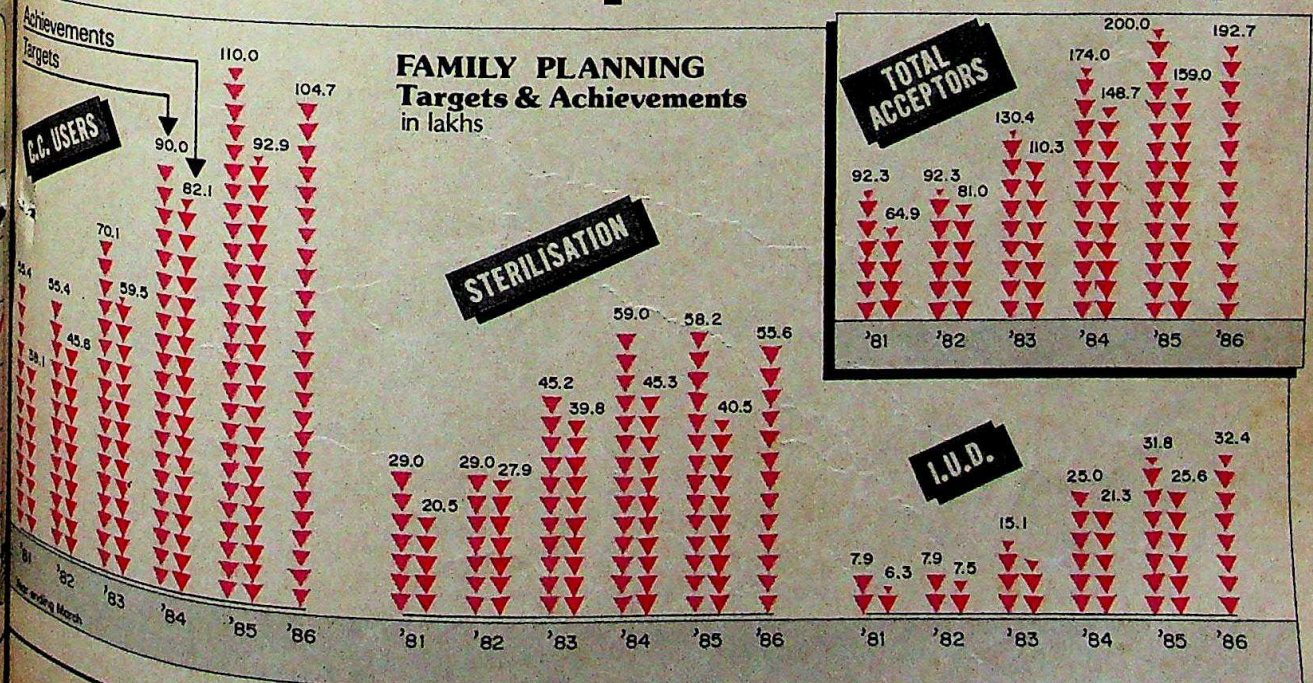
The reason for this is not that the family planning programme has become ineffective since the disastrous forcible sterilisation campaign of 1976 but that it simply cannot cope with the escalating momentum of couples entering the fertility age-group each year—the number at present is 125 million and is expected to rise to between 170 million and 180 million by the end of the century. "Therefore", explains Rami Chhabra, programme director, communications, of the Family Planning Foundation, an independent research organisation, "every slight shortfall in targets has steadily created a backlog to the two million to three million new couples reaching the fertility age-group each year. For the family planning programme to register its impact, it will have to run all that faster to cover the cumulative increase in couples who need to be covered by contraception."

"The programme has had a bad history and it is imperative that we now create a positive climate, involve every body and dispense adequate supervision."

MOHSINA KIDWAI,
minister for health

A state-wise breakup further indicates that while some states, notably Maharashtra, followed closely by Punjab and Haryana, are forging ahead to cover almost half their fertility-level populations by contraception, the entire Hindi heartland of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, as well as Jammu & Kashmir, are lagging behind with hopelessly low contraceptive levels varying from 13 to 17 per cent. Therefore, while the Health Ministry from time to time trots out encouraging figures (a 14.7 per cent increase in use of contraceptive methods nationally in 1984-85 over the previous year with detailed breakups) the fact is that, in perspective, these figures mean little.

The latest ministry figures, however, reveal that the number of sterilisations have, in fact, registered a 10.6 per cent decline—from 45.32 lakh sterilisations done in 1983-84 down to 40.50 lakh in 1984-85. The reason for this, according to both the Minister for Health Mohsina Kidwai and Health Secretary Grewal, is that at the best of times the family plann-



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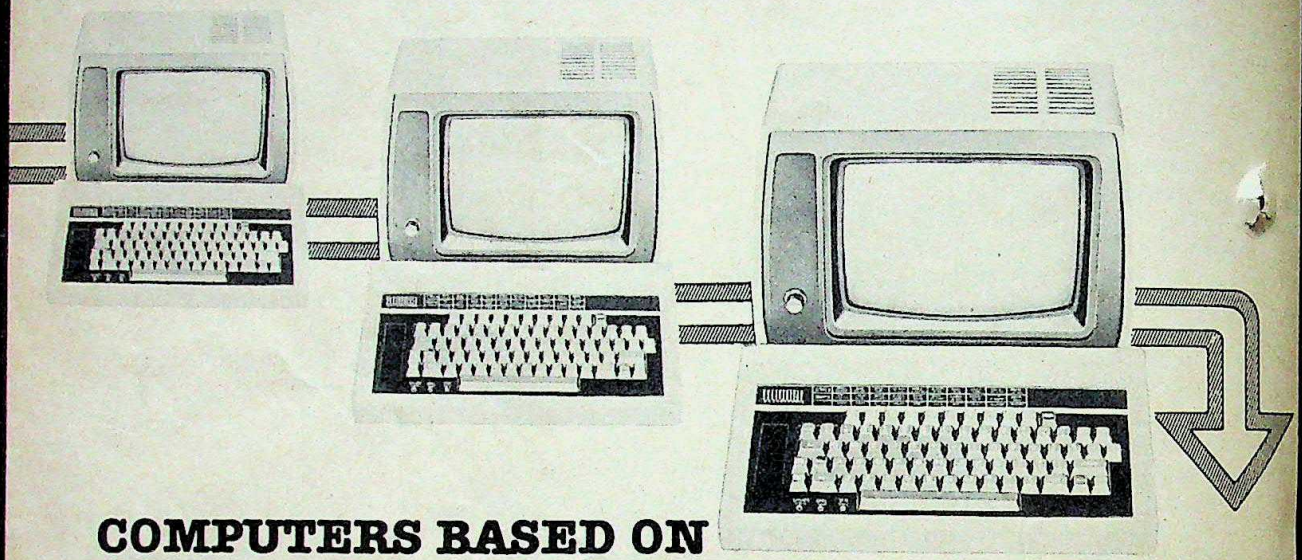

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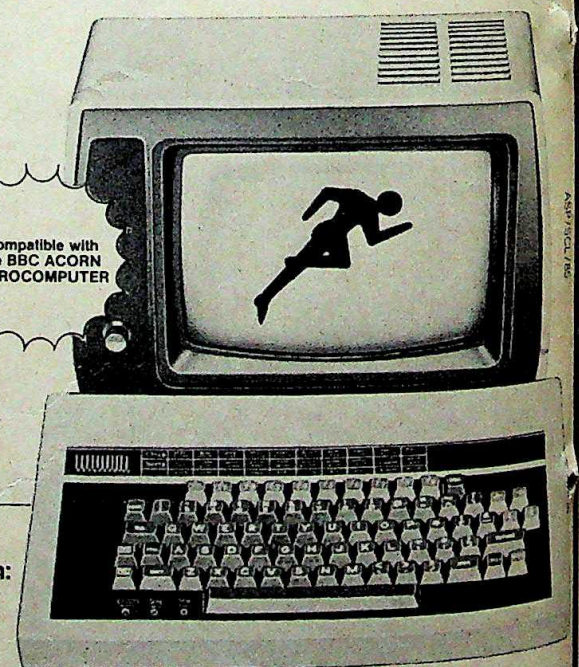

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ing programme remains acutely susceptible to political change, so that both the period of political uncertainty following Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the general elections caused serious disturbances, thereby affecting the number of sterilisations. Grewal admits that traditionally the season of intensive family planning campaigns has been from September to March with the summer months ignored by health workers and state health ministries. "This is something we are determined to change. Earlier we simply hadn't tried summer campaigns. Now it is imperative that our workers are in the field throughout the year," she said.

Still, Health Ministry officials are hopeful of meeting their targets for the year 2000. These are, to reach a net reproduction rate (NRR) of one, which means that every female leaving the fertility age-group will be replaced by one entering it, and that 60 per cent of eligible couples will be covered by contraception. Kapoor argues that while the Sixth Plan target may have fallen short, for the first time, the programme is poised to overshoot the Seventh Plan target of covering 42 per cent of eligible couples. His optimism is founded on the 1981 census which records the unprecedented fact of fewer children in the 0-4 year age-group (87 million) than in the 5-9 year group (93.6 million) or even in the 10-14 year group (85.7 million)—in other words, there are fewer children growing up to enter the fertility period.

The Health Ministry also points out two major shifts in the increased acceptance of birth control among women in the last decade: for the first time the use of the pill has registered a phenomenal increase (up from 5.5 million the users in 1983-84 to 9.3 million in 1984-85) and the trend in sterilisations shows a complete reversal from the 1970s when the number of men accepting sterilisation was much higher. The number of vasectomies in the 1980s has come down sharply in comparison to the number of tubectomies which is steadily rising (*see chart*). However, medical experts at Unicef point out that though this is a positive indicator, the increased number of women accepting sterilisation is made up of an older age-group, the majority of acceptors having already undergone an average of 3.7 births at the time of acceptance. "India is still unable to attract younger women to sterilisation," says a medical expert.

But the commonest criticisms of the Indian family planning programme, one of the oldest in the world though still the least effective in international comparisons, still remain the same: that too much power has been vested in government agencies and not enough outside; that all too often these agencies regard the exercise as a matter of statistics and not of people; and that if successful family planning programmes anywhere are linked to a process of integrated development, in India, the programme has been pursued in rigid isolation, thereby magnifying its political connotation.

"We need to adopt a caring, compassionate approach. Family planning is a matter of people, not statistics."

RAMI CHHABRA,
programme director, communications, Family Planning Foundation

Medical experts and social scientists have reiterated the need to define such a coordinated policy. Only such an approach, they claim, could lead to the quantum jump required to meet the targets for the year 2000. "What we need to adopt is a caring, compassionate approach. And we need to link the programme with basic medicare, adult education, child development and anti-poverty programmes," says Chhabra "Any agency that has mass contact with the people should be involved," adds Avabai Wadia, president of the Family Planning Associations of India.

"We want to try out new techniques in the social marketing of contraceptives and the use of the information media in an unfettered manner."

SERLA GREWAL,
secretary, Health Ministry

Health Ministry officials admit the narrow ambit of the programme's functioning, and agree that much will depend on the shifts in the new policy to widen its scope, optimise the utilisation of its services and monitor the results. "The programme has had a bad history and it is imperative that we now create a positive climate, involve everybody and dispense adequate supervision," says Health Minister Mohsina Kidwai. Grewal delineates two major areas for future emphasis: one is to strengthen linkages between the programme and associated programmes such as child immunisation, maternity care, adult literacy and education. "This, of course, must be accomplished with a continuous updating of our own skills and resources: improvement in quality of our field workers, training programmes and rural services." And the other is to introduce a strong motivational slant via the media. For example, Doordarshan's most popular soap opera *Hum Log*, was originally to be funded by the Health Ministry in conjunction with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, but as the programme expanded beyond all expectations to encompass a staggering variety of characters and issues, family planning inevitably was shoved under the carpet. New plans are afoot to produce family planning-oriented programmes for television as well as consultations with the advertising industry for better, forceful campaigns. The famous *Do Ya Teen Bas* campaign of the 1970s, for example, has now got inextricably muddled with the 1980s campaign which recommends delaying the first child, spacing the second and eliminating the third altogether.

Rather like the campaigns for two successive decades which confusingly overlapped each other the country's family planning programme is desperately in search of new definitions for a full-scale revival. And only a careful, considered push from the top can give it the direction it now requires.

—SUNIL SETHI

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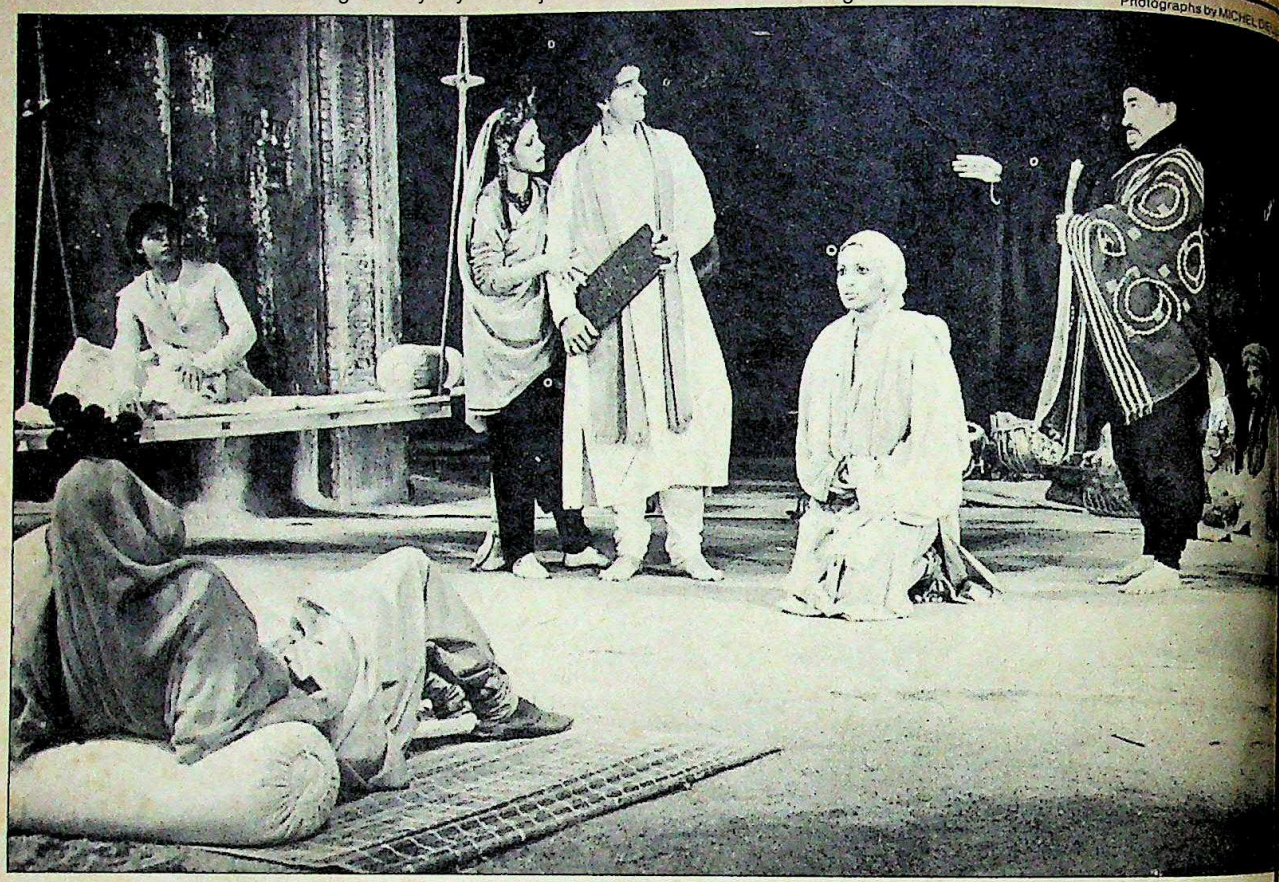

Draupadi, (centre) at King Virata's during the last year of her period

THE MAHABHARATA

An Epic Endeavour

IN THE lush countryside of Avignon in southeastern France last fortnight, the internationally-acclaimed theatre director Peter Brook's long-awaited version of the *Mahabharata* opened to a rousing reception as part of the year-long Festival of India celebrations. An estimated 25,000 people had booked in advance to see the three-fold cycle of the fourth century Indian epic which has taken 10 years to prepare and is being staged in a stone quarry outside Avignon. Adapted by Jean Claude Carriere, the eminent screenplay writer of Bunuel films who also recently wrote the scenario of *Swann In Love* and designed by Chloe Obolensky, the production in French is enacted by an international cast of African, Polish, French, Greek, Lebanese and Indian performers who form the nucleus of Brook's Paris-based repertory known as the Centre Internationale de Creations Theatrals (CICT). Indian dancer Mallika Sarabhai is a special import playing the part of Draupadi and observes that "working with such an international company of artistes I have paradoxically become more aware of my Indianness."

The excitement the play has generated has reached "fever pitch", says Alain Crombeque, the director of the Avignon Festival who believes it's one of Brook's most unusual forays in experimental theatre. For Brook himself, the effort has been more than an ordinary dramatic experiment, it has been a kind of mission to bring to life one of the greatest books of mankind. "The very fact that we did not know the Mahabharata and the West shared that ignorance with us was a terrible thought," says the gnome-like director who was fascinated years ago with the "image of a soldier who refused to fight the war in Vietnam by throwing away his gun" and understood it when an Indian writer brought him a copy of the *Bhagvad Gita*. "It greatly aroused my interest," says Brook, "and so I went to a French friend who is a great Sanskrit scholar and just as Ved Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, says that if a person listens carefully to a story he may not be the same person again, so Carriere listened to the story of the *Mahabh* and thought of sharing it with the p of the West."

Carriere's adaptation of the *Maha rata* follows the original translation Bhandarkar Oriental Institute in P Sanskrit edition, so that even Ind unless knowledgeable about the va parallel texts and stories, may fin French adaptation confusing. In its rety, the work is so stupendous th two Indian scholars could agree on a trayal of the same events. Still, the Fr have responded to the epic with siasm. To seek a preliminary reac the six-million franc-production tested it out in 24 preview perform in Paris spread from April though with only one of all three parts to on a Sunday.

The creative performance is in parts—*The Game of Dice, Exile in the* and *The War*—and compresses the by focussing on aspects that do not away from the essence of the epic. A the natural setting of the stone q through common devices such as a at the back and a pond of water up

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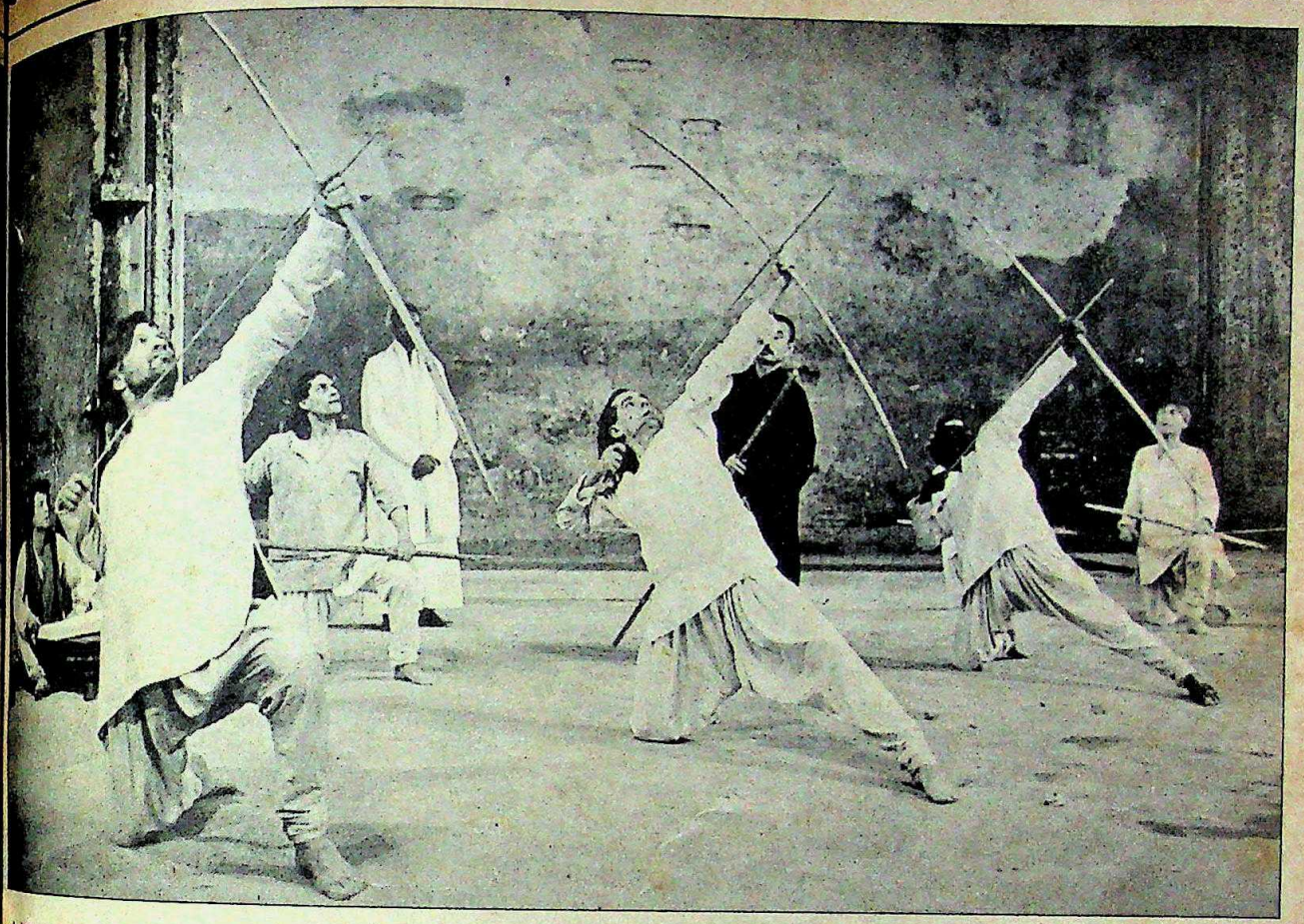
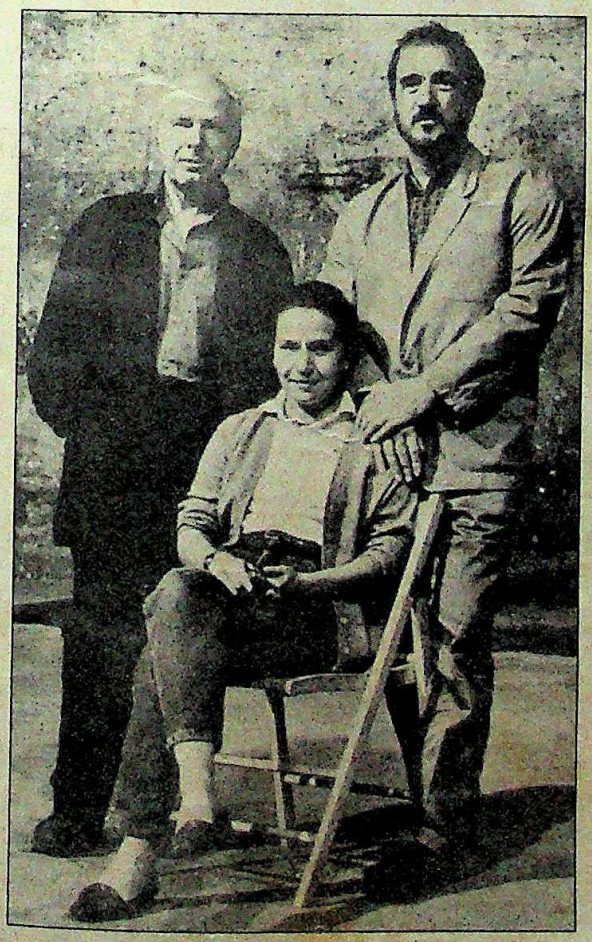


Archery tournament; and(right), Bro. Carriere and Obolensky

the five natural elements are included. And the simple costumes, in offwhite and neutral creams, solved the problem of colour. "Our aim was not to rely on authenticity but on suggestion," says Chloe Obolensky, the production's Greek costume designer. For scene changes, the performance further relies on the traditional piece of cloth used as the curtain in Kathakali, Kuchipudi and other dramatic forms in India.

One theatrical innovation the director has employed to condense the series of the epic and circumvent a literal interpretation of events is to introduce the character of a young child who asks Vyasa, the author-narrator, questions on aspects of the narrative. Thus well-known episodes from the epic such as the Kauravas wanting to kill the Pandavas, the setting of Lakshagriha, the palace of lac on fire or the marriage of Draupadi are retold in the form of questions and answers and seldom let up the intensity of the performance. And the child, witnessing the war, moving in the



arena, holding up the curtain and questioning Vyasa becomes an alienation device reminding audiences that it is a story being told, and at the same time echoing the questions in their mind. For instance, when Krishna dies as a result of a curse and the hunter shoots an arrow, the scene is enacted with Krishna reclining, Vyasa and the child holding up the cloth, an actor walking up and placing the arrow between Krishna's toes and the child turning to Vyasa and asking, "But Krishna is dying, what did he tell Arjuna in battle?". Vyasa replies that the child must ask Krishna and Krishna says that he can tell the truth only once and passes away. The shooting of the arrow, the questioning of the child as Krishna's life ebbs away contrive to powerfully convey the message of *dharma*.

At other moments, the visual impact is as vital. When Duryodhana asks where Arjuna has gone to perform penance, a circle of fire springs up near the canal; similarly there are other strong images of the floating of the children in the Ganga, the birth of the Kauravas represented by a huge steel ball and

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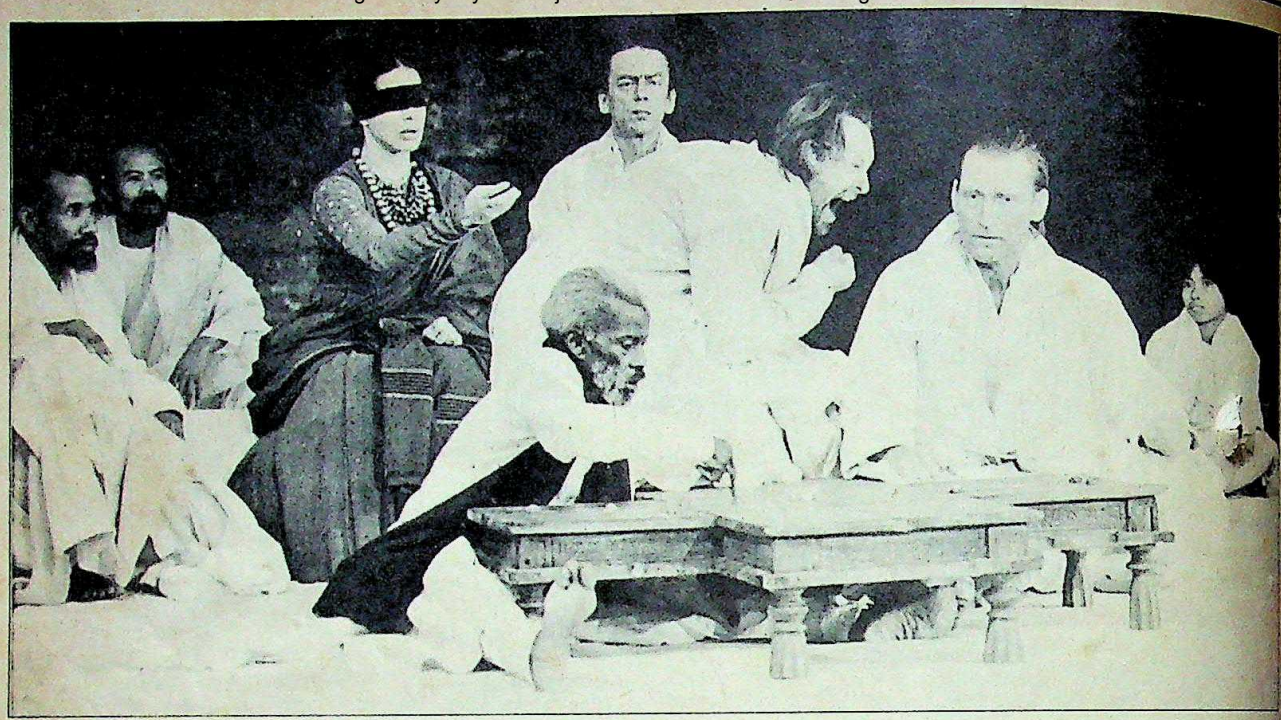

Duryodhana challenges Yudhisthira at the game of dice

Drona's archery tournament shown with flagged poles forming a square in which Arjuna and Karna confront each other.

Each of these scenes, and others like the deaths of Duryodhana and Bhishma, use devices from the traditional theatre forms of not only India but places like Bali and Formosa. Indian theatre forms such as the martial arts of Manipur and Kerala and puppet plays contribute to the wealth of dramatic devices used in scenes of war and mythology, such as the slaying of Abhimanyu or the drawing of Dushasana's blood.

In order to give the international cast an experience of the culture and people of India, the entire troupe travelled in the country two years ago. Once outside a Vishnu temple on top of a hill outside Madurai they were trying out a duel sequence when suddenly an impromptu audience gathered and watched in rapt silence. "It was a most moving experience," recalls Georges Corraface, the Greek actor who plays Dushasana. "They understood the battle between Arjuna and Shiva completely and it gave us great confidence." Many of the performers have spent time learning traditional music and dance forms of India. Alain Marat, the French actor who plays Vyasa, studied *Kalaripayattu* in Kerala, Kim Menzer the Danish musician, learnt to play the nadaswaram and shehnai and Toshi Tsuchitori, the Japanese musician has studied Hindustani vocal and Rabindra Sangeet. Some of these musical pieces are used in the performance: verses from Tagore's *Gitanjali* in Bengali as the Pandavas leave for exile in the forest lend an exquisite poignancy as do the playing of drums by a Japanese actor to presage the doom-laden sounds of war.

WHETHER in French or in any other language the Mahabharata is bound to make an enormous impression; but the fact that so far the West has never attempted it as a story for the theatre places Brook's production in a unique position. In part, the greatest problem has been of introducing all-encompassing Indian concepts such as the doctrine of *dharma* to foreign audiences. "I had to be very careful in using the exact French equivalents for such concepts as *dharma* and *nyaya*, or else it would be a case of perpetuating philological imperialism by using terms understood differently in European languages. *Dharma* has to be *dharma* and it has to make sense as the story progresses," says Carriere.

For both Brook and Carriere the discovery that there existed in the East an epic containing not only so many universal truths but truths that were of unique relevance to the contemporary world came as a great revelation as it does to French audiences who are flocking to see the *Mahabharata*. Already invitations to present the French *Mahabharata* are pouring in from Italy, Poland, Germany and the Soviet Union. The immediate task, however, is to produce it in English so that it can tour the United States and India, the country where it originated. "We hope to take the English version to India after our present engagements which extend till 1987," says Brook. The present text in French is to be published shortly by the CICT but for Carriere the ultimate accolade will be to see it translated someday into Hindi. "It would be the best reward," he says humbly.

Controversial though it may be in French for Indian viewers who do not understand the language, the English version may prove more suitable though it will also rouse reactions of all kinds. That is bound to be so in a mammoth text that has for centuries been open to a multitude of interpretations. And Brook's nine-hour-long spectacle contains intimations about man and the world as relevant in today's world as they were 1,600 years ago. "But," he warns, "we cannot drag the Mahabharata to our way of perceiving things. We cannot drag it in its entirety, this great inexhaustible river—heroic and sensual, comic and profound. We may, if we listen carefully, rediscover at its every moment our own anxieties, emotions, laughter, questions, contradictions or our most secret dreams. Or we may not."

—SUNIL KOTHARI in Paris and SUNIL SETHI in New Delhi

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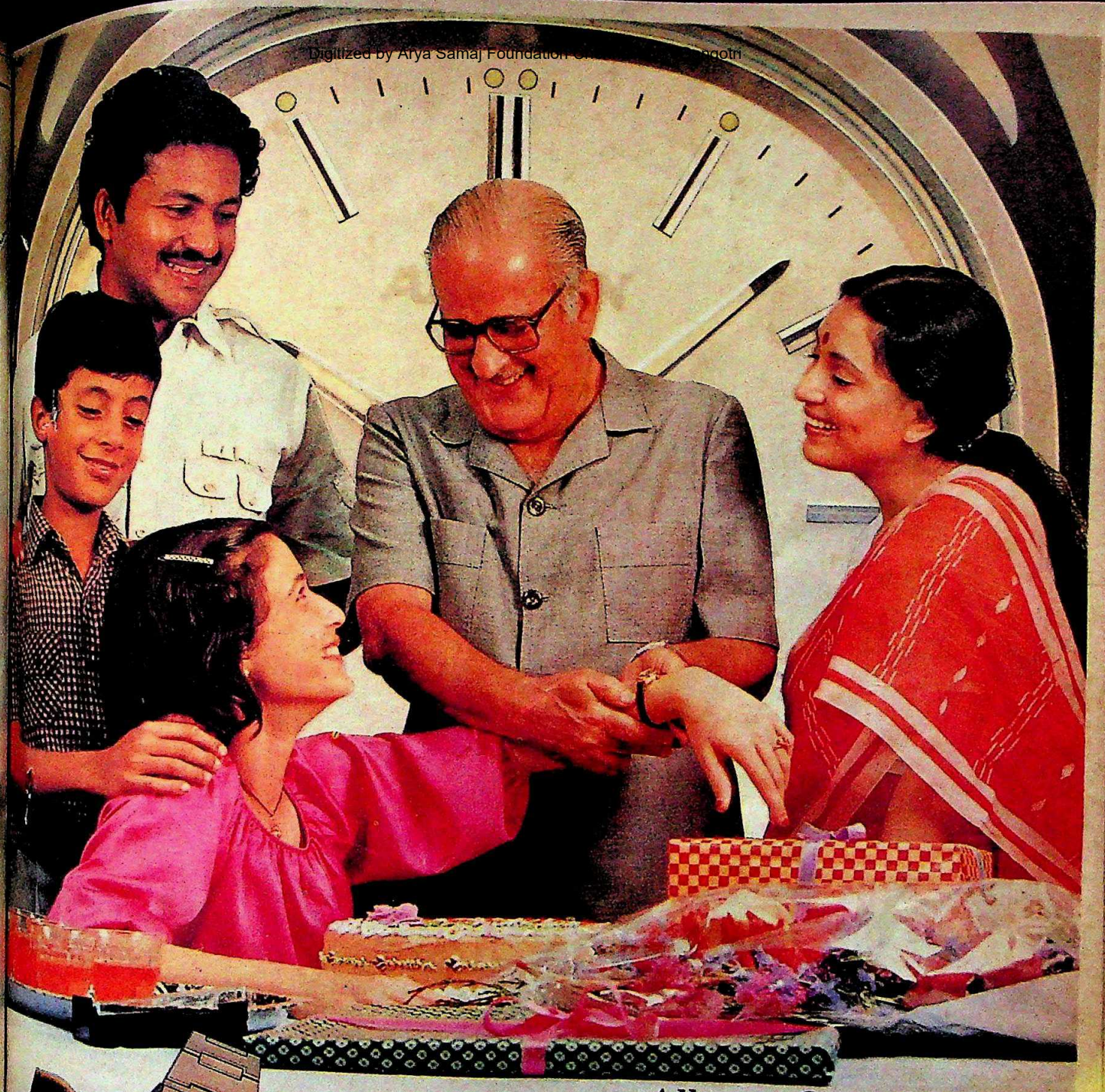

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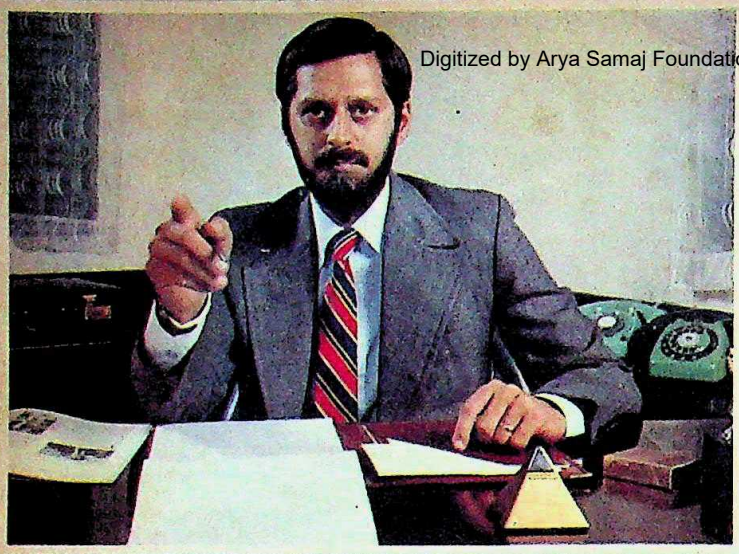

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TAMIL NADU

Fallen Hero

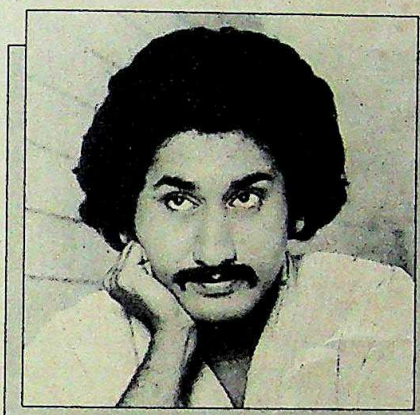
HE HAD the world at his feet. At 26, Suman Thalwar was already at the peak of his career. Tall and handsome, he was one of the top actors of the Tamil and Telugu screens, earning Rs 5 lakh per film and completely booked up to the end of 1988.

And then, suddenly, the bubble burst. On the night of May 18, a group of policemen arrived at Suman's house, seized some pornographic video tapes and arrested Suman. The charge against him, of course, was far more serious than the mere illegal possession of a few blue films. Suman was arrested on the basis of far more offensive complaints filed by three young girls claiming that he had abducted, raped and forced them to act in blue films. Overnight, the hero of the film industry became its blackest villain.

To make matters worse, 27-year-old Diwakar—also charged and sentenced in connection with the illegal possession of blue films—substantiated the charge against Suman. In his confessional statement he reportedly indicted the young actor as the brain behind a blue film operation designed to lure young, innocent girls, drug them and strip them for obscene photographs and films.

Events moved very fast after that. On May 21, Madras Police Commissioner Sathyal ordered Suman's detention under the draconian Goondas Act of 1981, an Act which allows the police to keep a person in jail for a full year without producing him before a magistrate. The police made the arrest non-bailable. On the detention order, the police commissioner clearly wrote "detention of Thiru Suman alias Suman Thalwar, goonda".

But last fortnight, the actor made the first move to prove his alleged innocence. Through senior advocate G. Ramaswamy, who usually represents top DMK functionaries, Suman filed a habeas corpus in the Madras High Court seeking his release and claiming that his detention was mala fide. A division bench of the court, while admitting the petition, ordered the issue of three weeks notice to the police commissioner and the prohibition and excise secretary, administering authority for the Goondas Act. The case for the prosecution is built on complaints filed by the three girls—Lakshmi, Beena and Sheela—against Suman. Their stories are more or less the same. Suman offered them a lift home, drugged them and forced them to pose nude for photographs. All three claim to have begged him to return the indecent photographs and one of the girls, Sheela, even claims that when she went to retrieve the offending snaps, Suman took her out in his car and threatened to shoot her. She jumped out of the car and fled. All three were ultimately forced to file complaints in the police station. Said a top police official: "It was on the basis of the complaints of Lakshmi and Beena that Suman was first arrested on the night of May 18. But on receiving information about Sheela's police complaint, it was decided to detain him under the Goondas Act."



Suman was arrested on the basis of complaints filed by three girls claiming that he had aducted, raped and forced them to act in blue films.

Suman contends that all the charges against him are framed. He claims to have never even seen the girls who had complained about him. The entire film industry seems to be suddenly speaking out in his favour. Said a film source: "Suman is very tall and handsome. It is the young girls who fall for him and not the other way around."

Film producers and directors have built a solid wall of defence around the popular hero. They vouch that on the days when Suman was supposedly abducting and raping different girls, he was, in fact, shooting for his films. Famous film director L.V. Prasad categorically stated: "Suman was with us shooting from around 9 a.m. (on the day he is said to have met Sheela at 9 p.m.). It was a tight schedule and shooting went on till around 10.30 at night. After that Suman went to see writer Sachiamurthy who was in a private hospital."

Of course the film industry is bound to speak up for Suman since it has a lot at stake in his release. He had at least three dozen films on hand when he was taken into custody. Nearly 10 producers, whose films starring Suman are ready for release, are growing more and more desperate everyday. Many others have paid large signing amounts and advances to the jailed actor. Film circles estimate that at least Rs 7 crore, if not more, is locked up with Suman.

Suman himself is quite aware of his current demand and is shrewdly cashing in on it. He has long sheets to prove his busy shooting schedules just when he was supposed to have accosted the girls. And argued a friend of Suman: "That girl Lakshmi complains of having been raped on April 20. Why should she have waited till May 10 to complain to the police? Beena says she was assaulted on April 21, and she waits till May 14 to make a police complaint." The answers are not hard to find. Said a police officer: "We forget that these girls had obscene films of them taken. So naturally they would first try to recover the films. Only when they realised they couldn't, they come to us in sheer despair."

The more obvious question, of course, is if Suman is not guilty why should the police pick on him of all persons. He has an ingenious answer to that too. "The case has been foisted against me," he states in his writ petition, "at the instance of a liquor baron who commands great wealth and an all-pervasive influence over the chief minister of Tamil Nadu as well as the second respondent, the commissioner of police." According to Suman's story, the liquor baron's daughter apparently eloped with Diwakar a fortnight before he was arrested and Suman was suspected to be in the know. This was the liquor tycoon's revenge. So, as the case trudges on with its plots and sub-plots and melodramatic twists, all eyes are focussed on Suman Thalwar, the upstaged god of the film industry. As in a suspense film, everyone is waiting to know the final denouement: is Suman the hero or is he the villian?

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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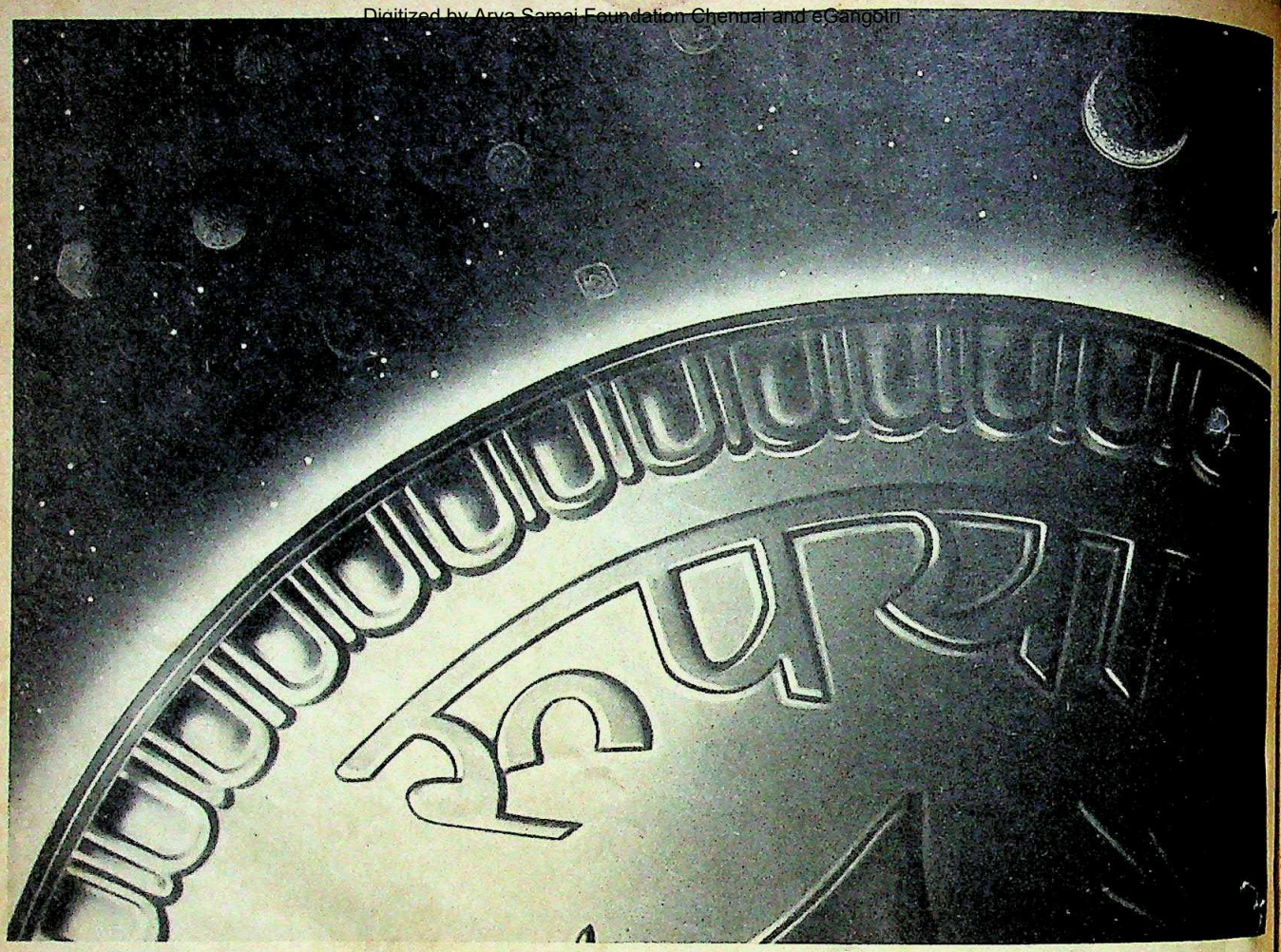

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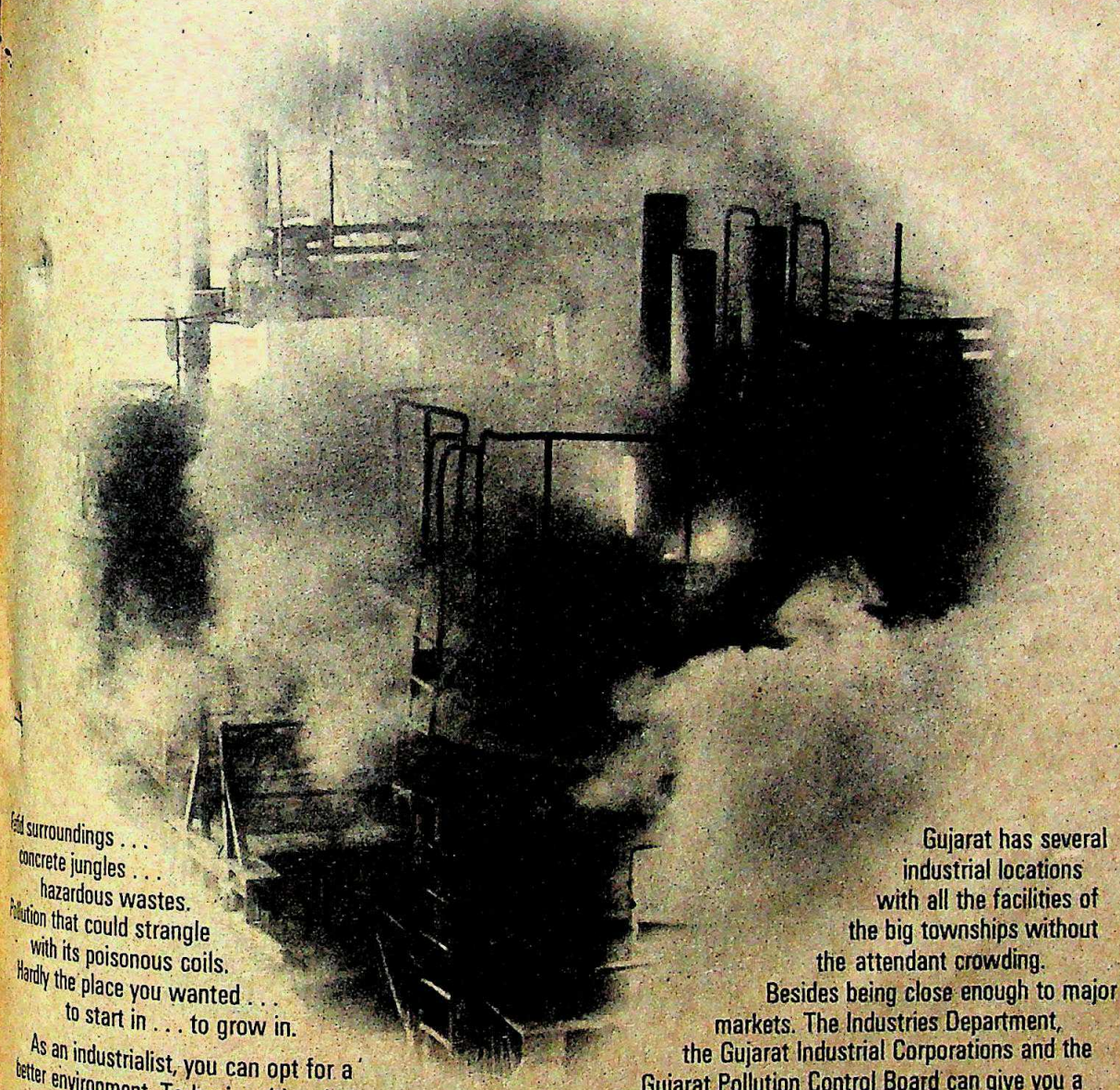

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HINDI FILMS

The Age of Insecurity

WHICH films will sell now? Five years ago if you had asked this of Gulshan Rai, the old patriarch of the film industry and its acknowledged crystal-gazer, he would have come up with a veritable menu card: an Amitabh Bachchan action movie with a revenge theme thrown in; a "multi-starrer" between Amitabh, Rishi Kapoor and Shatrughan Sinha; a "lost and found" story; a "separation and reunion" story, and so on. But now Rai is wiser and grimmer. Which films will sell now? Sitting at his Tardeo office, Rai shakes his bald head and says: "I'll give you anything if you can tell me that."

Never before has the Indian movie industry felt so insecure as it does now. Of the 734 films made last year, only *Chhota Chetan*, the 3-D Hindi remake of a Malayalam children's film, was rated as a super-success by *Trade Guide*, the authoritative journal of the movie industry. In 1983, there were as many as six films in that category. So far this year, and upsetting the predictions of nearly all pundits who keep their fingers on the pulse of the movie industry, only one film—a soppy melodrama called *Pyar Jhukta Nahin*—has come up to the winning post by grossing over Rs 3 crore in six months flat against a modest production budget of less than Rs 50 lakh. On the other hand, the expensive bombs—films made with budgets of over Rs 1 crore—present a depressing list. *Yudh*, *Aandhi Toofan*, *Sarfarosh*, *Hoshiyar*, *Sitamgar*, *Zamana*—the casualties of this year—are both colourful and extensive. "A long winter has set in on the film industry," says N.N. Sippy, the newly elected president of the Indian Motion Picture Distributors' Association (IMPDA), adding that "what amazes us more at present is not the audience's force of acceptance but that of its rejection."

Post-mortem of both successes and failures is an ongoing exercise in the show business. But what is most stupefying is the erratic distribution—themewise and in terms of the overall packaging—of the recent hot-sellers. If *Arjun*, a film full of violence, action and contemporary political message, had crashed virtually everywhere other than Bombay, there was yet another film, *Ardh Satya*, also a spin-off from the common Hollywood ancestor, *Deathwish*, which did creditable business all over the country. And if *Aaj ki Awaz* had kept the cash register ring[illegible] is *Awaz*, which is indeed an echo of its [illegible] decessor, that flopped at the box-[illegible] While top-flight distributors are at [illegible] wit's end trying to solve the puzzle, [illegible] is a pattern that seems to emerge u[illegible] ticed. As Amit Khanna, theorist [illegible] mass cinema and film maker, put[illegible] "What is distinctly in is the type of [illegible] that puts skill and craftsmanship a[illegible] content. What is distinctly out is the [illegible] sociological concern of the late '70s."

For all their dissimilarities in [illegible] proach, the more successful among [illegible] film makers in Bombay today are tech[illegible] cally way ahead of their predecess[illegible] Subhash Ghai and Rahul Rawail, bo[illegible] whom are under 40 and have four [illegible] grossers of the past three years to th[illegible] credit, are now respected in the indus[illegible] for their workmanship. Ghai made [illegible] 1984 blockbuster, *Hero*, which is mer[illegible] humdrum boy-meets-girl story but [illegible] deemed by its superb technical gloss. [illegible] wail's *Betaab* too is a flimsy picture-[illegible] love story, an adaptati[illegible] of the age-old format [illegible] *Taming of the Shrew*, bu[illegible] is the hallmark of super[illegible] craftsmanship that le[illegible] film all the way to the [illegible] of the chart. Even [illegible] *Jhukta Nahin*, th[illegible] recent box-office [illegible] tion, has on it the [illegible] of clever execution. [illegible] maker, Chander S[illegible] nah, is an acknowle[illegible] specialist in sleek [illegible] tion who had once [illegible] *Victoria No. 203*, a [illegible] box-office smasher.

It is quite remark[illegible] that many of the top [illegible] tributors, who have [illegible] ears ever fixed firm[illegible] the ground to detect [illegible] the subtlest shifts in p[illegible] lar taste, have now [illegible] talking more and [illegible] a film's "visual te[illegible] rather than its story [illegible] tent and cast line-[illegible] Rai puts it: "The story [illegible] taken a backseat. It [illegible] treatment that m[illegible] now." But the b[illegible] news is that even s[illegible] the top mandarins [illegible] movie makers have [illegible] been baptised into [illegible] latest creed of putting [illegible] craft before the [illegible] Notable examples [illegible]

Jackie Shroff in *Hero* and; Sunny Deol with Amrita Singh in *Betaab*: blockbusters

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SAAGAR

Back to Love

TEN YEARS ago, when steam locomotives and bandit horsemen ran side by side down a strange mountainscape to form the opening scene of *Sholay* few expected that the film would create movie history with 25 crore people watching it over the years. And, like the hero who mounts Pegasus, director Ramesh Sippy found it difficult to live up to his achievement. He opened up a dazzling array of smart gadgetry, in the best tradition of James Bond films, in *Shaan*—but the audiences found it too remote and did not buy enough seats at the theatres. Later Sippy had a fling at heavy doses of drama in *Shakti*, but that too left the viewers cold. And when the industry had all but written off Sippy as a failure, he is ready with *Saagar*, a film as different from *Sholay* as a Clark Gable romance is from a John Wayne western.

Yet there is a strong underlying similarity between the two films. Like *Sholay*...and only like *Sholay*... *Saagar* is purely a director's film. If *Sholay* had picked up the story-line from "spaghetti westerns", *Saagar* also gratefully acknowledges its debt to *Casablanca* and many other romantic Hollywood films of the '40s. But, like in *Sholay*, Sippy once again drowns story, drama, characterisation, music and all the other components of a film under an all-pervasive textural pattern. From the opening shot, where the camera draws lines and arcs in the air to portray the fisherman's village by the sea, one knows what Sippy is trying to get at. He seems to be saying: "Look, I'll give you a Mills and Boon story on celluloid, if you like. But that's only an excuse to hold you down here. Now, you better watch the film, because the film is only the film."

As the shots begin to unfold, one understands why it cost Sippy Rs 70 lakh to create the village alone. For the expenses...and the long time by the seaside (it took two-and-a-half years to film it)... show not in the stacking of gaudy properties but in the inner weave of the film, the internal harmony of its texture. The village is far from naturalistic: it is only in tune with the film's choreography. And Sippy makes no leones about it from the moment Kamala Hasan appears on screen, playing a stylised fisherman with an electrifying presence.

Dimple Kapadia, who plays the daughter of a restaurant-owner in the village, and Rishi Kapoor, playing the grandson of a rich heiress and fishing magnate, at once get identified as the idealised Romeo-and-Juliet pair in the film. Kamala Hasan loves the girl but the girl is in her turn in love with his friend, Rishi. The trigonometric problem is inevitably solved by the bullet that comes in too late.

Trite? Yes, that's what the 'story' is. But who indeed cares when Sippy is just grabbing his audiences by the hand to transport them into a world of pure cinematic fantasy, a world filled with the tireless music of the surf running along the level sand of the beach, the glorious sunrises and the sunsets, the catamarans and the heady taste of *feni*. And the brilliant clowning of Kamala Hasan expresses a sexual surge that runs through out the film.

Rishi and Dimple: passion play

It is perhaps the most non-psychological film ever made on the commercial screen, an equivalent of the triangle between Kamala Hasan, Rishi and Dimple is almost Euclidian in its two-dimensional inflexibility. Equally unambiguous are the others on the cast: Madhur Jaffrey as the rich grandmother; Shafi Inamdar as the villain; Saeed Jaffrey as Dimple's father. But the weight of this fable-like film is carried neither by the flimy story nor by the dialogue. It is carried by the deep passionate images. These are the images of lust as well as innocence; of merriments in a country tavern which are as rumbustious as a village fair; of the featureless rocks on the sea-shore desolate against the sky—framed in a manner that is sure to evoke memories of David Lean's unsung classic, *Ryan's Daughter*.

The final magic of Sippy's film is felt when the images join up without a single shot appearing to be idle or expendable. Even in the scene, where Dimple is seen by Rishi taking her clothes off before a swim, the screen time is stretched with such brilliance that one forgets which to admire: the skill of camerawork and editing, or the lady's charm. Either way, it is Sippy's execution that commands the ultimate respect. No wonder that this scene was finally shot after 80 retakes.

"Perfectionist" is a word that is very often used in Bombay's film industry in the pejorative sense. In a profession where everyone works extra shifts to keep down cost and earn more money in a shorter time, Sippy's leisurely art is a sure butt of criticism—especially if it fails to earn enough money. It is also known that the priciest component in the Rs 3.2-crore extravaganza was—time. But a film like *Saagar* could not have been made on the assembly line. It was edited down to its 80-minute length from used raw stocks of 20 times that length. Nor was it easy to sell. Its impending nationwide release of 103 prints on August 9 has been possible only because Sippy's father, G.P. Sippy, also the producer of the film has undertaken to distribute it in most places. "It is too big a gamble, yes," says Sippy, tense.

Yet the gamble is worth it. For *Saagar*, shows how craftsmanship can be stuffed into a commercial format. In its reckless extravagance, and in its almost rebellious spirit to free cinema from the clutches of narrative, *Saagar* remains Sippy's one from the heart.

—SUMIT MITRA

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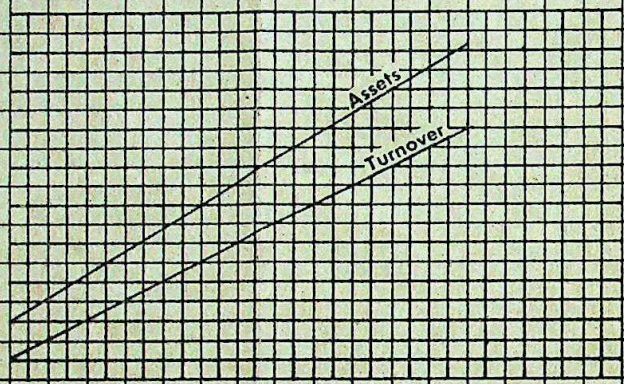

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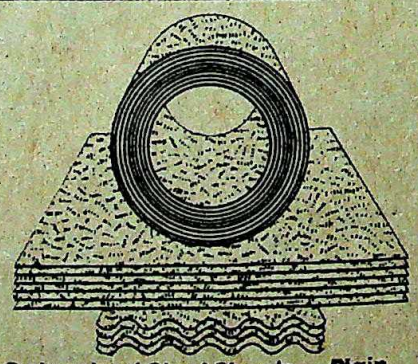

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conversion are: Ramesh Sippy, whose *Saagar* (*see review*) defines the pinnacle of craftsmanship on the commercial screen; and Yash Chopra, who, after years of living down the image of making action-packed and overly dramatic films, such as *Deewar*, *Trishul*, *Silsila* and *Mashaal*, is now making *Faasle*, a simple love story which he has striven to film stylishly.

Khanna says that the "social anger" of the movies of the mid-'70's is being constantly subjected to "the law of diminishing returns". He is obviously referring to the genre of films that became immensely popular after Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* (1973) and Chopra's *Deewar* (1975). *Deewar*, for instance, was a parable on the life of Haji Mastan, the reformed smuggler. *Zanjeer* was a take-off on the well-known Hollywood revenge tale, *Death Rides a Horse*. The apotheosis of the genre of revenge films came of course with *Sholay* (1975), a film inspired by the spaghetti westerns, which became a legend as time progressed, running in Bombay's Minerva theatre for five years at a stretch, at Jyoti in Calcutta for over two years and at Delhi's Plaza theatre for over a year.

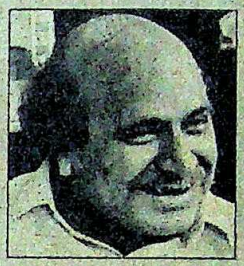
The formula worked up to a point, catapulting, in the process, into fame and money a matinee idol like Amitabh Bachchan and the writer-duo, Salim and Javed. It was Javed in particular who brought into the scripts the taut, earthy language of the poor districts in Indian cities and high doses of raw physical violence. However, with the passage of time, violence and anger tended to get passe, and the simplified confrontations between the rich and the poor lost their edge. It is difficult, in commercial cinema, to rationalise either a failure or a success. But scores of films bombed in the recent past because of their overt psychological twists, mindless violence and strident, if not false, sociological concerns. Even Javed Akhtar's proverbial innovativeness was reaching an intellectual plateau. *Duniya*, *Mashaal* and *Zamana*, his toughly-worded violence-prone scripts, were flops in a row.

"It suddenly became very expensive", says Sippy, "to mount violence and action on screen in a credible manner." He calculates that it may cost him Rs 10 crore now to make an action film of the same intensity of *Sholay*: it cost him Rs 3 crore at the time of its making. In the past 10 years, the price of raw stock has gone up by 60 per cent, star prices by 75 per cent, theatre rentals by 40 per cent, the price of print and publicity by 50 per cent and the cost of hiring technicians by another 50 per cent. But the number of exhibition theatres has increased only marginally—from 10,120 in 1975 to 12,634 now. The actual number of tickets sold has remained by and large stationary because of the proliferation of video parlours and extension of private video showing facilities. And the net yield to the industry from each ticket sold, after allowing for entertainment tax, has gone up by only 22.5 per cent. Explains Rai: "Even a success on the scale of *Sholay*, at today's cost of production, is not half as worth achieving as it would have been 10 years ago".

As producers began scaling down their production costs, violence and action became less and less sustainable on screen. Rhapsodises Khanna: "It signalled the return of a lot of good things, technical polish for instance." The first evidence of the wind of change was *Ek Duuje ke Liye*, an inexpensive but exquisitely mounted film which has grossed more than ten times its modest production cost of Rs 50 lakh since its release in 1981. *Ek Duuje ke Liye* was also the first commercial success of a film based on a simple, romantic theme since such subjects went out of fashion with Kapoor's *Sangam* in the mid-'60s. The success of Rawail's *Love Story* a year later further defined the trend. Even Javed was pulling new tricks out of his bag. Rawail's next film, *Betaab*, based on a Javed script, confirmed the final transition in popular taste. And now, *Saagar*, by far the most expensive love story ever on the Indian screen, will show the extent of popularity of the genre. "The success of Sippy's *Saagar* will definitely show us the way," says Rawail.

Javed, who has written the story and screenplay of *Saagar*, frequently talks of "genre films"; that is, films that show the outermost limits of popularity of a particular genre. According to him, both *Devdas* and *Main Chup Rahungi*, the two most popular tear-jerkers of the '50s, defined the maximum possible scale of success of the particular type of films. *Sholay* spelt out the limit to which the people could accept violence and gore in cinema. And now the industry will try and plumb the depths of *Saagar* to find out how much of money is exactly left in the sweepstake for well-made desi versions of Mills and Boon romances.

—SUMIT MITRA in Bombay.



"The story has taken a back seat. It is the treatment that matters now."

GULSHAN RAI

"What is distinctly out is the false sociological concern of films in the 70's."

AMIT KHANNA

"It suddenly became very expensive to mount violence and action on screen in a credible manner."

RAMESH SIPPY

"The success of *Saagar* will definitely show us the way."

RAHUL RAWAIL

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Every now and then something comes along and sh millio

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and sh millions that we all share an exciting future.

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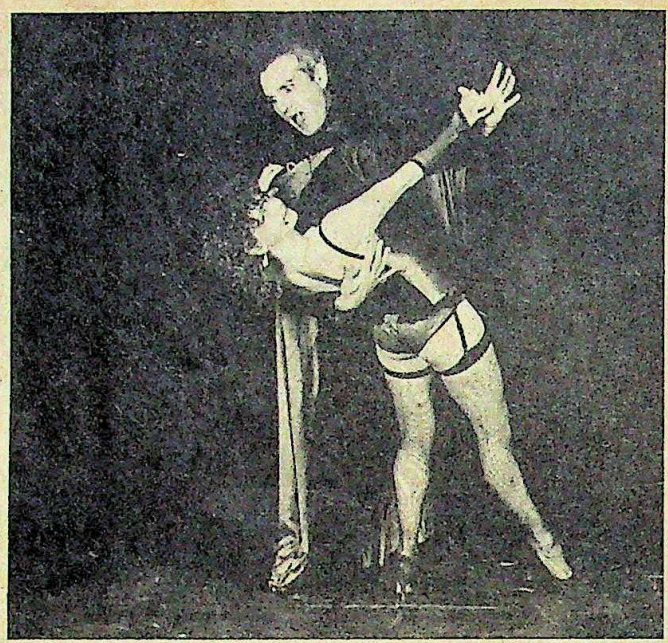
MADHU GADAKARI

Prabhakar: anniversary song



'Dracula': musical message

◆ What a circus, what a show. *Evita* has gone to town—and how. June 30 Alyque Padamsee's rock opera on the Argentinian first lady celebrated its 100th performance in India—under the new old name *Evita II*—leaving Bombay completely razzled and dazzled. Of course it was the same old wine but in a shiny new bottle. To celebrate her 100th coming of stage, born-again Evita decided to turn over a new feather. Out went the dull black tuxedos, the tacky evening gowns, the worn-out sets. On came the furs, the frills, the Ritz itself. "We're really going all out for glamour," said leading lady **Sharon Prabhakar**. But what was her big night really like? "Oh, for me, it's always the first night," came the unusually coy reply.

◆ Last month, she was sitting behind her desk at the Housing Development and Finance Corporation in Bangalore, going through ponderous legal volumes. Then she became Miss India—and, still, much hasn't changed for **Vanita Vasan**. "I don't want to act in films," she has been pleading to the film producers. "I want to do a course in sales and marketing. It changes a person's life-style." Well, her life-style changed a good deal anyway when she marched up the catwalk and stopped right beneath the *Eve's Weekly*-Miss India crown held in the hands of Meenakshi Sheshadri, herself a winner of the same title four years ago. Soft-spoken, 21-year-old Vanita measured a perfect 10, a perfect 10 inches apart, that is. With a figure that reads 35-25-35, Vanita can forget about boring financial statistics and concentrate on Tokyo where she will participate in the international beauty pageant next month.

◆ That was the beauty. Now for the beast. Launching a nation-wide attack, end of July, is **Count Dracula** himself, the original terrorist. The count obviously wants something fresh to sink his buck teeth into. To get his first taste of India (and Indian flesh), the king of vampires will arrive with his entourage of lesser demons in a show called *Dracula Spectaculla*, performed by the Essex Repertory Theatre Company. But, horror of horrors, the dirty old devil has been put into a n fangled musical and b made, indeed, almost man.. "Rhesus nega rock," sings the Blood C in the show which ha generous helping of blo flesh and jeers. "It's not e ly a full-scale rock conc said Director Gordon Sc mell, "it is more of an e ing out for the family," that is okay, but will I bite back?

◆ The *Mr Ya Mrs* of Kh dan, the *Paying Guest* of H Log, the *Idhar Udhar* of A Pados—and now a fresh n TV serial is being baked s where between Bombay Calcutta. It is a bit of ho mystery, sci-fi—and gu whodunit? **Satyajit Ray** a son **Sandip Ray** themselv What's more, Ray senior h scripted most of the episod and composed the music t While shooting is schedule begin in August, some names have already be signed from the art world little films—Om Pu Victor Banerjee to star "The episodes will surprises," Sandip Ray s "and the moods will r from the gruesome to the mantic." However, even a ster's little masterpieces a ing to be a different experi altogether when squee between advertisements toothpowder-toothpaste.

—Compiled by SIMRAN BHA

Vasan: crowning glory

The Rays: small screen

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by SIMRAN BHA

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INDIA TO DAY
AUG 4
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय,
हरिद्वार
वर्ग.....आगत संख्या.....
पुस्तक-वितरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है। इस तिथि सहित २० वें दिन तक यह पुस्तकालय में वापिस आ जानी चाहिए। अन्यथा १० पैसे के हिसाब से विलम्ब-दण्ड लगेगा।
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Tribal Trail

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's tour of tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa resulted in a sudden rush by officials to give the areas a face-lift and much-neglected relief. But the tribals are sceptical of any dramatic changes in their lives.

SPECIAL FEATURE.....66

ustice Prafulla-
s chief justice of
ned, not just for
der, but for the
ted to usher into
.....92

Flooring the Show

Cabaret-bars featuring skimpily-clad dancers have flourished for long in Kerala. But growing protests from feminist leaders forced the state Government to shut down the bars recently, leading to further protests from the owners and, more vocally, from the dancers.

LIVING.....142

'black box' of
anishka, investi-
h conclusively
used the crash.
ay anything till
ble.
.....84

ENT.....11
NOTES.....13
S.....14
STORY
Breakthrough.....16
T EVENTS
ramping the Pantheon.....33
mation Trial:
room Dramatics.....36
Pradesh: The Householders.....38
Nadu: Curious Case.....39
Nadu: Board Ban.....45
an: Murder Charge.....47
r: The Siege Within.....52
Pradesh: Troubled Waters.....53
: Ineffective Accord.....56
Cop and Robbers.....60
& Kashmir:
e Tense.....61
shtra: The Identity Crisis.....63
Estranged Partners.....64
L FEATURE
ndhi: Tribal Trail.....66

GLOBE-TROTTING
Shahnawaz Bhutto:
Death on the Riviera.....74
MEDIA
Doordarshan: Child's Play.....81
AVIATION
Air-India: Ominous Evidence.....84
PROFILE
P.N. Bhagwati:
Age of Activism.....92
TRADE WINDS.....101
BUSINESS
Shaw Wallace:
Company Cocktail.....102
STC: Rice and Fall.....105
Elxsi: Taking on the Titans.....108
Peerless: Power Tussle.....112
Union Carbide: Job Problems.....117
Gujarat: Ruling on Aid.....119
NALCO: In the Red.....123
Exchange Racket:
The Money Changers.....124
The Economy Monitor.....129
The Markets: Fresh Gains.....131
SPECIAL REPORT
Maini Shipping Company:
Voyage into Oblivion.....134
LIVING
Cabarets: Flooring the Show.....142
INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT
L.K. Jha: Pushing for Reform.....145
CINEMA
Mahua Roychowdhury:
Mysterious Death.....149
EYE-CATCHERS.....156

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"Geometric designs have always been there. Right now they are on top."

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"The geometry factor in art, introduced by early Egyptian architects and artisans, has had a lasting impact on aesthetic concepts of today.

In fashion, the elements of geometry come as a liberating relief from the dominance of floral items. The geometric line becomes the fashionable stripe, the point and circle, a dot, the square, a block. Add to these the cube, zig-zag, diamond and arc and we have a panoply of shapes, simple permanent. Since these shapes are fundamental, they allow ground colours to have full play. "Geometric" is the new story line for Garden-Vareli fabrics — trendy, futuristic...in keeping with image of the modern woman as a liberated one."

Praful A. Shah, Managing Director, Garden Silk Mills Pvt. Ltd.; Chairman, Vareli Group.

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A gift for someone you love

Amul COFFEE CHOCOLATE

Amul CRISP

Amul MILK CHOCOLATE

Amul ORANGE CHOCOLATE

Amul BITTER CHOCOLATE

Amul FRUIT & NUT

Soft and creamy, like Swiss chocolates ...

its creaminess sealed in silver foil ...

and foil-board carton to keep it fresh.

Amul Chocolates

Amul Milk Chocolate, Amul Crisp, Amul Fruit & Nut, Amul Bitter, Amul Orange, Amul Coffee

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE
VOLUME X NUMBER 15
FOR THE FORTNIGHT AUGUST 1-15, 1985

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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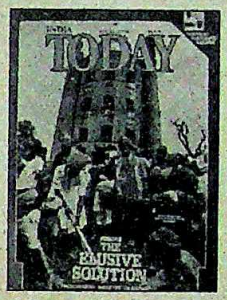
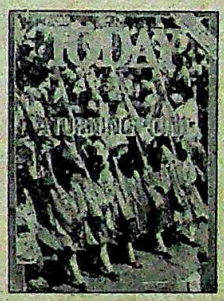
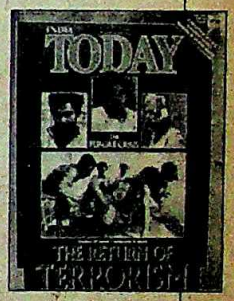
NEWS, like the rains, seems to come in cycles. Sometimes it happens that newsmagazines like INDIA TODAY *haven't hands enough to cope with what is going on, like at election time. At others, they're like drought-stricken farmers anxiously scanning the skies for signs of hope. So it was last fortnight when staffers at the fortnightly news meeting, at which major stories are planned and discussed, found themselves in a news drought. But when the news came, it came in a deluge. The announcement of the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal pact on Punjab on July 24—just two days before deadline—compelled us to pull out all stops. This is the 11th time Punjab will be on the cover since the magazine's first cover on Punjab in March 1979 and it has been the magazine's most frequent cover subject next to Mrs Gandhi. Quite naturally, in the course of reporting it, several of our writers have gained an intimate knowledge of the subject and the dramatis personae. So, even though time was short it was possible to divert our Punjab veterans on to the story all at once and cover its various aspects.*







Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA *and Chief Photographer* BHAWAN SINGH, *having tracked Longowal in Delhi departed for Chandigarh and Anandpur Sahib where the Akali Dal met to discuss the accord. Principal Correspondent* SUNIL SETHI *and Photographer* PRAMOD PUSHKARNA *made for Amritsar while Chandigarh Correspondent* GOBIND THUKRAL, *who was following the story from his vantage point, sampled opinion in the city whose fate had just been decided and travelled into Haryana to gauge the mood there. To assess how the accord was received,* INDIA TODAY *also commissioned* MARG *(Marketing and Research Group) to conduct a snap opinion poll in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. And having tracked Punjab through its worst moments, putting the story together was a particularly gratifying experience. Says Gupta, who has written this issue's cover story and done seven previous ones on Punjab: "Covering Punjab through this period of turmoil has been like becoming part of the depressing story. But this time there was a refreshing change in mood. There is no euphoria but there is hope."*

Punjab has been a festering open wound on the body politic of the nation. And its skillful suturing by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has removed the gloomy question mark which has loomed over the country's future for the last four years. Hopefully the accord will bring normalcy to Punjab—because if it does not, the consequences are too calamitous to contemplate. The Government has reached a point of no return. It has dealt all its cards and now it is up to the Akalis to bring Punjab back into the mainstream. Besides the relief over the Punjab agreement there is almost universal contempt and disgust for the antics of those politicians who fiddled while the state burnt, for the years of grief suffered due to the delayed settlement. And there is fear that the present accord may well be sabotaged by self-serving power-hungry politicians. Although the Punjab crisis has revealed this ugly side of Indian democracy, it has also shown that where there is a political will, settlements can be made on the negotiating table and not the streets. It is a time for healing, a time to affirm a renewed faith in democracy.

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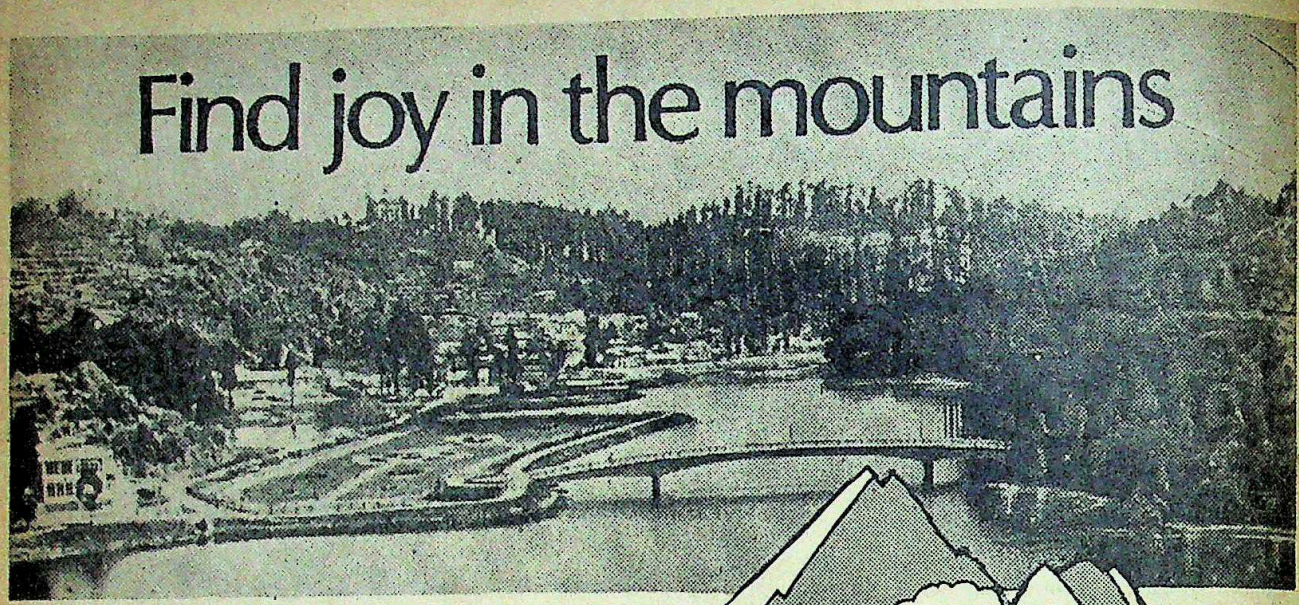
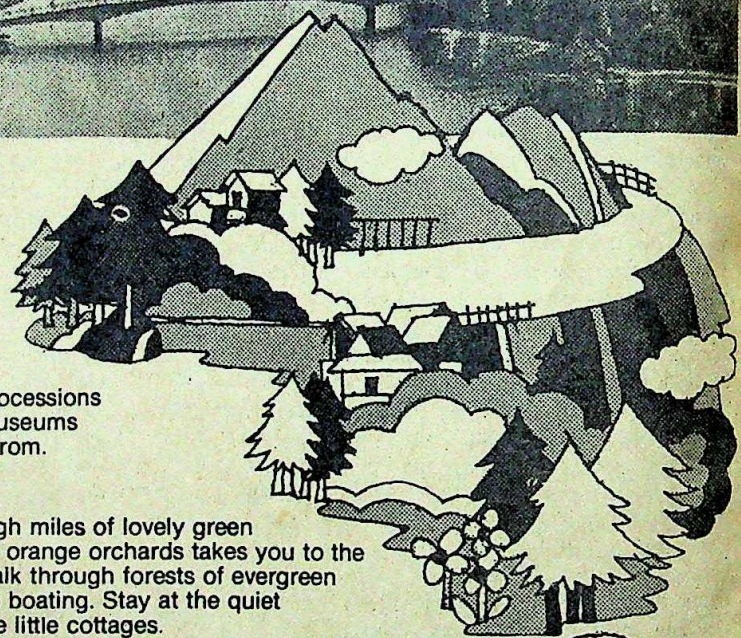
Find joy in the mountains



High and beautiful **Darjeeling**

It's a range of beauty spots, a package of experiences. Darjeeling town—the warm and friendly 'Queen' of hill stations. Exquisite natural splendour—Mt Everest and the Kanchenjungha range, rolling tea gardens, valleys full of flowers and evergreens. The colourful town with its gay processions and dances during festivals, shops and bazaars, museums and zoos A number of Tourist Lodges to choose from.



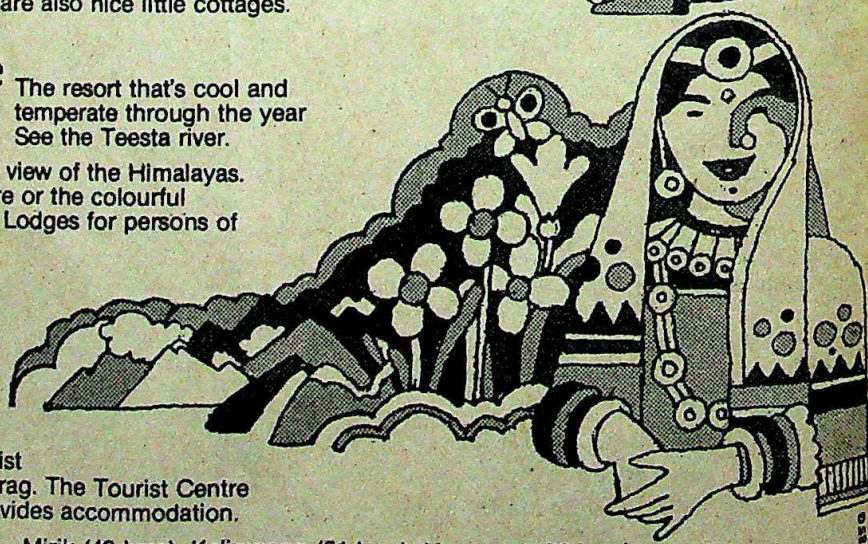
Calm and lovely **Mirik**

A journey through miles of lovely green tea gardens and orange orchards takes you to the lake at Mirik. Walk through forests of evergreen cryptomeria. Go boating. Stay at the quiet Tourist Hostel For luxury living, there are also nice little cottages.

Cool and attractive **Kalimpong**

The resort that's cool and temperate through the year See the Teesta river.

Climb upto Durbindara point for a rare view of the Himalayas. Browse in the local Arts & Crafts Centre or the colourful bi-weekly Bazaar. A number of Tourist Lodges for persons of different tastes and budgets.



Secluded **Kurseong**

A cozy and convenient stop-over spot on your way to or from Darjeeling. A beauty spot by itself. See the Buddhist Monastery, Dow Hill and the Eagle's Crag. The Tourist Centre with a beautiful bar-restaurant also provides accommodation.

All these places are close to Darjeeling—Mirik (49 kms), Kalimpong (51 kms), Kurseong (36 kms).

For further information & reservation, please contact:

Tourist Bureau and Reservation Counter, Tourism Development Corporation

3/2, Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh (East), Calcutta-700001 Phone: 23-8271, Gram: TRAVELTIPS
Nehru Road, Darjeeling: Hill Cart Road, Siliguri. West Bengal Information Bureau, A/2, State Emporia, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi-110 001 Phone: 34 3775; Karim Mansion, 787, Anna Salai, Madras-600002, Phone: 85206.

Government of West Bengal

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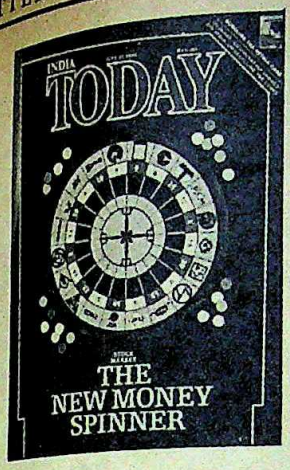

STOCK MARKET REFORMS

Thanks for the excellent cover story on stock-markets ("The New Money Spinner", July 31). With the increasing number of investors and the falling value of the rupee each year,it is very essential that we have some standardisation for the benefit of not only the investors but the industries too. First, the financial year for all the companies should be the same as the national financial year, that is April to March. The value of each equity share should be the same in all cases and there should be marketable lots of 50 each, uniform in all cases. All preference shares should be gradually redeemed and no more preference shares issued. Shareholders should be allowed to exercise the option of accumulating their dividends with the company so that whenever the rights shares are issued these can be adjusted against them.

Pune — R.N. BHIDE

■ I was surprised by your cover story. While nationally the so-called investors (more approximately, roulette players as subconsciously admitted by your cover) have gained by some Rs 15,000 crore so far this year, the rise in prices of most stocks is quite unrelated to respective increases in plant, machinery or technology. If unrestrained speculation is not curbed and controlled, it will affect not only the investors but the country's industrial production itself.

New Delhi — R.S. PHADNI

■ No doubt black money is one of the factors responsible for the stock-market boom. As Arvind C. Dalal put it, though it is an evil, if it comes into shares it is put to productive use and supports the corporate sector. It is wise to allow black money into the stock-market.

Madras — R. SRIKANTA

PATHETIC PLIGHT

It was appalling to learn that children are being sold by their mothers in Kalahandi due to acute poverty and drought ("The Agony of Kalahandi", July 31). The Orissa Government has done precious little to provide succour to these tribals and on the contrary, brazenly denies all that is taking place in this dry belt. What is most distressing is that while we munificently collect aid for the drought-hit of Ethiopia, the plight of our own people fails to stir our pachydermal conscience.

Calcutta — ARVINDER SINGH WALIA

WHAT'S IN A NAME

It is quite disturbing to know that the products sold under the Philips label have nothing to do with the much-touted "Dutch touch" ("Name Game", July 31). The singlemost important reason why people prefer Philips India products is that they take for granted that their quality is matched to those manufactured by the Dutch parent company. This kind of taking the consumers for a ride will definitely result in the erosion of credibility. Under these circumstances, what better reason is needed for people to go in for imported electronic stuff which is contemporarily designed, is way ahead in quality and a lot cheaper.

Ottapalam, Kerala — N. SUKUMAR

TRYING VIEWING

You only draw it mild when you say "the content of official domestic news programmes is laughable when it doesn't have to be" ("The Media Message", July 31). The fact is that it is highly redundant, trying and full of synthetic peptalk that cannot take us far.

Ranchi — NAVIN SINGH

■ Your comment on the media was one-sided. While commenting on media autonomy, we should not compare ourselves with western countries. Their socio-economic structure is altogether different from what we have in India. We have problems like casteism, communalism and regionalism. We are far behind in national unity and integration too. In such a society, complete autonomy for radio and TV is something unrealistic. It may even cause danger to our democracy. We still have to wait for long years to come.

Vasai, Maharashtra — VIJAY B. BHANDARI

TIMELY WARNING

The report "Water Supply: Drying Up" (July 15), is a timely warning against unscientific and unplanned exploitation of ground water everywhere in the country. Already a nation-wide estimate has painted a grim picture for the future. None of the states has so far adopted the 'model Bill' formulated by the Union Agriculture Ministry years ago for the scientific exploitation of ground water. I do hope that the present Government would see to it that this bill is adopted throughout the country as soon as possible.

Lucknow — M.A. QURAISHI

MISNOMER

Thanks for the eye-opening article on narcotics ("The Growing Threat", July 15). Unfortunately, the story gave the wrong name of the doctor who runs a de-addiction centre in west Delhi. He is Dr Harish Bhalla, not Hareesh Bhatia.

New Delhi — MAHENDRA SINGH & OTHERS

SAFFRON CAESAR

"Justice delayed is justice denied" is the moral that emerges from the Secunderabad conspiracy case ("A Protracted Process", July 15). It also drives home three points. One, that the British unleashed terror and confined it to their political opponents. Second, that the post-Independence rulers have been amending this strategy and using it to institutionalise terror. And third, that NTR has been scuttling all liberties with his despotic ways. Only, repression in the regime of the "saffron Caesar" is not confined to any particular group. Whoever voices dissent is immediately branded and victimised.

Vijayawada — B. JAGANNADHA RAO

PAID FOR

This refers to your report "Share Mystery" (July 15). You say that I had not paid for shares that Mr Harish Bhasin had bought on my behalf and that Bhasin was left holding the baby. This is for the first time that I have heard that some shares were purchased for me but not paid for. As far as I know I have paid for every share purchased on my behalf. Mr Bhasin has never told me that there were any shares purchased on my behalf on which payments are due.

London — SWRAJ PAUL

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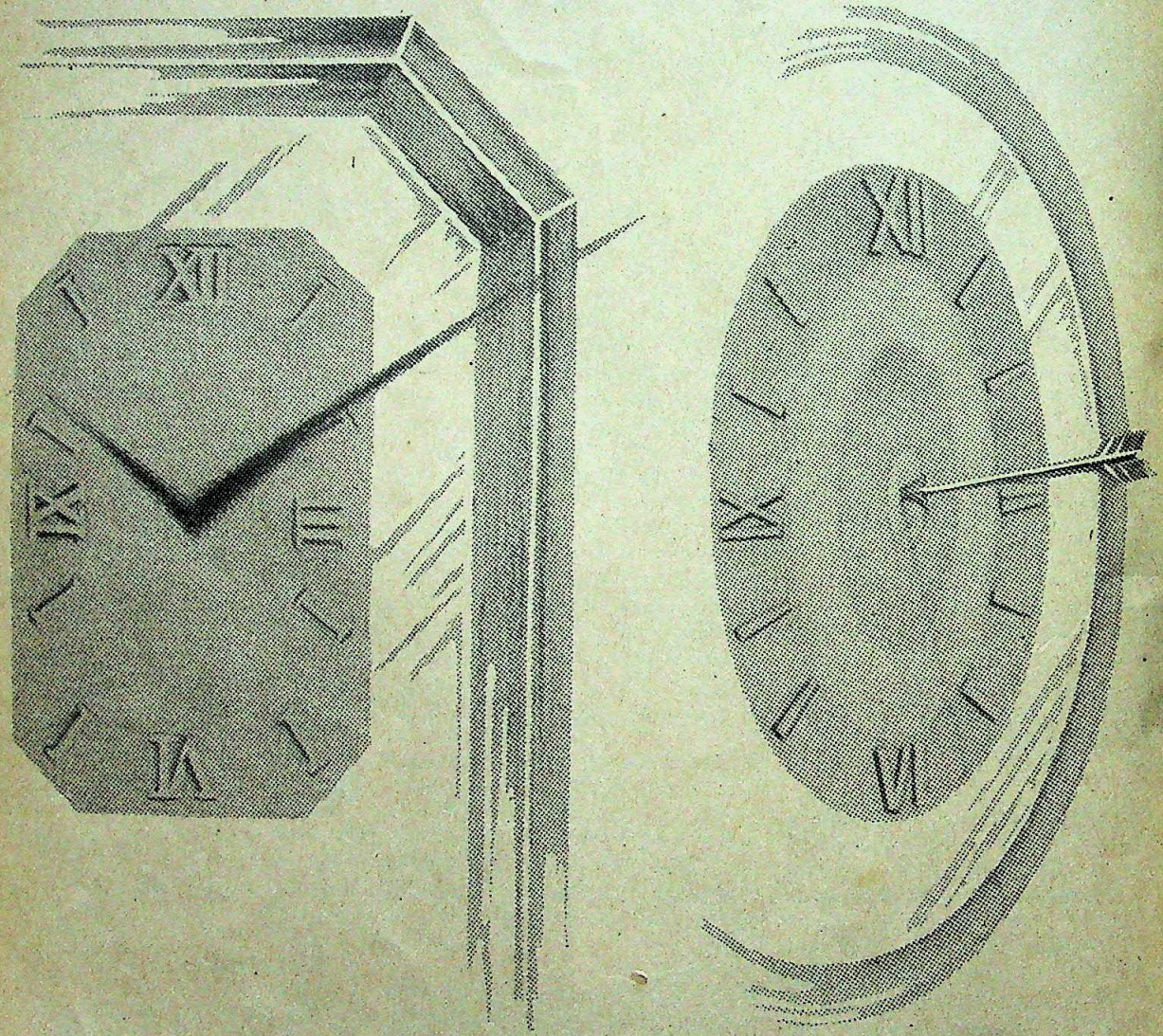
Right on Time

Right on Target



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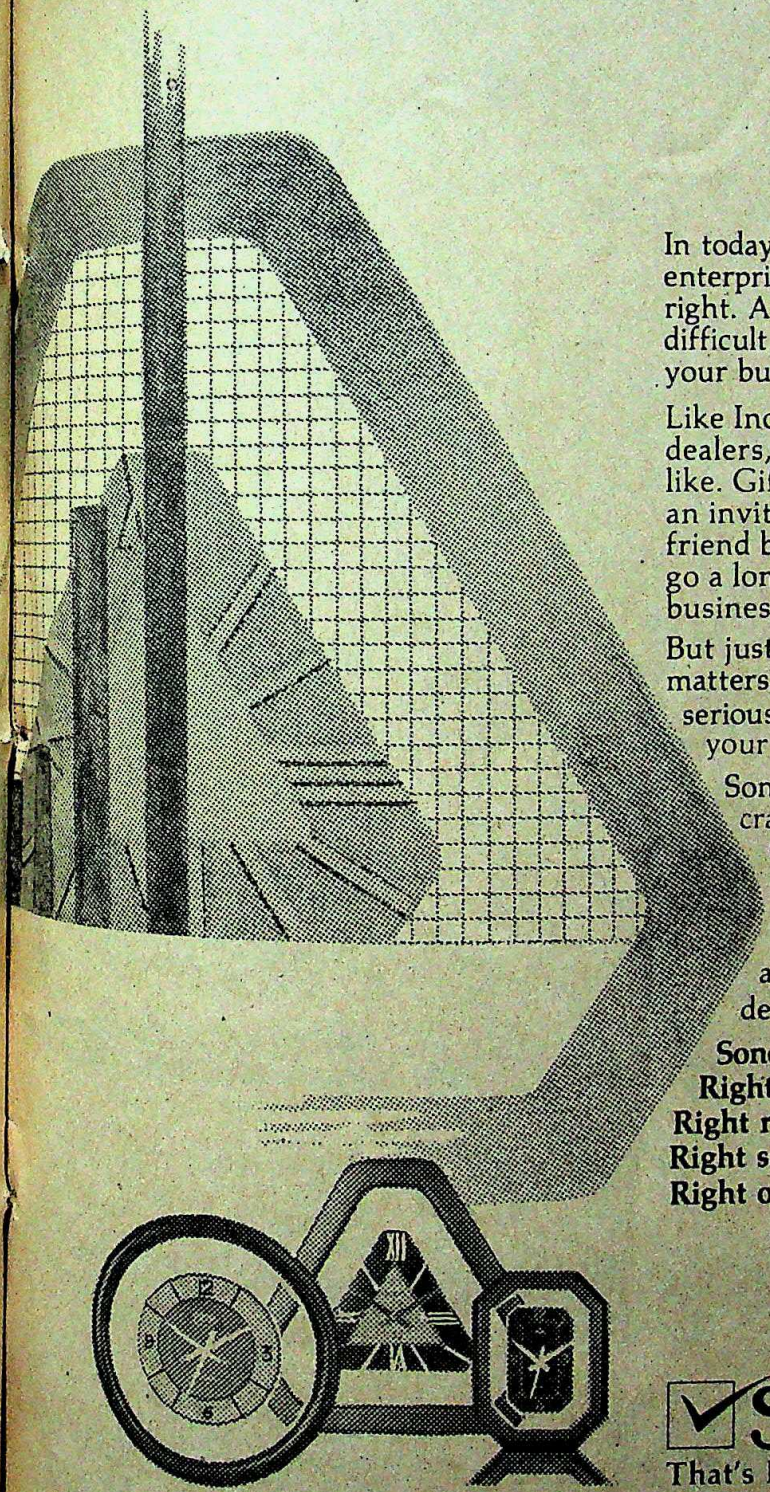
Right on Top

Any way you look at it it's Right for you.



In today's business world it takes a lot of enterprise to make sure everything goes right. And that means taking a lot of difficult decisions. Decisions which will affect your business for a long time.

Like Incentives & Gifts. Gifts for staff, dealers, representatives, agents and the like. Gifts for season's compliments; for an invitee, a distinguished visitor or for a friend because you know these gestures go a long way in promoting your business.

But just any incentive or gift is not all that matters. What you choose shows how serious you are and also speaks a lot of your company.

Sonell Quartz Clocks. Expertly wood crafted. Made from the finest quality seasoned wood. Elegantly finished. Fitted with a quartz movement made under licence from Haller, W Germany. Available in a choicest variety of shapes and designs at Special prices.

Sonell is the
Right choice to achieve the
Right results on the
Right side of your balance sheet
Right on time

Sonell Quartz Clocks
That's Right

Parichay/SMC/133

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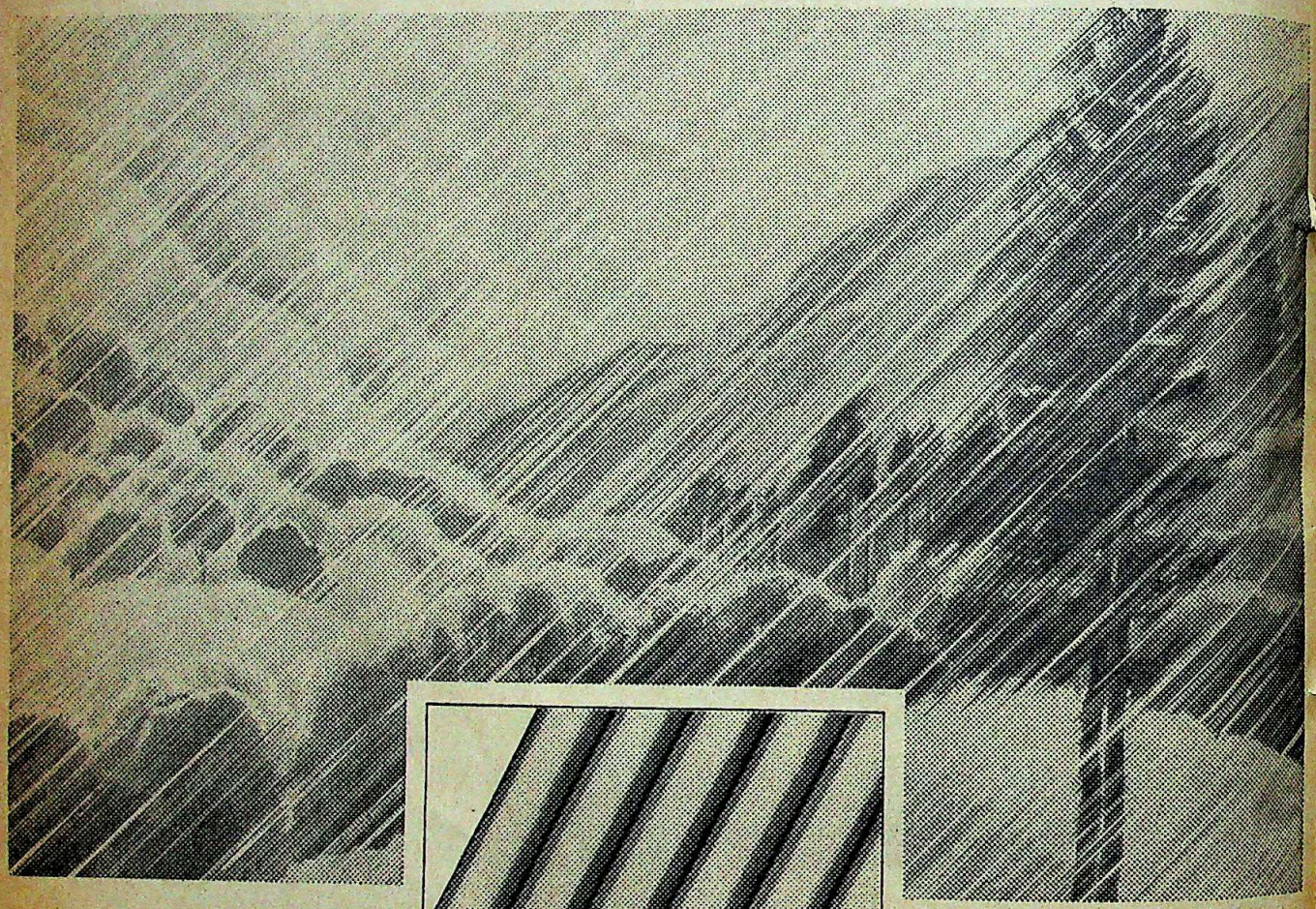
At the height of the monsoon in Cherrapunjee which roofing sheet would never soak up the rain?

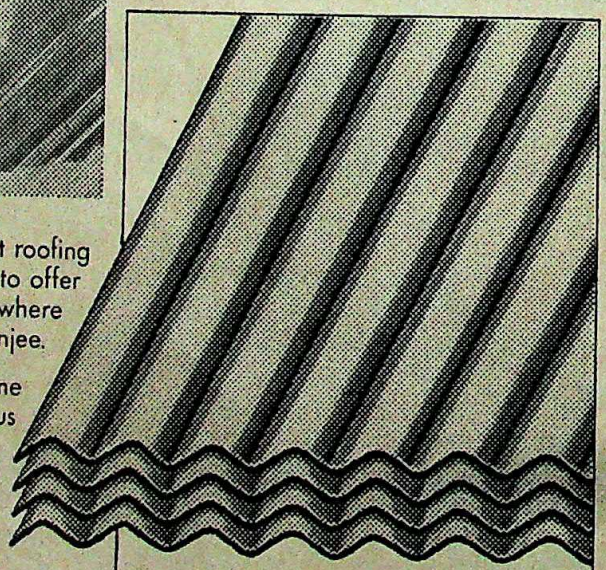


Ramco asbestos cement roofing sheets are known to offer complete protection anywhere – even in wet Cherrapunjee.

Ramco roofs have a life-time of strength built in. Fastidious raw material selection is followed by sophisticated production technology and systematic quality control.

That's why Ramco stands the test of time. Whatever the weather

No wonder, Ramco is the top roof today – the choice of all top-ranking architects, engineers and contractors.



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Because it's designed, made and tested to ensure there's no seepage, no leakage even in the wettest conditions.

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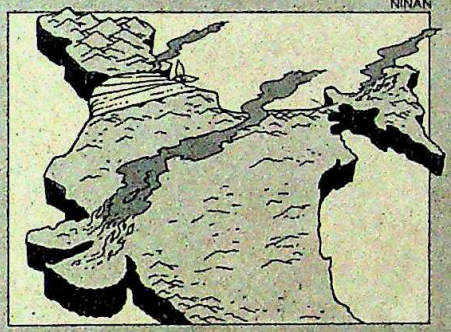
The Punjab Lessons

PRIME Minister Rajiv Gandhi has reason to be satisfied. In signing the Punjab accord he has kept his promise to the Indian electorate, that Punjab was his number one priority and that he would move to solve it as soon as possible. That he should have been able to reach an agreement within five months of setting the ball rolling in March is a magnificent feather in his cap. The future cannot, of course, be taken for granted. There is still anger in Punjab and there are still misguided people, probably in large enough numbers, who do not see the accord as a positive step. There are people who will remain dissatisfied, who will work against it. But given time and deft handling—and some luck—there is no reason why peace should not return, why Punjab should not once again become the beacon of progress it was and its people regain the exuberance they have for so long been proud of.



Yet even as the country savours the moment, it must also remember that there are other problems seemingly as intractable, such as Assam and Gujarat, that the future may well bring new eruptions of disaffection, that new problems will rear themselves in the years ahead. It is vitally necessary that the Punjab experience be re-examined for the lessons it teaches us because some of the mistakes of the past four years are being repeated in a different context and on a different scale in Gujarat.

The first lesson has to do with the too-little-too-late syndrome. The Punjab agreement contains very little that sets it apart from earlier negotiations. By all accounts, each of the points that has been agreed upon could have been achieved during the abortive and sometimes secret discussions in 1982 and 1984. From the standpoint of July 1985, with the accord an accomplished fact, this might seem like quibbling but much the same thing happened in Assam. The differences between what the student agitators wanted and what the Government was willing to yield is today no narrower than during the prolonged discussions that stretched over so many months, and it took bandh after bandh, strike after strike to bring home the seriousness of the problem and get the Government to act. Now, much the same has been happening in Gujarat. Former chief minister Madhavsinh Solanki was allowed to continue in office long after he had lost the moral right to do so. The promised reservations were given up some four months after the agitation started when good sense had long suggested this should be done much earlier. And, nothing was done to rein in the police till the appointment of J.F. Ribeiro last month.

The second lesson is that as long as politicians seek to exploit such problems for their own gains, there can be no solutions. This happened with the Akalis. It happened in Assam where the Government's primary objective was to achieve power and deny the students any public gain. In Gujarat, the reservations agitation has, thanks to political meddling, acquired the additional dimension of communal rioting. The agitation started because of Solanki's exaggerrated promises to the backward castes before the election which sparked off that particular prairie fire.

A third lesson is that a government that lacks credibility lacks ability. The story of Punjab is, in one sense, the story of the decline of New Delhi's credibility—whether it was because of suspected links between some Congressmen and Bhindranwale and other extremists, or the farce over Bhindranwale's arrest or even the political manoeuvres that won the ruling party the government in Haryana at the cost of peace in Punjab. In Assam too, the problem was widely seen as the creation of the Congress(I) politicians who turned a blind eye to and even encouraged illegal migration and then enrolled them in the voter lists so that they could win power. In Gujarat, suspicion of the state Government's bonafides is the unkindest legacy that Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary has inherited from Solanki whose ability to cope with the agitation and killings decreased in proportion with his declining credibility.

A fourth lesson is that a government that appears to be weak and indecisive can make no great headway in tackling political and social problems. From a position of some strength in 1981 Mrs Gandhi's political fortunes plummetted. The shakier and more paralysed her government seemed in its handling of Punjab, the bolder became the extremists. Rajiv Gandhi, who has the unprecedented backing of some 400 MP's in the Lok Sabha, was able to seize the initiative and make whatever concessions he needed to precisely because he spoke from a position of strength. In Assam, too, the agitation continued for several years and it was no act of governance that took the wind out of its sails; the catharsis came after the massacre of Nellie. What has happened in Gujarat cannot pass for decisive government either.

Finally, it is abundantly clear that all these problems are in essence political problems. People, in general, do not want violence. What they want is justice. Punjab persisted because, for too long, it was treated as a law and order issue. Assam has yet to be tackled politically. And in Gujarat the political initiatives are long overdue. The Punjab accord has signalled that given determination, a spirit of compromise and genuine goodwill it is possible to achieve the seemingly impossible. It has encouraged hopes for a similar settlement in Assam where there seems to be new confidence in the Centre's willingness and ability to make honourable agreement. It should, similarly, send the right signals in Gujarat and there is no reason why the same level-headedness should not come to prevail. And if the right lessons are learnt from the bitterness of the recent past, it might just happen that India, a country known sadly for its social conflicts and sectarian violence, would now come to be regarded as a nation which has learned to live in harmony with itself.

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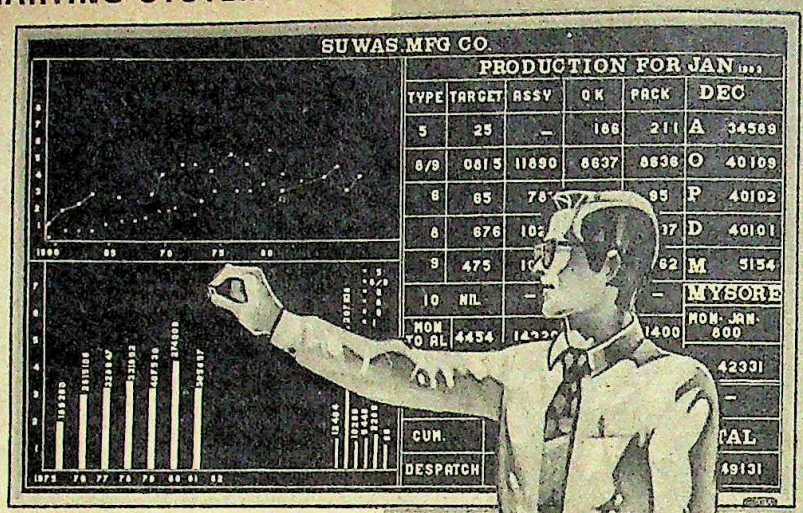

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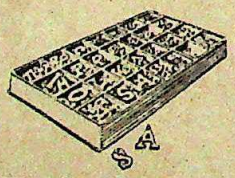

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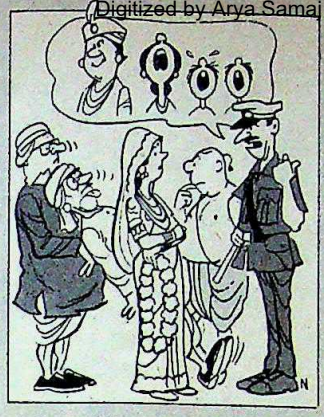
HAPPY ENDING

■ "All's well that ends well." It was the bard of Avon who uttered that seemingly fatalistic platitude a long time ago, but like most of the things he uttered, there is a heartening ring of truth to it. Rajeevi of Mangalore would be perhaps the first one to testify to the sanity of the poet.

She was to marry Ishwara Poojary last fortnight and all was set for the wedding at a temple in Mangalore when the slips between the cup and the lip began to manifest themselves. First and foremost, there was no sign of Ishwara and although the Hindu religion provides for a lot of things, it cannot sanction a marriage when the bridegroom is not around. What was present, however, was a sub-inspector of police called Santappa who declaimed to the excited gathering—Rajeevi's father had prudently decided to faint—that Ishwara was already married, was the father of two bonny children and that his first wife had lodged a complaint. Upon which Rajeevi burst into tears. "Never fear," said the lordly youth Taranath, 30, of good family, who stepped in and offered to redeem the situation by marrying the sobbing bride-in-waiting. Santappa gave her away.



PRIVILEGE LEAVE

■ The enduring pastime of Indians appears to be to stay away from their jobs as long as they can. The leader of these magnificent men with their unsigned musters is likely to be Nanubhai Umrabhai of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC). Umrabhai is a 'bedlar'—whatever that means—at a corporation swimming pool and he left the pool, apparently never to return, on April 20, 1978. He reported back for work on June 30, 1980, after a prolonged absence of 858 days.

During that time, he had reportedly gone abroad to some more paying job—the SMC is not the most munificent employer in the world—and had made, if not a fortune, enough money in the bank. Then for some odd reason the pull of the water became too strong for him and he once again breathed the heavy chlorine-laden air of the pool.

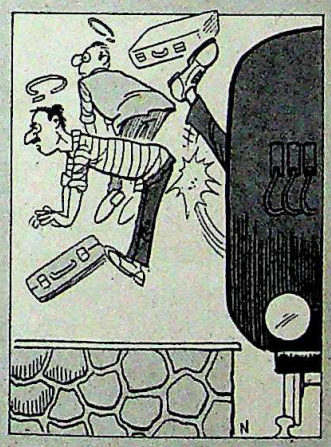
The SMC board obviously liked the man's sense of loyalty. They debated for a short while and then sanctioned him 177 days leave with pay and 681 days leave without pay. Nanubhai, incidentally, has already drawn his salary for the 858 days.

TABLES TURNED

■ If anyone was to dispute the fact that India is adding an Australia to its population every year, all he or she has to do is to travel by train with the sweaty, *hoi polloi* in the second class.

Last month, nearly 150 people were doing so in a compartment supposed to carry half that number on the Bombay-Goa route. There was no conductor. Two indignant-looking men and their families were standing squashed up in a corner near the toilet because the people who had captured their berths refused to give up their hard-won resting places. Ultimately at Pune, the two men decided to do something about this injustice and called in the police. The inspector posted a guard at the door and went through the compartment with a fine lathi. He ordered that only those with confirmed berth reservations were to be let back inside.

Halfway down the queue, he was confronted by the two civic guardians who explained sheepishly that they had lost their tickets in the melee. The inspector refused to even consider the idea—the two families had to book fresh tickets to wherever they were going, and by the next train. It doesn't pay to be virtuous all the time.

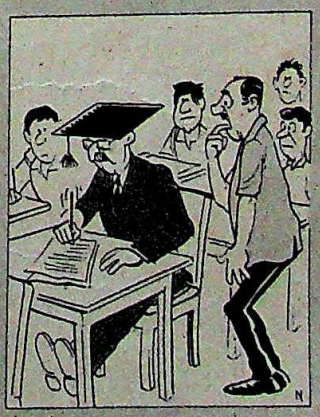


EXAM FEVER

■ It was a quiet afternoon at the examination hall, the silence punctuated only by the scratching of several leaky pens dashing off illegible replies to obscure questions in the hope of getting the diploma in higher education offered by Bombay University. Suddenly the invigilator paused in his tigerish round. Was that...? No, it couldn't be....But of course it was....And he leapt with joy....

On seeing Professor Hemant Wagh, dean of the Faculty of Arts and director of correspondence courses, sitting diligently at a table, his roll number card clutched in a hot little hand and his pen flashing furiously over the paper as he gave liberally of great erudition.

The university was agog with excitement. Not because Wagh has no right to garner another degree or diploma if he wants to but because the examination is conducted by his own department. And because he is the member of a committee which recommends the appointments of examiners for university examinations. To call that a ticklish situation would be understating the issue.



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The Times of India

- *I didn't say it (the Emergency) should be misused, that it should be abused, but if everything else fails then it is the ultimate tool you have.*
  ■ RAJIV GANDHI in *Blitz*

- *We would like to hear from the prime minister that emergency has been put beyond the pale of options whatever the provocation.*
  ■ Editorial in *The Telegraph*

- *What is wrong if fundamental rights are suspended? Who has conferred them? If they are conferred by the Constitution they are subject to other provisions of the Constitution.*
  ■ RAMRAO ADIK in *Imprint*

- *Let me ask you one question. Could the Congress do in 35 years what I have done in two years?*
  ■ N.T. RAMARAO in *Sunday*

- *Criticism does not bother me. In fact I welcome it. People have every right to criticise a judgement.....there should be no personal criticism of the judge. You should not attribute motives to a judge.*
  ■ P.N. BHAGWATI, Chief Justice of India in *Indian Express*

- *His (Rajiv Gandhi's) handling of foreign policy has been superb....not many leaders in the world today can go to Moscow one month and Washington the next.*
  ■ NATWAR SINGH in *Imprint*

- *Delhi 2001 is destined to have innumerable slums. They can only be improved not removed....Delhi can no longer be a sprawling green island of the affluent.*
  ■ PREMKUMAR, chairman, DDA, in *The Times of India*

- *When you neglect one form of life you neglect all forms of life. A killer is a killer whether he destroys a rare species of bird or he kills a person in cold blood.*
  ■ SALIM ALI in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

- *I feel my sarod should sing, breathe, whisper, shout, scream...I want it to have the dimensions of the human voice.*
  ■ AMJAD ALI KHAN in *Indian Express*

- *Why are people scared of me? Surely, I'm no tyrant. I cannot afford to be nasty or arrogant.* ■ LATA MANGESHKAR in *The Times of India Sunday Review*

- *I have great regard for Rajiv Gandhi. He wants to take the country into the 21st century...even if he can steer us into the 17th century he would have achieved a lot because now we are only in the 16th century.*
  ■ SHATRUGHAN SINHA in *Filmfare*

- *Had I married earlier I would have been a one-woman man. But I wouldn't condemn a man who bed-hopped.*
  ■ GIRISH KARNAD in *Savvy*

- *Only the retarded and utterly mediocre people can believe in God.*
  ■ RAJNEESH *quoted in Patriot*

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PUNJAB

BREAKTHROUGH

FOR FOUR traumatic years, it had held an entire country to ransom, growing into the biggest and bloodiest crisis in independent India's history. It succeeded in alienating a community, raised the ugly spectre of terrorism and secessionism, and caused the cold-blooded killing of thousands, including the former prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi. Now, in the hands of her untried son, however ironic the reversal of roles, the Punjab crisis finally achieved the breakthrough that only days ago had seemed unattainable.

Akali leaders at Anandpur Sahib meet: discordant notes

BHAWAN SINGH

Till the other day the emotional and communal divide in Punjab had seemed unbridgeable, but all of a sudden now peace had a chance. At the culmination of a week's work at frenetic pace, the prime minister and his key aides,

Count Down

IN NINE months the human organism reproduces itself. It is fitting that the birth of hope in Punjab should have taken almost exactly that long after the last cataclysmic violence assaulted its psyche in the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi and the killings that followed it. For the tragedy that has stalked that once joyful land has been nothing more nor less than a human tragedy, a gory tale of mass suffering and pain because of the clash between the warped ambitions of a clutch of misguided men and a wooden, self-serving government. Had anyone suggested before it all happened that such characters would stride the national stage and such events unfold, he would have been labelled a Cassandra. But the events did unfold and the characters did step into the limelight.

Take Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. His message of hate rang loud but those in authority who should have silenced it chose, for their own narrow purposes, to turn a deaf ear to it. The result was predictable: Hindus and Sikhs, brothers for centuries, fell out. Bhindranwale and his men had a field day, picking on easy targets. Sikhs who stood up to them were slain, Hindus were killed at random. They wanted to sow hatred, to break the bonds of centuries.

Operation Bluestar, a military manoeuvre with hardly a precedent, was a

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Bhindranwale (below) and (right) the shattered Akal Takht where he met his end during Operation Bluestar

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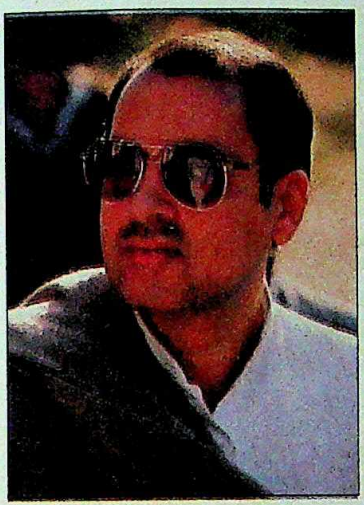
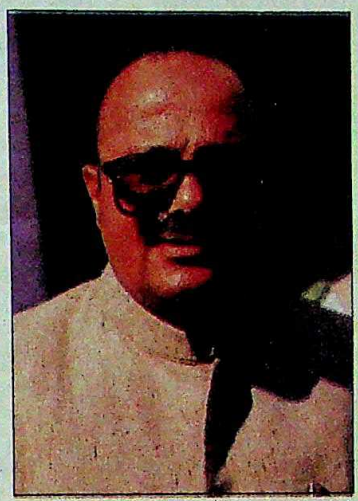
who had sat up continuously for two nights poring over the various aspects of the accord over endless cups of coffee and sandwiches, had cause for relief. They had worked on the Punjab problem as their first priority and now the effort was bearing fruit. And the relief was just as overpowering among the Akali leaders, with the agony of Bhindranwale's bullying, long jail terms and incarceration of their community at the back of their minds. A beaming Longowal said as he walked out of the prime minister's office after signing the accord: *Guru dee kirpa naal eh hoya*" (This happened by the grace of the Guru). And proclaimed his key associate and former Punjab finance minister Balwant Singh: "The period of confrontation is over."

That statement, more than anything else, summed up the overpowering sense of relief which overtook the country. For four years now people, chased relentlessly by the shadow of extremism, were praying for just such a deliverance. Here was an assertion of the collective will of the nation, especially the people of Punjab. If the accord was symbolic of the Government's new conciliatory approach on national problems it was also an emphatic Akali rejection of secessionism. The sense of relief was widespread. The mood was summed up by an *Indian Express* editorial which said: "The prime minister and his colleagues will be hailed by a grateful nation.... Mr Harchand Singh Longowal and his advisors have shown great statesmanship, fortitude and courage in rising above the bitterness of the long overdue, last-ditch attempt to rid the country of Bhindranwale's armed marauders and destroy the spectre of Khalistan. But a greater damage was thereby done. The Sikh community, which had unsuccessfully wrestled with the moral dilemma posed by Bhindranwale, found conviction: Operation Bluestar was not a cleansing of the temple, it was an attack on the temple. A whole community felt humiliated, injured, its religious susceptibilities assaulted by the destruction of the Akal Takht. For a while it seemed that Bhindranwale had achieved in death what he failed to achieve in his lifetime: a break between Hindu and Sikh.



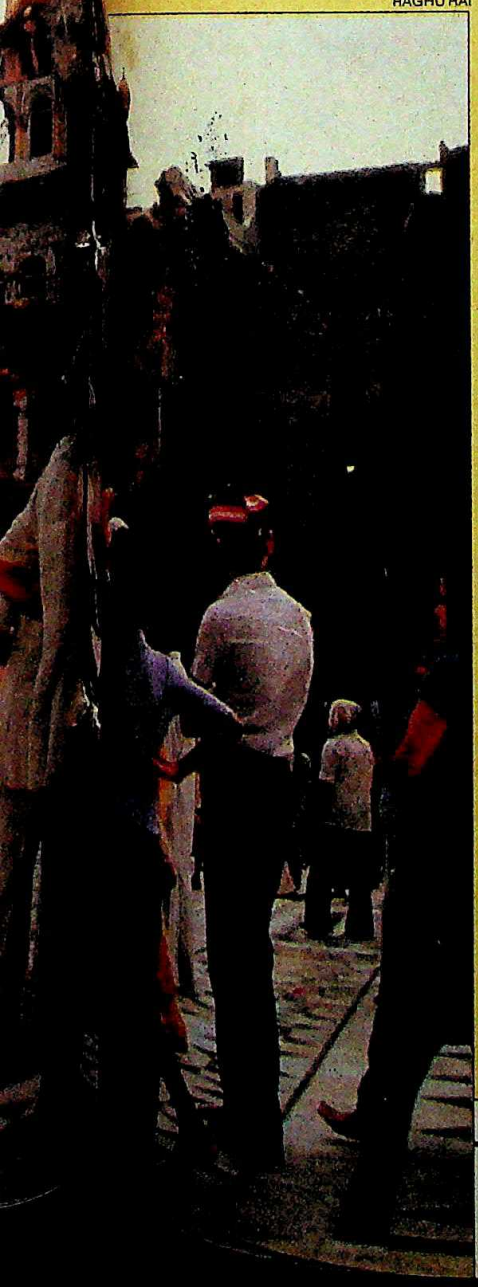


Rajiv Gandhi and Governor Arjun Singh: secret diplomacy

Take the Delhi riots of November last year. With the entire Sikh community seething with anger after Operation Bluestar, it seemed only a matter of time before something gave way. Something did, with the assassination of Mrs Gandhi. Tragedy piled upon tragedy. Rampaging mobs heaped indescribable horrors on Sikhs. And left behind a community in rage and in pain.

From the vantage point of November 1984 it seemed impossible that sanity could ever prevail, tempers cool, that peace would return. But the pendulum has swung. How long, after all, could the country be at war with itself? It was time to heal the wounds, to leave behind the bitterness of the past. That hasn't happened quite, but a new hope has been born. It is fragile and may not endure, but if it is nurtured properly it can reach a full flowering.

RAGHU RAI



Anti-Sikh riots engulfed the capital after Mrs Gandhi's assassination

BHAWAN SINGH

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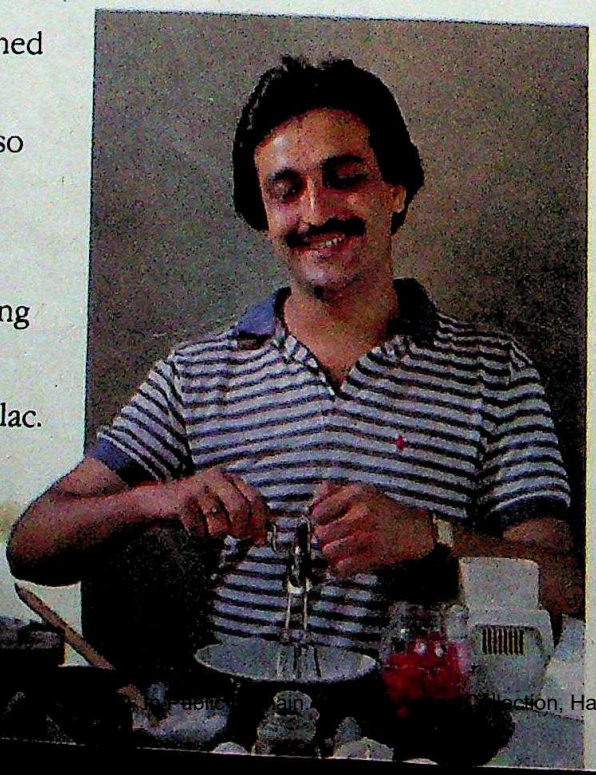

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past. This is a victory for all." Calcutta's *Telegraph* headlined its comment: "Thank you Rajiv, Thank you Sant." And the feeling in Punjab was echoed in the words of Cookie Maini, a college lecturer in Gurdaspur, who said: "The last two years have been lived in such tension and day-to-day uncertainty that sometimes it seemed your entire life was going to pieces. At least, this agreement denotes security for the common people."

The agreement had miraculously lifted clear the thick pall of gloom and fear which had held the country in a cruel bind for over four years. Not that the relief was universal. It led to anger and consternation among the pro-extremist elements like the United Akali Dal and the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), whose members clashed violently with Longowal supporters as he returned to the Golden Temple. Armed with guns, swords, lathis and kirpans, the two factions' clash outside the Akali Dal office in Amritsar last week, left several injured. But the fact that the breakthrough had come despite a widening split among Akali factions, in no way subdued its importance.

Too much blood had spilled in Punjab for there to be much rejoicing, but there was an overpowering feeling of relief that the long wait was over, that for once the negotiations had escaped getting bogged down in technicalities and suspicion. The prime minister and his key aides, including some of the cabinet members and Punjab Governor Arjun Singh, who played a crucial role in bringing about the accord (*see box*), had much to be proud of and more to be thankful for. "These were the most tense moments of my life," an official involved in the deliberations recalled later and disclosed that "even while the accord was being worked out, the prime minister was worried about the possibility of extremists sabotaging the talks as they had often done in the past." In fact, the final round of talks had barely begun when a message landed at the Punjab Civil Secretariat in Chandigarh directing officials to strengthen security measures.

For over six weeks both the officials and Akalis had lived under the shattering burden of tensions. But once the prime minister and Longowal sat for their first round of talks a rapport was struck immediately and the mood of anticipation was transparent even among Longowal's supporters who, on the day of reckoning sat in the anteroom of his VIP suite in Punjab Raj Bhawan playing cards with Punjab policemen, who had driven in from Punjab, protecting Longowal against prowling extremist hitmen. But on this afternoon they were men full of banter and many slept using the butts of their rifles as pillows, as if looking forward to a period of peace. The passage to the accord had been far from smooth and straight. So high were the stakes that the prime minister, who led the campaign personally from the word go, had even taken the extreme step of deliberately keeping out of the proceedings President Zail Singh, who was often consulted by Mrs Gandhi on Punjab. Similarly Buta Singh and Darbara Singh, two other Punjab Congressmen who have strong lobbies back home were kept out of the deliberations. The gains now were too precious to be frittered away.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Longowal flanked by Barnala and Balwant Singh leaves Parliament House after signing the accord with the prime minister: seizing the initiative

The success was the culmination of a process that began in the second week of March with the Government ordering Longowal's release. This coincided with the appointment of Arjun Singh as the new governor of Punjab. In retrospect now, it is easy to see the key elements in the Government game-plan. Firstly, the idea was to let Longowal re-establish his leadership among the Sikh masses and strengthen both his hands and the government's credibility through a series of concessions. These began with the release of the Akali leaders in stages. Then came the initiative in April, including an inquiry into the Delhi riots, release of many young detenus and lifting the ban on the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF).

As part of the same approach the Government was restrained in its response to Longowal's belligerence. The think-tank around the prime minister consisting of the three-member cabinet subcommittee on Punjab and Chief Parliamentary Secretary Arun Singh decided that this hawkish posture was necessary for Longowal now to regain credibility among the Sikhs. The approach soon paid off as Longowal's posture changed dramatically. He first welcomed the April initiative and later, was prompt in his condemnation of the bomb blasts in Delhi and the suspected terrorist involvement in the Air-India Jumbo crash. Slowly, the Government was getting the right signals from Punjab.

The impact of the change was also being felt in Chandigarh where Arjun Singh shrewdly continued to expand the scope of behind-the-scenes efforts. By the end of May, both he and the Akalis had begun talking in terms of a package deal. This also marked the beginning of a series of 14 meetings that Arjun Singh had with the Akali leaders (*see box*). In

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the course of these. Arjun Singh decided to put his money on Longowal. He never seemed like losing. It was touch and go and Delhi knew that even Longowal would panic in case the information on the secret talks leaked out. Says Arjun Singh: "That secrecy was the key to success. If we had failed there the accord would never have come about."

This also marked the beginning of what some Akali leaders light-heartedly call Longowal's pen-friendship with the prime minister who first wrote to him in July firmly making an offer of talks and a package deal. Longowal replied promptly and the ground was set for the prime minister's July 17 letter inviting Longowal and his aides for talks in Delhi.

But for all his good intentions Longowal is not exactly known to be a man of iron determination. He soon found himself torn between contrary pulls and pressures within his party. His key aides, former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and President of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) Gurcharan Singh Tohra pleaded with him to go slow, saying, "With such great difficulty we have been able to re-establish our leadership now. If the talks fail all will be lost."

In Chandigarh, Arjun Singh had sensed this mood and advised the prime minister to seize the initiative. And he decided to take charge of the proceedings himself. In the second week of July, he called Longowal on the telephone and told him reassuringly: "You come, we will accept your demands as well as we can. Punjab belongs to you much more than to us all." Longowal still tried to persuade Badal and Tohra at meetings held in Chandigarh on July 22 and 23, first at Balwant Singh's house and then at the SGPC's Sector-5 office. But failure of the persuasive mission did not discourage Longowal. He decided to seek "advice" from the holy Guru Granth Sahib.

In a solemn-moment at Balwant Singh's house he performed the Sikh ritual of seeking a *"vak"* from the scripture. This means opening the book at random, reading the first verse on the page and deciding the future course of action on the basis of its interpretation. On July 22, the Guru Granth Sahib told Longowal to "act courageously and stop being in two minds on vital questions." "It wasn't such a difficult decision after all, I just followed the order of my Guru," Longowal says now. But he was tense. "For Santji it was a question of the *takht* (throne) or *takhta* (chopping block)," a key Longowal aide was to remark later.

OPINION POLL

Public Support

WITH the agreement between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal marking a watershed in the history of the Punjab problem, INDIA TODAY *commissioned Marketing and Research Group (*MARG*), a leading independent market research agency, to gauge public opinion on the agreement by conducting an opinion poll in four cities —Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh and Hissar —and two villages—Khatkar Kalan on the Chandigarh-Jalandhar road in Punjab and Bhiwani, adjacent to Bhiwani town in Haryana.*

A snap poll of this nature, with its limited geographical scope and relatively small numbers, does not necessarily reflect the mood and opinions of the total population in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and elsewhere, but it does provide pointers.

The pollsters conducted 1,207 interviews over three days (July 26-28) in the six centres, selected because they were among the places that had borne the brunt of the Punjab problem, or whose future was involved in the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, or because they were politically sensitive. The interviews were divided almost equally between men and women, and an effort was also made to obtain a representative sample of Hindus and Sikhs.

In all, 404 interviews were conducted in Delhi, 201 in Chandigarh, 201 in Amritsar, 200 in Hissar, 101 in Bhiwani and 100 in Khatkar Kalan. The interviews were conducted with adults who claimed to be aware of the agreement. As expected, the level of ignorance was extremely low. The findings of the poll have been statistically 'weighted' in order to provide an unbiased perspective. MARG*'s report:*

Few agreements to settle domestic disputes would appear to have had the widespread sanction and approval of such large numbers as that reached last fortnight between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal. Among both Sikhs and Hindus the response to the agreement is overwhelmingly favourable, but the polling centres in Haryana showed a greater degree of dissatisfaction over the agreement, and could be a pointer to possible trouble. The majority also expects the situation in Punjab to improve consequent to the agreement.

▶ **Reactions to the agreement**

Except for the centres in Haryana —Hissar and Bhiwani—the overwhelming majority of respondents approved of the agreement between the prime minister and Sant Longowal. In the three cities of Delhi, Chandigarh and Amritsar, Sikhs were particularly keen supporters of the pact, with over 90 per cent of the respondents in each case voicing their approval. Even in Hissar though the support was more muted in comparison to the other cities, two-thirds of the respondents were in favour of the agreement vis-a-vis just more than a fourth of the respondents who held a contrary view. In Bhiwani, however, those backing the pact were outnumbered three to two.

Pact Reactions

	DELHI	CHANDIGARH	AMRITSAR	HISSAR	BHIWANI	KHATKAR KALAN
Total number polled	404	201	201	200	101	100
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Reactions to the agreement						
Approve	83	81	91	70	59	80
Disapprove	11	17	7	22	36	6
Undecided	6	2	2	8	5	12
Reactions to the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab						
Approve	70	66	91	58	66	86
Disapprove	22	31	5	36	16	20
Undecided	8	3	4	6	17	13
Rajiv Gandhi's handling of the Punjab problem						
Approve	83	81	91	58	66	86
Disapprove	9	14	5	36	16	20
Undecided	3	5	4	6	17	13
Opinions on the extent of the compromise by both the Government and the Akali Dal						
Compromise by both	58	66	81	80	86	91
Government compromised too much	36	16	17	12	20	5
Akali Dal compromised too much	6	17	1	2	13	4
Undecided	—	1	1	6	1	3
How will the agreement effect the current situation in Punjab						
Situation will improve	80	86	91	70	86	91
Situation will deteriorate	12	20	9	22	13	5
Situation will remain the same	2	13	3	8	1	4
Undecided		1				

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▶ **Reactions to the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab**

Interestingly, two-thirds of the respondents in Chandigarh were favourably inclined to the transfer as against 31 per cent who disapproved of its loss of status as a Union territory. Sikh residents of the city were the most enthusiastic backers of the scheme, with 88 per cent expressing their approval of the transfer. In all other centres, with the exception of Bhiwani, a clear majority of those interviewed (from a low of 67 per cent in Hissar to a high of 93 per cent in Amritsar) were in favour of Chandigarh being transferred to Punjab. Sikh residents in Delhi were also unanimously in favour of the shift in the status of the Union territory. In contrast, 61 per cent of the respondents in Bhiwani were aggrieved by the transfer.

▶ **Rajiv Gandhi's handling of the Punjab problem**

In the four cities where the poll was conducted, the overwhelming majority of respondents supported the prime minister's handling of the Punjab problem. In the villages of Khatkar Kalan and Bhiwani, however, he could only muster the approval of a little more than 40 per cent of the respondents. In consonance with their overall distaste for the agreement, Rajiv Gandhi's critics in Bhiwani outnumbered his admirers 4:3.

▶ **Opinions on the extent of the compromise by the Government and the Akali Dal**

In Chandigarh, Delhi and Amritsar the clear majority of respondents believe that the agreement reflects a compromise on the part of both the Government as well as the Akalis. This conclusion is emphatically endorsed by 82 per cent of the respondents in the Sikhs' holy city of Amritsar. In Khatkar Kalan, a Sikh-dominated village located between Chandigarh and Jalandhar, though 47 per cent felt that both sides had compromised, as many as 31 per cent were of the opinion that the Akali Dal had conceded too much ground. Quite the opposite view prevails in Hissar and Bhiwani, where the Government has incurred the wrath of more than two-thirds of the respondents who felt that it had surrendered too much ground to the Akalis. Even in Delhi, a significant 36 per cent of the respondents feel the Government has compromised too much.

▶ **How the agreement will affect the current situation in Punjab?**

With the sole exception of Bhiwani, the poll shows that the vast majority of respondents are hopeful of a turn for the better in Punjab because of the agreement. In Chandigarh, Delhi and Amritsar, the Sikh fraternity is particularly sanguine about the prospects of a return to normalcy, with more than 80 per cent of the respondents in each of the above cities cherishing such a belief. Respondents in Bhiwani, however, have a more gloomy outlook, with only 30 per cent supporting the view that the situation is likely to improve while 56 per cent believe it will remain the same.

To sum up, it appears that the Gandhi-Longowal agreement has widespread support. The undercurrent prevalent in each of the centres is positive, ranging from overwhelming support in Amritsar to cautious satisfaction in Bhiwani. If the *vox populi* in these centres is any indication, Rajiv Gandhi has certainly managed to hammer out a winning truce.

DELHI	CHANDIGARH	AMRITSAR	HISSAR	BHIWANI	KHATKAR KALAN
404	201	201	200	101	100
%	%	%	%	%	%
83	81	92	67	41	83
11	17	4	26	59	17
6	2	4	7	—	—
70	66	93	67	38	73
22	31	5	27	61	26
8	3	2	5	1	1
89	81	93	78	42	46
9	14	3	20	57	20
3	5	4	2	1	34
58	66	82	20	20	47
36	16	16	71	67	21
6	17	2	9	13	31
—	1	—	—	—	—
80	86	93	68	30	76
6	20	4	12	10	21
12	13	3	20	56	3
2	1	—	—	4	—

In retrospect the accord is also a tribute to Longowal's mutation from a stuttering, indecisive and spineless figurehead into a political personality in his own right, a transition that came all of a sudden in the wake of the challenge to his position by Baba Joginder Singh in May. Earlier, Longowal had been content with playing second fiddle. First it was to Badal, who way back in 1979 manoeuvred the installation of Longowal, then a relatively nondescript religious preacher, as president of the party to upstage his arch rival Jagdev Singh Talwandi. Then came the Bhindranwale phase peaking in 1982. He took charge of the Akali Dal morcha through a temple coup and left Longowal sulking in silence for two long years. But he must have done some serious rethinking on his own political future in the course of his 10-month detention.

On his release, Longowal was a changed man; belligerent, vocal and pining for the spot left vacant by Bhindranwale. At a public meeting near Moga on April 6, he declared: "It is a lie to say that Bhindranwale had so many arms in the Golden Temple. Let them give us all that ammunition now and try taking the Golden Temple from us." Stoutly refusing to condemn Mrs Gandhi's assassination he went to the extent of saying, "Why Mrs Gandhi alone? I mourn for all those who have died in Punjab over the years." His demeanour changed as he found himself more secure. But the greatest turning point was the May Day assault on him by Baba Joginder Singh, the ageing father of Bhindranwale who led a breakaway faction pushing Longowal into a corner from where he had no choice but to fight. And he had to fight from the moderates' side of the fence.

The victory in the battle against Bhindranwale's father gave Longowal a hitherto undiscovered sense of confidence. Says a senior government official: "It firmly established his credentials and also gave us new hope. After all, it is so much easier to deal with a well-intentioned politician rather than an old man whose son was killed by the army or temple high priests whose vision is limited.

The same rapid transition was evident in the way Longowal took the decision back to his people, shrewdly avoiding the Golden Temple at Amritsar where Baba Joginder Singh and his AISSF storm-troopers were planning a hot reception for him. Instead he opted for Takht Keshgarh Sahib at the town of Anandpur Sahib, considered second only in religious importance to the Golden Temple. Realising that persuading his younger party-

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men to accept the accord will certainly nvolve a bit of a hard sell, Longowal took a leaf out of Bhindranwale's book. He unabashedly told a rather modest gathering of Sikh youths at Anandpur Sahib: "This (the agreement) is a victory for the panth. This is an agreement signed not once but on each page. This is as good as a treaty between two countries. Not since the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has such an agreement taken place between Punjab and Hindustan."

Yet he was aware that such populistic rhetoric was good only for the young troopers. The chieftains in the party hierarchy were bound to ask some inconvenient questions and tensions were evident. Badal curtly turned down news photographers' repeated requests to pose for a picture with Longowal, murmuring, "I am sorry, let's not do this drama," and even while leaving the room for the meeting hall, announced clearly: "There are differences on each point." And though Tohra was quiet he maintained a tell-tale sullenness throughout. The battle at Anandpur Sahib involved strong ambitions. For Longowal and his supporters it was a crucial opportunity for encashing the credit of having secured the accord. But Badal and Tohra, left out of the talks had their own problems. They saw the fresh assembly elections round the corner and realised that they had been left quite far behind.

This desperation showed once the meeting began and both Badal and Tohra pulled out all stops. "My able friend Balwant Singh," said Badal sarcastically, "wants us to believe we have achieved a victory. But will he explain to us what is the meaning of this accord? We have lost so much on the river waters alone." Badal went on to say that what the Akalis wanted was firm decisions and not commissions. In the same emotion-laden voice Badal charged Longowal, Barnala and Balwant with having made a sell-out on the Anandpur Sahib resolution and angrily asked them what business they had "having *rasgullas* with a parliamentary affairs minister who marked the houses of Sikhs in Delhi for slaughter last November." Tohra raised similar questions and, at one stage even threatened to walk out. Newsmen waiting outside could distinctly hear an alarmed scream "don't let Tohra *saab* go" and he was obviously physically pulled down and then persuaded to stay on.

But Longowal had come prepared. Displaying his newfound confidence he threatened to quit in case the agreement was not accepted unanimously. Realising that in the present mood it was unrealistic to take on Longowal, Badal and Tohra beat a tactical retreat though it did not stop them from sulking afterwards. "All I can say is I am not happy," Badal told INDIA TODAY later. But there was very little doubt that, after two very eventful decades in Akali politics Badal now found himself a beaten man.

Longowal and his aides later decided on the second stage of the operation, to win acceptability for the accord among the rural masses. "Our mass contact programme will begin shortly," said Barnala and neither he nor Longowal were underestimating the serious challenge there. In the villages as well as cities there exists a strong AISSF hardcore which will settle for nothing short of what Bhindranwale had wanted and its mood as well as strategy was evident in the reaction at the Golden Temple (*see box*) and elsewhere in the state.

In Gurudwara Gurdarshan Prakash at Chowk Mehta, once the headquarter of the late Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, an old contemporary of Sant Kartar Singh

ARJUN SINGH

Hidden Moves

IN THE front seat of the Indian Airlines flight IC 421 to Chandigarh on July 26 sat a contented figure sipping coffee from a modest plastic glass. With the biggest success of his political career behind him Punjab Governor Arjun Singh was coming home triumphant. "See you in Ahmedabad now," said an American correspondent leaving for Anandpur Sahib after a brief press conference at the Chandigarh airport. "I did not know you were such a well-wisher of mine," quickly retorted Arjun Singh.

Light-hearted cracks apart, Arjun Singh must have been laughing up his sleeve. In March as he was suddenly flown out to Chandigarh from Bhopal, less than 24 hours after he was sworn in chief minister of Madhya Pradesh there had been widespread speculation on whether it was a promotion or demotion. "Many thought I had been kicked upstairs from Madhya Pradesh. But the importance of the assignment showed the confidence the prime minister had in me," he now casually says.

Singh had to contend with an unhappy legacy, of the departure of four governors in fairly quick succession and unhappy circumstances. All his predecessors in the troubled period, except B.D. Pande had lacked the will take the bull by the horns. But it must be said to their defence that they never had the kind of support from Delhi that Arjun Singh was promised. Arjun Singh was promised Delhi's full backing the moment the prime minister told him of his new charge—curiously while he was waiting at Palam airport to get the list of his cabinet members cleared by him.

In Bhopal it is often said that one key reason behind Arjun Singh's success was his excellent rapport with the media. He was conscious of this in Chandigarh as well and indeed began his campaign of peacemaking with the media. Says he: "When I met the prime minister on my way to Chandigarh I asked him to lift the press censorship first of all. And when I addressed my first press conference in Chandigarh that change had taken place." But both in Chandigarh and Jalandhar, the regional newspaper centre of Punjab, he enjoyed a thoroughly friendly relationship with the press. Ultimately he was even able to use the services of at least two well-known editors in order to establish contact with the Akalis.

From the day he moved into the Raj Bhawan he began sending feelers to the

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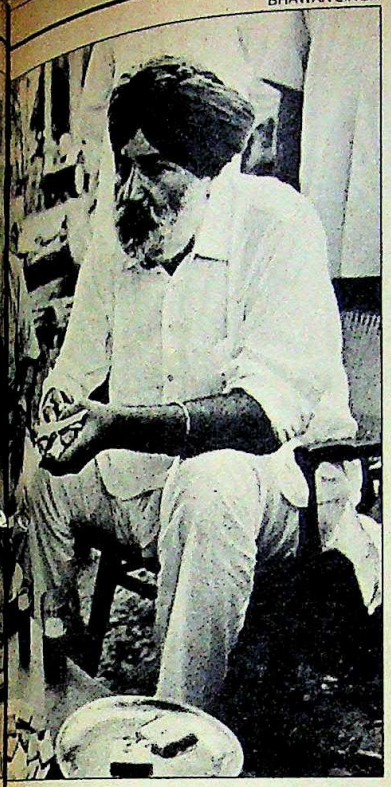
BHAWAN SINGH



Parkash Singh Badal expresses his grievances after the Anandpur Sahib meeting: upstaged

(Bhindranwale's predecessor) called Baba Jagir Singh is now in residence, minding his charge of an assortment of young acolytes, all extremely sceptical about the accord. Said Sohan Singh: "It is all wrong. Longowal alone went off and made a settlement with the Government without taking into account the feelings of the whole community. He has no mother or sister of his own, or else he would have felt shame for the atrocities committed upon our womenfolk during the storming of the Golden Temple."

A local woman called Gurdip Kaur from a nearby village who had come to perform *sewa* in the gurudwara was louder in her recriminations against the accord. "Rajiv has bought Longowal with cash. If he were actually sincere about satisfying the Sikh community the first thing he would have done is to visit Punjab himself and apologise to the Sikhs for destroying Harmandir Sahib last year. But it hasn't even struck him to come to Punjab since he became prime minister."

Similar sentiments were in evidence at the Golden Temple. Surat Singh, secretary to the United Akali Dal and Baba Joginder Singh's chief spokesman announced that a massive Sikh conference was to be called in Manji Sahib in early August to denounce Harchand Singh Longowal's "deal and package with the Government". He said that leaders of all religious *taksals*, Sikh foundations and organisations, the Akali Dal and representatives of minority communities would be invited to attend. "We are now considering taking up the *morcha* that Longowal and his cohorts have abandoned These are the men who swore in the sacred presence of the granth that they would not give up the *morcha* till the Anandpur Sahib resolution was accepted. Now that they have betrayed the panth, it is our duty to carry on the agitation."

The basic points that the detractors of the accord make are:

- that army deserters should be given back their jobs, i.e. exonerated, as opposed to being rehabilitated;
- that the Government should publicly apologise for Operation Bluestar;
- that all cases be unequivocally dropped against terrorists and hijackers;
- that these men, along with other detenus, be released immediately.

It is obvious that as the hardliners chalk out their strategy at their August meeting the list of objections will lengthen. But, unless the Longowal group now suddenly displays a total lack of the art of communication they should not cut much ice, for a majority of the Sikhs realise that the Centre could hardly have conceded more ground than this. In fact there is a widespread feeling in Delhi that the Government, in its desperation to ensure that the talks did not fall through: gave away too much. "They have given them so much, what have they gained in return? If nothing else they should have at least asked them to condemn extremism and declare that they will not allow their shrines to become arsenals and sanctuaries of extremists," asked BJP President Atal Behari Vajpayee, adding, "this was a climbdown. The Government did not involve states like Haryana and Rajasthan whose interests were intimately connected with the accord."

The Government spokesmen, however, argue that the price for failure at these talks would have been prohibitive as it could have meant the political destruction of Longowal and total breakdown of communication between the

HARI OM GULATI

Arjun Singh: combining skill with subtlety

Akalis while, at the same time, trying to project himself as a different kind of administrator. He visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar and made an eloquent note in Hindi in the visitors' book, saying, "*prabhu ke is ghar mein meri yeh prarthana hai ke meri sewayen sweeker hoon.*" (In this house of God I pray that my services be accepted.) On the administrative plane he shuffled his advisors and saw the back of R.V. Subrahmanyam, the Assam cadre officer who had acquired a hawkish image. He also set a hectic pace for himself, keeping a 16-hours a day work schedule and often flew from one corner of the state to the other to personally supervise the administration. He gave top-most priority to redressal of grievances and that established his credentials with the common population.

His approach to the Akalis initially drew tepid response. But around the end of June his feelers were beginning to get the kind of response he was awaiting.

Singh's aides disclose that he had to iron out innumerable problems in the course of his 14 meetings with the Akali leaders—seven with Longowal, four with Badal and three with Tohra. His greatest success lay in convincing them of his good intentions. His strength was his disarming demeanour and self-effacing manner. "He is such a *gumsum* (quiet, unpredictable) person," a senior Punjab Congress(I) politician once said about him. Added Harpal Singh Bhullar, an Akali leader from Ferozepur: "Punjab would have been saved from the tragedy of Operation Bluestar and Mrs Gandhi's brutal murder could have been avoided if Arjun Singh had come here two years earlier." That could indeed be a little far-fetched and hypothetical. But there is no denying the significance of the role Arjun Singh played behind the scenes in the build-up to the accord though he himself modestly dismisses this as "a victory of commonsense."

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Government and the Akalis. "All along," said a senior official, "we were forced to do tight-rope walking. But it was soon clear that we could not please all the sides."

In South Bloc, the answer was found in bureaucratese. As a matter of fact the waters question, which was the major stumbling block so far is also the vaguest part of the accord. It tries to please the Akalis without giving too much away and is thus open to different interpretations. By far the only positive, firm point in the accord is that the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal on which Haryana has already spent over Rs 100 crore and sacrificed over Rs 700 crore in crop losses would be finally completed by Independence Day next year. This means a bit of a concession by the Akalis. Earlier they were never able to defy Bhindranwale's logic in demanding from Haryana an equivalent amount of land as was used for digging the canal in territory belonging to Punjab.

That apart, the clause is unclear on everything else. For example, while the canal has been agreed upon the accord does not specify where its water will come from (*see box*). The Akalis recognise these problems but they do not want to jeopardise the accord by making a public issue of it. At their mass contact meetings which began with a camp organised by the party youth wing at Anandpur Sahib, the Akalis are trying to project that while the accord protects the quota of water that the state was drawing on July 1, 1985, only the remaining water will now be subject to adjudication by the tribunal and thus Punjab only stands to gain.

Similarly in spite of the reservations expressed in private Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal and his Irrigation Minister Shamsher Singh Surjewala talk publicly of only the advantages the accord could bring for them. Said Bhajan Lal: "We have no doubt that the tribunal will be fair. Our current share of 3.5 million acre feet (MAF) remains unaffected and our genuine need is twice as much. We have no doubt that we will ultimately be able to get enormously more than our present allocation."

Not everyone, however, shares his optimism. Former chief minister Devi Lal who led a campaign against the Government, accused it of selling out on the water and land issues. Birendra Singh, who was once the irrigation minister in Devi Lal's cabinet accused Bhajan Lal of misleading the people by claiming that Haryana will continue to get 3.5 MAF arguing: "The Government of India has played a cruel game with Haryana and over the past few

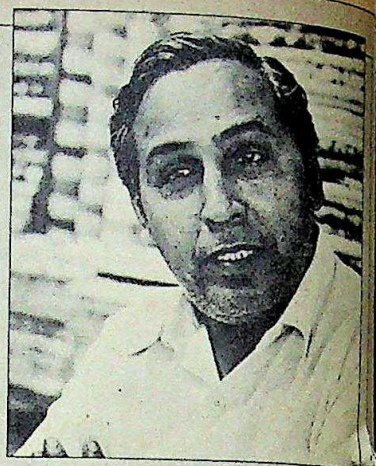
AMRITSAR

Still Tense

IN A WAY Amritsar is where it all began, and where the four-year-long agitation for Akali demands climaxed last summer in a confrontation of agonising brutality. As the epicentre of the Punjab crisis, the town has lived on a knife-edge of tension for too long. Perhaps the repeated lacerations of terrorist violence, political horse-trading and bloodshed in the recent past have numbed its memory of a better time, because a day after the Sant Longowal-Rajiv Gandhi accord last week there were few signs of open public approbation. If one expected jubilation in the streets, scenes of touching emotion like Sikhs and Hindus hugging each other in renewed brotherhood or distributing sweets, no, there was none of that. There was a sense of relief, however, in people's voices, as if a reprieve had unexpectedly been granted in the middle of a life sentence. And perhaps great relief, if the injury has been deep and the cure unimaginable, is not a feeling that can be easily expressed.

In the area around the Golden Temple the lanes were bustling, the shops loaded with merchandise, and people, unheedful of knots of policemen every few yards, did their daily business. Conversations were easy to start (they were never difficult, except in the last year or so when residents became easily nervous, and in their state of jitters, often gave exaggerated or evasive accounts) and the large community of Amritsar's traders, Sikh and Hindu alike, were vocal about the political settlement. "It's the best thing that happened to the business community," said Jagdish Raj, a cloth merchant who has run a shop in Katra Jaimal Singh for the past 25 years, "because for us the threat was double: as traders we would have had to down our shutters for good and as Hindus look for a livelihood elsewhere." Two shops away, another cloth merchant, Devinder Singh, echoed his sentiments: "The point is that Amritsar's agony has ended. Okay, some Sikhs may think that the accord doesn't give them their due. But, then, this is the group that created the situation, and kept it on the boil for so long."

Elsewhere, in the city's homes, colleges and offices similar opinions were



For Jagdish Raj, a cloth merchant of Katra Jaimal Singh, the threat was double: as a trader he would have had to down shutters for good and, as a Hindu look for livelihood elsewhere.

being expressed, with people in saddened tones sometimes asking why such a solution couldn't be effected two years ago. But inside the Golden Temple, views were at sharp variance: the silence in the Akali Dal offices and the Guru Nanak Niwas, usually the hub of all activity, bordered on gloom; posters with crude rhymes attacking Longowal had been spattered on walls; a pair of shoes had been ignominiously hung outside the gate and effigies of the former *morcha* dictator burnt with gusto amidst catcalls from a gang of All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) volunteers. In blazing saffron turbans, AISSF boys read aloud slogans on posters with Longowal's face blackened: *Lungiram ne kita ki/ Dhokha, thuggi, 420* (What did Lungiram do? He deceived, robbed and hoodwinked) or *Longowal ne pai hatti/ Qaum vechke kiti khatti* (Longowal started a shop/ And sold his community for profit). "This isn't an agreement, it's a straight deal, a sell-out," said Swaran Singh, the 24-year-old treasurer of the AISSF. And Surat Singh, secretary of the United Akali Dal led by Baba Joginder Singh, accused Longowal of betraying the ancient Baba by first giving him a

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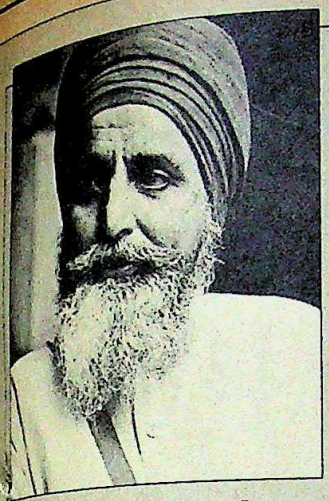

United Akali Dal General Secretary Surat Singh accuses Longowal of betraying Joginder Singh by first giving him a written undertaking to abide by his decision but later negotiating with the Government.

Devinder Singh, another cloth merchant, feels that the agony has ended. He agrees that some Sikhs may think that the accord doesn't give them their due, but also points out that they created the situation.

written undertaking that he would abide by his decision and then going off independently to negotiate with the Government.

Small crowds collected as these men elaborated Longowal's "betrayal": specifically, they would have insisted on a total exoneration of Sikh deserters from the army; asked the Government for a public apology for Operation Bluestar; insisted on an all-India inquiry into the November riots; released all agitation detenus and dropped all on-going cases against them. The audience simmers in agreement. A young, well-dressed man (he said he was a city businessman but wouldn't divulge his identity) spoke out: "The real Sikhs will carry on the *morcha*, now that the *morcha* dictator has run to Delhi like a beggar." And Surat Singh, a United Akali Dal official, produced a sheaf of letters and telegrams received from Sikhs world-wide condemning the accord. "We strongly condemn treacherous agreement...We strongly condemn betrayal of Sikhs by Longowal ...he has sold the rights of the Sikhs" read a cable from the committee of a gurudwara in Gravesend, U.K.

The callous obstinacy of these men, their populist rhetoric and pernicious posturing are reminiscent of the early crowd-pulling ploys of Bhindranwale, whose garlanded photographs today sanctify their offices. Similar rabble-rousers may be heard after the accord in rural gurudwaras, drumming up drained passions. But there is a new semblance of sanity in the consensus of popular opinion in Punjab's cities. In the crowded bazar outside the Golden Temple, a teashop owner whose stall was more than once the target of terrorist attacks during 1984's hallucinatory reign of terror, says: "I know those fellows have been in mourning ever since they heard of the accord. But let me tell you, if they're up to any dirty tricks now, they'll get beaten up by the people. The people simply won't risk losing their peace again."

History has a way of repeating itself, but also of imprinting its immediate lessons upon those who live it first-hand. A fractious clergy or political agreements or elections may or may not provide a solution for the short term. In Amritsar today the people have learnt that in the long term they alone can defend their own peace. —SUNIL SETHI in Amritsar

years the state's share has been reduced to 2.8 MAF. Why is this injustice being done to us? What is our fault?"

Similar doubts were expressed in Rajasthan, the third state affected by the river waters question. In an unprecedented move last fortnight the entire Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly sat in dharna protesting against the accord. Even Chief Minister Harideo Joshi initially committed the indiscretion of rejecting the accord. But though he was summoned to Delhi and "persuaded" shortly afterwards, doubts persisted. Said the BJP's Jaswant Singh, who happens to be the only opposition MP from Rajasthan in both houses of Parliament: "It is amazing how they can decide an issue concerning Rajasthan's interests without consulting the state. In any case who is the prime minister to decide on such an issue by himself?" While the Centre has now conveyed to the Rajasthan Government that the state's present share of water will remain unaffected popular doubts are summarised in Chief Minister Joshi's telex to the prime minister which reads: "Inclusion of the state of Rajasthan (in the accord) seems wholly unnecessary and contradicts the substance of reference to the proposed tribunal. Insistence of the inclusion of Rajasthan seems to be designed by the party concerned to create complication in actual flow of water from headworks into Rajasthan."

The other inter-state aspects of the accord are confined to Punjab and Haryana. Haryana, for example, has to think on terms of a new capital now. "We shall take a final decision on where to locate our new capital once the Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab are transferred to Haryana next Republic Day," says Bhajan Lal who is constituting committees including members of all political parties and town-planners to take the decision. The possible contenders are Hissar and Panchkula. Hissar is fairly centrally located in the state and has a mini-secretariat and an agricultural university. But the chances of Panchkula, adjoining Chandigarh seem brighter. Nestling in the Shivalik foothills it has scenic surroundings. The Government has already acquired large chunks of land there and if the Mani Majra village of Chandigarh gets transferred to Haryana, as expected, even the area around Panchkula will become sizeable. The Centre is likely to release a generous amount to Haryana for building the capital though it can be nowhere near the Rs 1,000 crore that Bhajan Lal is demanding.

The Government will have to act

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quickly on the capital project as the state will soon face the problem of shifting thousands of government employees out of Chandigarh. As a matter of fact they are the ones with the most genuine grouse against the accord. A majority of them face the prospect of shifting out of Chandigarh in the middle of their children's academic session.

But inter-state rows were not the only stumbling blocks on the way to the agreement. Insiders reveal that on many occasions the talks reached close to the breaking point on the question of the army deserters, many of whom are currently being put through court martials. The Akalis wanted a total amnesty for them. "But," says Arjun Singh, "the prime minister made it clear from the very outset that there could be no compromise on army discipline." The clause relating to the deserters is also rather vague but the most plausible interpretation is that all the Sikh soldiers who are dismissed from the army on the charge of desertion or indiscipline will be given vocational rehabilitation. While Akali hardliners consider this inadequate it pleases a number of former Sikh generals who had signed a memorandum to the President seeking lenient treatment for the deserters. Retired Lt-General Harbaksh Singh said: "I am reading between the lines and presume that the court martials will take a lenient view of the cases. Also, that the sentences awarded so far will be reviewed and remitted as was done in the case of the Indian National Army (INA) soldiers. Most of the Sikhs did this out of their religious conviction and because they were completely confused and rudderless. In many cases their officers had got scared and run away. It was a failure of command."

But the same clause draws sharp comment from another former soldier, BJP MP Jaswant Singh, who argues: "Court martial is one of the most painful decisions an army has to take and it is a serious matter. Now this agreement really means that if the court martial sacks a soldier he will immediately be rehabilitated. That pre-empts the very idea behind the exercise." Similar doubts persist on both sides on the issue of special courts and treatment of suspected extremists. The Akali hardliners want total abolition of special courts and release of all those detained under the National Security Act while many in security agencies and particularly Punjab police feel that the Government is being too soft. Arjun Singh, however, defends the decision to be soft on the Sikh youth, saying: "Many of them have been released in the recent past and that has not led to any increase in violence. It is reasonable to presume that common sense is prevailing now and even they want peace."

From the point of view of the Akali politics, however, the most significant clause is the acceptance of the demand for the promulgation of an All India Sikh Gurudwara Act in accordance with constitutional provisions and "in consultation with the Akali Dal". There was strong opposition to this within the Government. As a matter of fact in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar Mrs Gandhi's close advisors had blamed the Sikh Gurudwara Act, which gave the Akalis control of historic shrines in Punjab for all

LAND & WATERS DISPUTE

Pitfalls Ahead

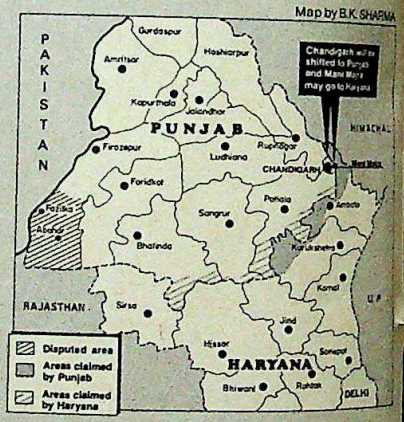
OF ALL the issues bedevilling an accord on the Punjab problem, none has proved more intractable than that of the distribution of Ravi-Beas river waters between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. And even the latest accord stops short of finding a solution to this problem. While the final allocation of waters has been left to a tribunal headed by a Supreme Court judge, even the clause maintaining the existing usage of water by the various states has caused confusion and is open to various interpretations.

The agreement set the seal on the present usage of water by the three states from the Ravi-Beas system as on July 1, 1985. Water for drinking purposes would also remain unaffected but the conflicting claims over the remaining waters would be worked out by a tribunal headed by a Supreme Court judge. The ruling would be delivered within six months and would be final and binding on all three states. The phrase "legal and binding" is a pointer to the conflicting claims and counter claims indulged in by politicians in the three states. Thus, Akali negotiator Balwant Singh and even Longowal have declared that any solution by the tribunal would favour Punjab since it was already drawing 4.8 million acre feet (MAF) of water. However, Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal is equally enthusiastic since it does not affect the 3.5 MAF they are presently drawing and "since our need is more than 7 MAF, we shall get more," he says confidently. As for the state of Rajasthan, the initial reaction of the Assembly was to unanimously reject the accord but Chief Minister Harideo Joshi rushed to Delhi and came back with the assurance that their share of 8 MAF would also remain unaffected.

Facts, however, have to be faced. The tribunal's award is bound to affect all three states to some extent or the other more so because the conflict runs deep. The Akalis have always taken the rigid stand that since Punjab is the sole riparian state, it alone has the right to the waters of the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. They do concede to Haryana a share since it was once part of Punjab.

But the Centre maintains that since Rajasthan cannot get water from anywhere else, it has to get it from Punjab. As for Haryana, its canals are poorly

Map by B.K. SHARMA



developed and it gets little rain. Thus, when the first guidelines were issued for sharing river waters in 1955, Rajasthan was given 8 MAF, undivided PEPSU 7.2 MAF and Jammu & Kashmir 0.65 MAF.

Since then the Centre has always stuck to that formula while tilting slightly towards Punjab. The fruits of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan—under which India got unrestricted rights to the use of those waters—were also divided between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. Another agreement in 1976, more or less forced on the states by the Government during the Emergency, gave Punjab 3.5 MAF.

The Akalis protested and in 1981 a new agreement increased Punjab's share to 4.22 MAF. The Centre was quick to claim that this was a "fair and equitable" distribution but it cut no ice with the Akalis. Badal pointed out that 14.20 lakh hectares of land in the state were irrigated by canals, leaving over 20 lakh

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the trouble and there was talk of new, progressive legislation on the issue superseding the SGPC. But the Act proposed now will cover historic gurudwaras all over the country, which include the Sikh Takhts of Nanded and Patna and the three major gurudwaras in Delhi under the SGPC control. Since only the Sikhs vote in the SGPC election, the Akalis anticipate that they will continue to reign supreme. "With this the Akalis have been accepted as representatives not only of Punjab but of the whole lot of Sikhs in the country," complains Vajpayee. Within the Congress(I) also this was always opposed by people such as Buta Singh and Darbara Singh. But this time they just did not have a say in the matter.

The written, publicised clauses of the accord are, however, only part of the story. There is a widespread feeling—which Akali sources confirm—that there has also been a certain amount of unwritten understanding between the two parties. For example, at their mass contact programmes the Akalis claim that the Government has virtually decided to do away with the system of a population-based statewise quota system for recruitment in the army. They also claim that the Government has offered to ensure that the Union Public Service Commission will invariably have a Sikh member and as far as possible the state public service commissions will also include Sikhs. Government spokesmen, however, deny this, saying that the prime minister has conceded nothing except offering to write to all chief ministers to take special care of the interests of the minorities while making recruitments through the state public service commissions.

But more significant than all these is the widespread feeling that the accord involves an unwritten understanding between the Congress(I) and the Akalis to join hands politically and perhaps contest the next elections to the Punjab Assembly together. According to highly-placed sources within the Government this is based on the feeling that the price for lasting peace in Punjab is political power to the Akalis. This decision has also been apparently backed by the recently released religion-wise figures based on the 1981 census which places the percentage of Sikh population in Punjab at 65—a far cry from the 52 per cent it was believed to be all along. This has led to the view in official circles that in a future election Akali rule in Punjab is a *fait accompli* since, due to the polarisation of the past four years the Congress(I) has lost much of its old base among more educated sections of Sikhs. "Sant Longowal has now proved that he is a nationalist," said Amarjit Kaur, a Congress(I) Rajya Sabha member from Punjab, adding, "the climate is very good for elections in Punjab. And what is wrong if there can be an understanding with the Akalis?"

That indeed is a crucial question now. Logically, the next step after this agreement should be the poll in Punjab. A decision on this is likely to be taken soon. "Wait for eight to ten days," says Governor Arjun Singh, adding, "to avoid having to amend the Constitution again elections should be held before October 5," when the present spell of President's rule ends. He is apprehensive that there may yet be a terrorist backlash in the state, and

dependent on diesel-run tubewells. He even quoted the Narmada Award of 1974 which denied water from the Narmada river to Rajasthan since it was not a riparian state.

Irrigation experts of Punjab and Haryana have gone on record to state that it is very difficult to measure the exact quantum of flow down the Ravi-Beas system on any single day since it is a continuous one. The usual practice, until now, has been to tabulate the total flow over a year divided by 365 days to get, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, the flow of a single day. Again, there is only a small canal taking about 1,200 cusecs of water from the Ravi with the rest of it flowing down to Pakistan. India has full claim to this water under the India-Pakistan Indus Water Treaty of 1960.

Obviously, until the Thein Dam comes up, all talk of utilising the remaining waters of the Ravi will remain notional. But there's more welcome news for Haryana. Construction work on the long-delayed Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal, on which the state has spent Rs 100 crore over the last decade and written off Rs 700 crore in crop losses, will be speeded up and is expected to be completed by August 15 next year.

On the question of territorial disputes, for the first time the principle of contiguity and linguistic affinity with a village as a unit has been recognised. Punjab gets the Chandigarh capital project area that comprises nearly 70 per cent of the Union territory. The town of Mani Majra and the adjacent areas minus the Sukhna Lake—part of the Hindi region of composite Punjab—go to Haryana. A commission constituted with the help of linguistic experts will determine the remaining Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab, which will be transferred along with Chandigarh on Republic Day next year.

Other claims and counter claims for readjustment of the existing Punjab and Haryana boundaries will be gone into by another commission. Present indications are that some Punjab villages falling between Chandigarh and Haryana and a few other villages from Khanouri block of Patiala district adjoining Kurukshetra district will go to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. The award of Mrs Indira Gandhi in January 1970 had given Chandigarh to Punjab, with Haryana getting the prosperous tehsils of Abohar and Fazilka. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal has gone on record to state that he would respect the award of the commission, but it is pretty clear that his troubles are going to take off once it comes through. Large areas to which Haryana has been laying claim on the grounds that they are Hindi-speaking are now Punjabi-speaking. The last census saw many Hindus opt for Punjabi as their mother tongue instead of Hindi. As Haryana Lok Dal legislator Dr Bhim Singh Dahiya put it: "The linguistic basis goes against us unless the transfers are decided on the basis of the 1961 census."

The two blocks of Dehrabassi and Lalru of Patiala district, for instance, may choose to remain Punjabi. "We are all Punjabi and nobody will have the right to arbitrate over us," says Hukam Singh, a Hindu farmer from Bukhri village near Lalru. His opinion is echoed by other farmers and traders of the two blocks since they feel their interests are better protected in Punjab which has even had a farmer as chief minister. Says trader Ram Nath: "We are Punjabis and shall remain in Punjab, we also have better trade prospects." These sentiments are echoed by many other people in the affected areas.

But whichever way the decision on territories goes, it will ultimately affect people, unsettle families and even lead to a minor exodus. In fact that problem will be the most pronounced in Chandigarh where thousands of Haryana Government employees have already begun thinking in terms of shifting to a new capital which has not yet come into being.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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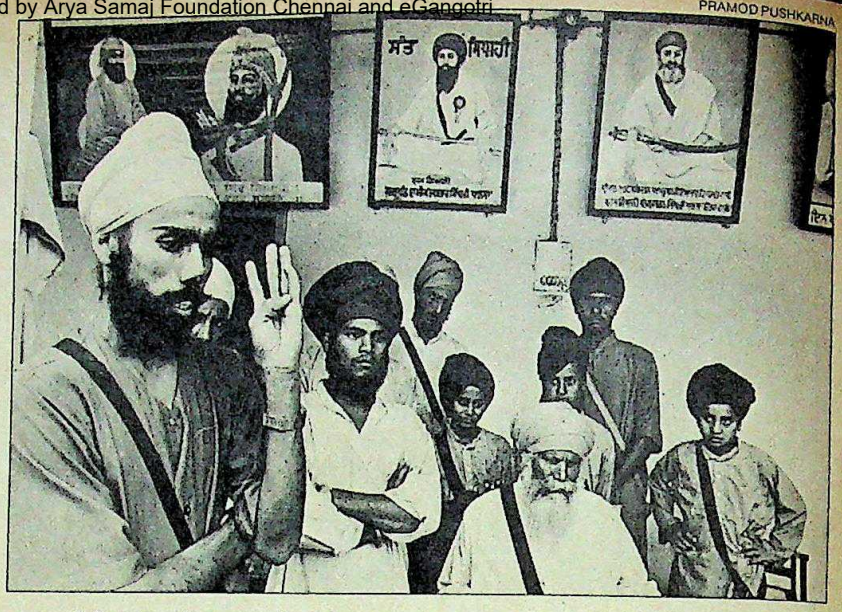
is still undecided on whether to recommend an election in the last week of September, or let the state remain politically undisturbed for a longer period so that tensions raised by the agreement can cool off. In any case, his recommendations must reach Delhi in about two weeks. In the meantime, asked what he plans to do to beef up the state police and administration, he says: "I will do the bare minimum that is necessary. Let us leave that (major changes) to the popular government."

Akali circles are looking forward to the upcoming poll. While in the past Longowal used to react angrily at the very mention of the word election his reaction was very different now. "It really is a decision for the Election Commission to take. We will decide our stance once the decision is taken," he says. In Delhi too there were indications that the Government had sounded the Election Commission on the possibility of elections in Punjab in the very near future. This has also left the Opposition in a rage. A number of opposition leaders charge the Government with having made concessions on national interest for the sake of political gain in Punjab. They argue that while Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi damned them in the last Lok Sabha election for being on talking terms with the "anti-national" Akalis, his own party is now going to fight elections jointly with them.

The Congress(I) leaders deny the charge of an understanding with the Akalis but admit that the election is round the corner. But, just like the Akalis, they are conscious of the fact that the prospect of elections will prove to be a further provocation for the extremists to return to the streets. "Extremist activity is inevitable even if we take all precautions. But we will have to take it in our stride," says Arjun Singh. And already last week extremists made their presence felt in Amritsar by shooting Sub-Inspector Sadhu Singh who, as the station house officer of Verowal police station near Amritsar had been rather harsh on AISSF workers. Intelligence officers also sniffed out a new plan to eliminate Arjun Singh and Longowal, the two men most responsible for bringing about the accord. The Government nurses no illusions and admits the fact that the accord by itself will not rule out terrorism. But it will deny extremists the kind of covert support they earlier had from Akali politicians. Also, it is hoped that in the new mood the Sikh masses will be disinclined to provide help and sanctuaries to the terrorists.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Sohan Singh, a *sewadar* at Bhindranwale's gurudwara at Chowk Mehta speaks out against the accord: pockets of dissent

Even if it achieves that much, the settlement would have served its purpose and the Government would net a reasonable return for the price paid in terms of concessions. Yet there will be no getting away from some of the harsher lessons implicit in the developments of the past few weeks climaxing with the accord. For example, it will be said for a long time that the accord of July 24 is not substantially different from the drafts finalised in November 1982 and February 1984 which were initially agreed to by the Akalis but later scuttled by the Government itself with last minute changes. That also substantiates the Akali charge that during Mrs Gandhi's time the strong coterie of bureaucrats around her wielded exaggerated power and succeeded in throwing a spanner in the works. But the new Government had a different approach underlined in Balwant Singh's favourite line: "The difference between Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv is that while she trusted her bureaucrats he trusts himself." The lesson, however, is that indecision on such crucial issues extracts a price that the country can hardly afford to pay.

Also, the frenetic developments saw the Government and the prime minister himself having to eat their own words more than once. The same prime minister who had based a whole, vicious election campaign on the charge that the Opposition was backing the "secessionist and anti-national" Anandpur Sahib resolution has now signed an agreement that includes a promise to refer the resolution to the Sarkaria Commission. The justification is that the Akalis now affirm that the resolution is within the Constitution. "They haven't even bothered to specify which version of the resolution they are talking about. In any case the resolution talks about the glory of the Sikh nation," complains Vajpayee. The *volte face* can be defended with the argument that election rhetoric is one thing, serious negotiation quite another, but that would be a confession rather than an alibi. The lesson obviously is that it is dangerous to make political capital out of issues that are so intimately linked to national interest; any change will inevitably be regarded as a climbdown.

But no amount of recrimination can now alter the fact that the accord marks a new beginning for the beleaguered state of Punjab. There is a spirit of renewed hope and expectation in the state despite the widespread ravages of flash floods. And perhaps the most eloquent observation on the change comes from none else than Amrita Pritam, the queen of Punjabi poetry, who said: "A friend in Bulgaria has sent me a bunch of coloured threads. They tie these around the trees as soon as the spring comes and new leaves sprout. Today I wish I could tie these threads round the branches of our democracy. This accord really means the flowering of our democracy." Perhaps a new spring of peace and prosperity await Punjab after a long and cruel winter.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA
with GOBIND THUKRAL and bureau reports

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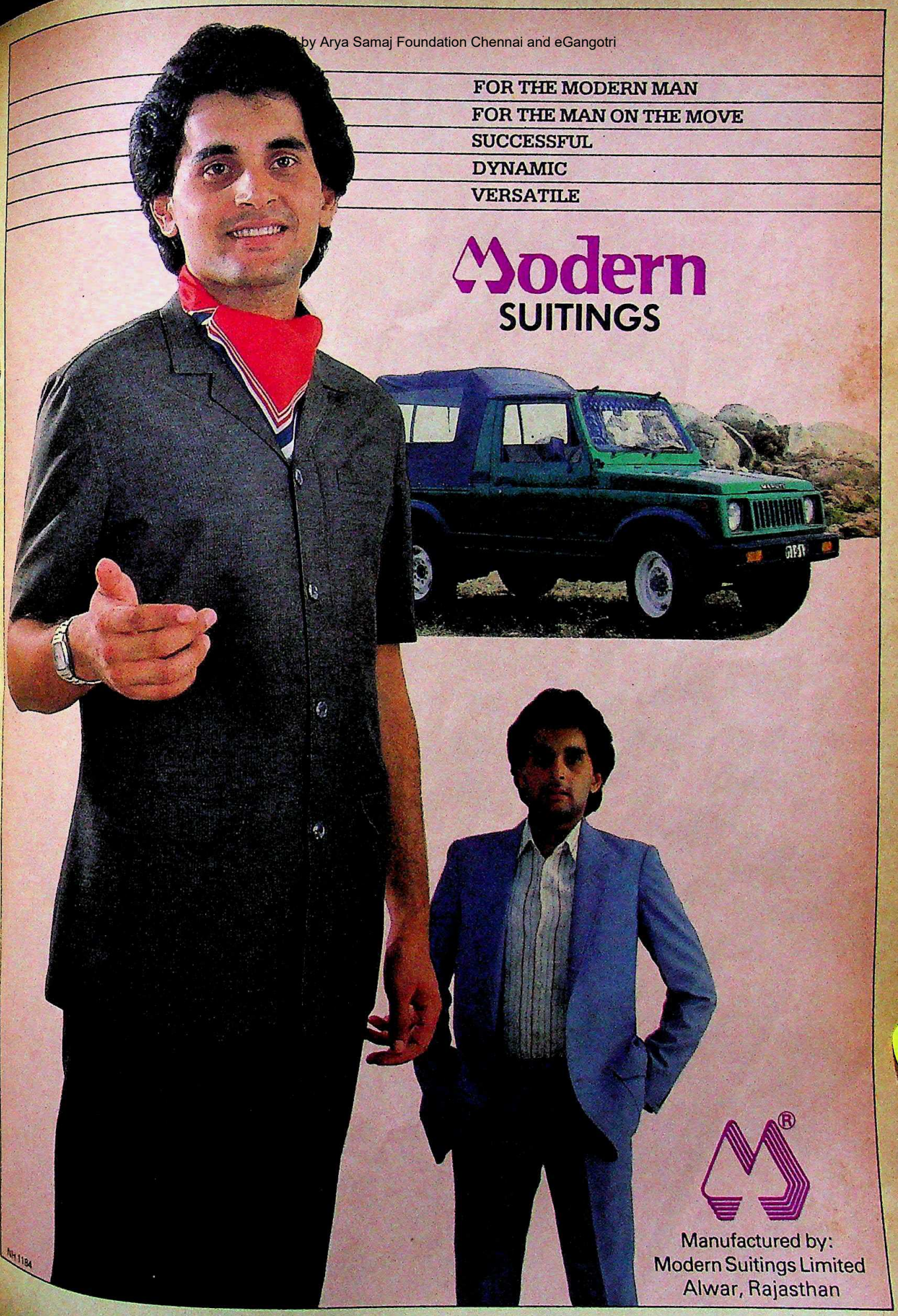

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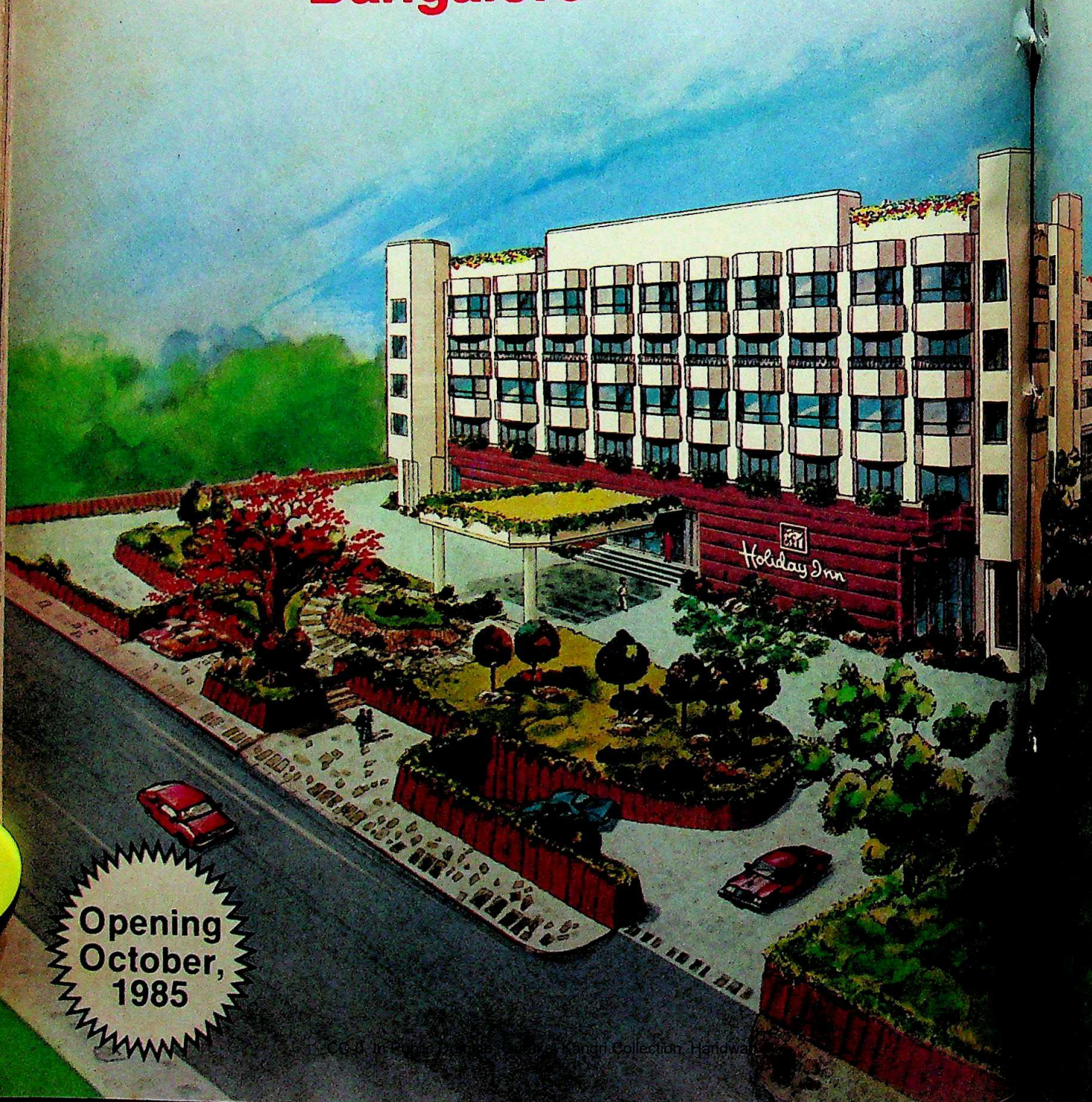

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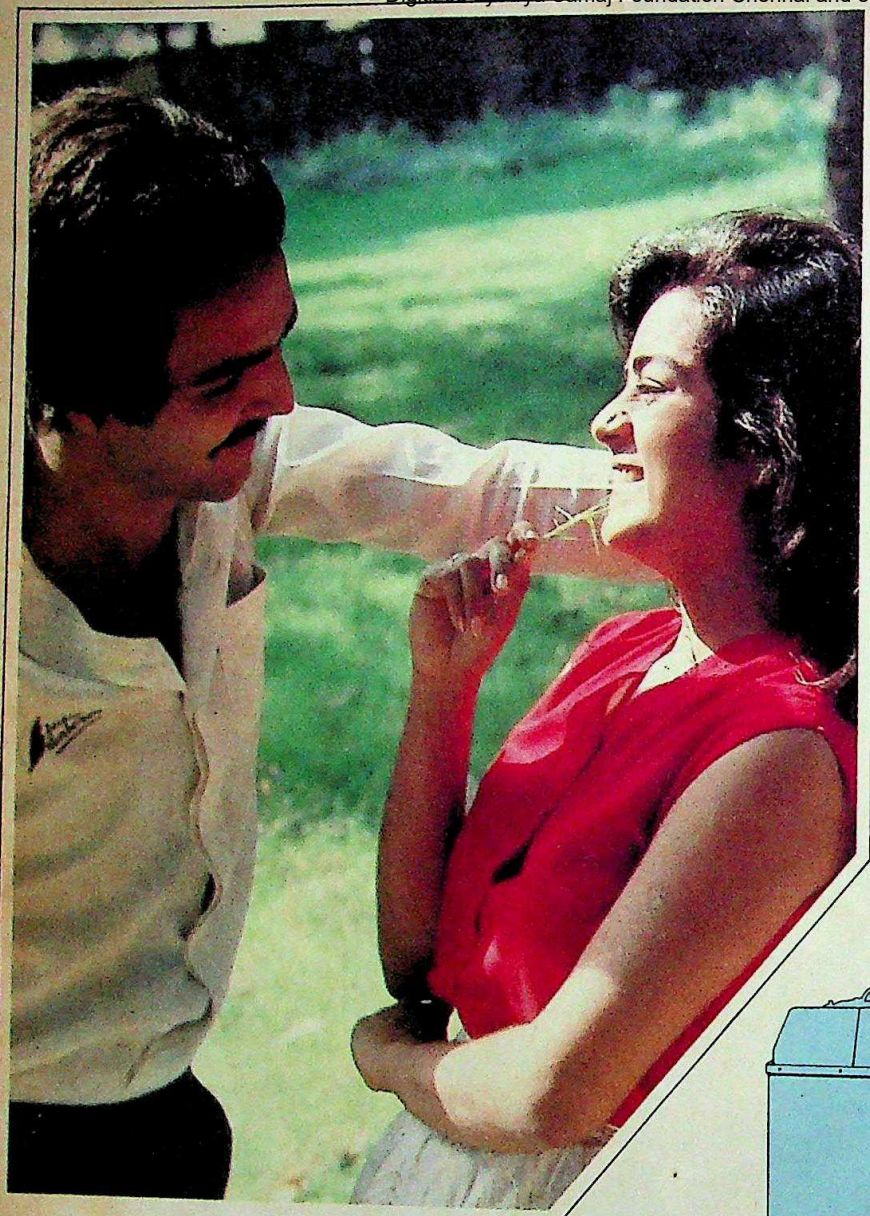
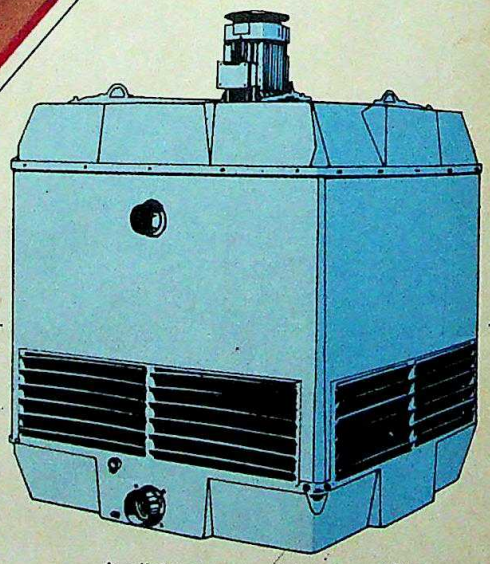


A COOLING TOWER SO QUIET IT WOULDN'T DISTURB TWO LOVE BIRDS.



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BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Revamping the Pantheon

IS THE Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) changing colour and adopting saffron again? Is it about to dump its assiduously sought secular image in favour of the fundamentalist posture of yore, and indeed go back to the identity of the Jan Sangh? The answers that emerged from the meeting of the party's national executive in Bhopal last month were indecisive, but there seems little doubt that at least one increasingly aggressive section of the party leadership would like to see a new political dawn for the party tinged with saffron. What else, they ask, can the party do when it has been humbled in the elections, lost the 'Hindu vote' to the Congress(I), and found its ambitions of developing into a far more secular, national alternative ground in the dust?

The key document that might have paved the way for this fundamental shift back to fundamentalism was the report of a working group set up to review the party's performance in the five years of its existence. But as things turned out, the Bhopal meet was not as decisive as it might have been. The report was ready only on the second day of the three-day meeting, and there was not enough time to debate it. Besides, the party leadership also decided to hasten slowly. The report will now be discussed at a camp of party workers in September before the leadership decides on its recommendations. Nevertheless, the report itself contained enough to fuel media speculation that the BJP had, as the *Indian Express* noted, decided to look "further back in a bid to move forward": a reference to the recommendation that the party jettison 'Gandhian socialism' as its political philosophy and replace it with 'integral humanism', a somewhat mystifying man-in-all-important creed evolved in the 1960s by party ideologue Deen Dayal Upadhyaya.

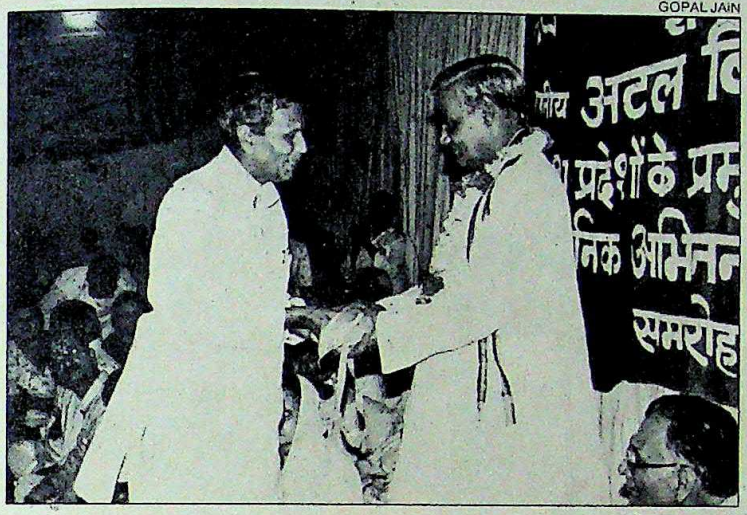
BJP leaders, however, were at pains to argue that the replacement did not mean the party was turning its back on Gandhi, whom they admitted into their pantheon only in 1980. Explaining the rationale for their recommendation, Krishanlal Sharma, convenor of the 12-member working group, said: "The Gandhian approach and socialism are not cohesive concepts. One stands for decentralisation and the other advocates statism. The concept was a legacy from our days in the Janata and we decided to have a more objective look at it." Murli Manohar Joshi, another member of the group, argued that the dissatisfaction with Gandhian socialism persisted because the leadership failed to convince the rank and file that it was no departure from integral humanism. "Workers continued to think that socialism meant statism while the leadership accepted socialism because of its concern for social justice."

There is little doubt that Gandhian socialism was never accepted even in the party's highest echelons. Said Vijaya Raje Scindia, the party's vice-president, who had opposed the creed when the party adopted it at its plenary session in Bombay in December 1980: "The concept was adopted in a hurry then and was sought to be imposed from the top levels of the party. I was personally never in its favour."

Media commentators have also interpreted the recommendation as a capitulation to a section in the party which wants to go back to the principles and policies of the Jan Sangh. Party President Atal Behari Vajpayee had himself posed this question when he suggested the setting up of the group at the last meeting of its executive. The group did not answer the poser directly but related the events leading to the formation of the party and concluded that the party had "taken the correct decision when it decided to merge Jan Sangh into the Janata Party, a wise decision when it decided to come out of the Janata Party and a right decision when it chose to be BJP".

In a way, the group's evasiveness reflects the continuing ambivalence on this issue within the party. Vajpayee heads the small group which mainly comprises non-Jan Sangh, non-RSS elements like Sikander Bakht, Rajya Sabha member Jaswant Singh, former law minister Shanti Bhushan and leading lawyer Ram Jethmalani, who believe there is no going back. Leading the hardliners is Scindia who feels the party has gained nothing by adopting principles and postures which differ little from other parties like the Congress(I) or Janata. Rooting for them from the sidelines is former Bharatiya Jan Sangh president Balraj Madhok who says derisively that the BJP has become a "B team" of the Congress(I). Many media commentators agree that the main crisis is one of identity, of the party being seen as no different from the Congress(I). As *The Tribune* noted: "It does not pay to be an imitation of the Congress(I) when the original is basking in the bright

GOPAL JAIN



Atal Behari Vajpayee at the meet: matter of fact

> "There is a section within the BJP which wants to make it a Hindu Party (but) the Hindu is liberal, secular and he wants a party whose doors will be open to all."
>
> ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE

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कि, हिन्दी एक महान् भाषा बने'

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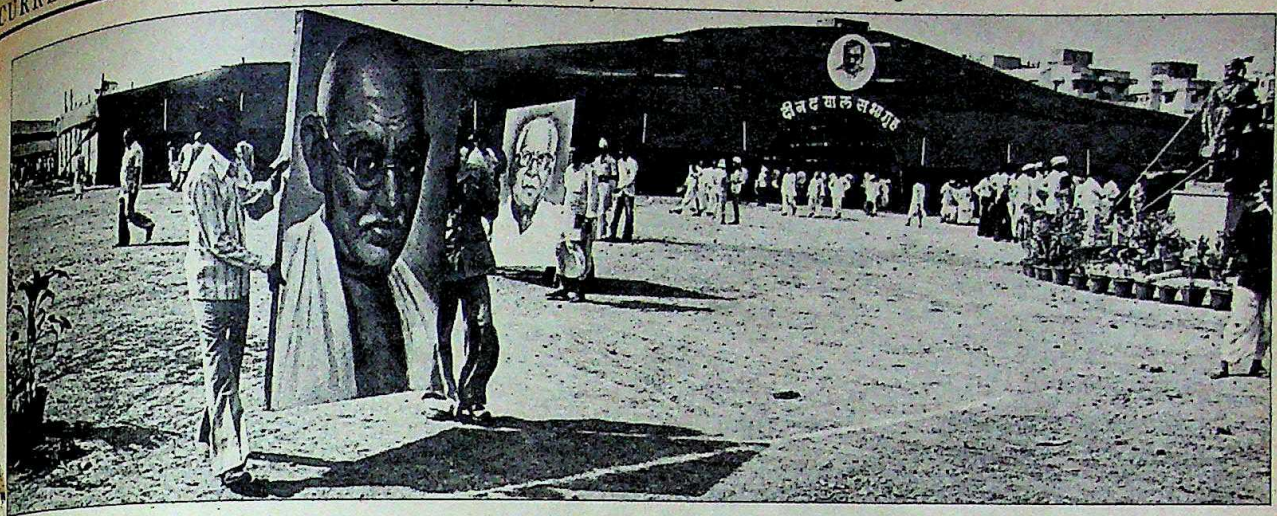

BJP plenum in 1980: winds of change

sunshine of an electoral landslide."

Vajpayee is very forthright and clear-headed on this issue. Unlike the hardliners who will not even admit that there are two streams of opinion within the party, Vajpayee does not hesitate to admit that "there is a section within the BJP which wants to make it a Hindu party because the Hindus have no party of their own." This section points to the way in which the Congress(I) fruitfully projected itself as a party for the Hindus in the last general elections and seeks to "thwart the Congress(I) in its attempt to become the party of Hindus." But Vajpayee, arguing differently, says there is no such thing as Hindu interests. "Hindus identify themselves with the national interest," he points out. He also believes that there is nothing like the Hindu vote and says: "The Hindu is liberal, secular and he wants a party whose doors will be open to all. Hindu society can never be fundamentalist."

According to him, the BJP faces no "identity crisis"; what it needs to resolve is "whether it wants to remain a small pressure group or become a national alternative. No sectarian party can do this (the latter) and those who fight elections know this." Jaswant Singh agrees: "BJP's current problems are the problems of growth, of evolving from a small, homogeneous pressure group to a heterogeneous, widely dispersed party. The BJP was in the process of growth when it received a check. Hence, the introspection."

And this introspection is likely to last for some time. Says K.R. Malkani, former editor of the *Organiser*: "The process of crystallising political lessons from electoral reverses is still on. The BJP has been at the crossroads since the elections and will be there for some more time." Pramod Mahajan, party secretary and member of the working group, feels it will be at least a year before the party acquires a new and clearer image.

Yet it is somewhat disingenuous to say that only the electoral losses have induced the introspection. The BJP has faced an identity problem ever since it split away from the Janata in April 1980. Even while doing well electorally—the party's high point was the April 1982 election in Himachal Pradesh when it almost pipped the Congress(I) to the electoral post—it realised that its image was its albatross.

A keynote paper, remarkable for its rhetoric and its optimism, circulated at a workers' camp in September 1981, had argued that if only the party showed faith and confidence in its newly-acquired secular and liberal image, it would truly emerge as a national alternative (INDIA TODAY, April 15, 1982). At one point the document argued: "Only our programme and policies can save the country; only our leaders are tested and trusted, only ours is a nation-wide party. We work up to only 25 per cent of our capacity." The paper had extrapolated that the party should win 243 seats in the next parliamentary elections (it won two of the 224 it contested). But as the INDIA TODAY report had pointed out, even then an intense debate raged in the party over its image: the progressives were dominant because the party was on an electoral upswing.

Some media observers were arguing last fortnight that the liberals in the BJP were now on the retreat. But they could not produce sufficient evidence to back their observation. Jaswant Singh, one of the liberals, maintained that he felt under no kind of pressure: "I have not felt inhibited. I continue to hold all the responsibilities I had."

Yet it is undeniable that the party is groping towards a new equilibrium in which some of the mannequins on its shop window would be changed: the report of the working group discussed at Bhopal last fortnight noted that the party was acquiring some "stay-puts". Vajpayee signalled that he was volunteering to be the first change when he announced at a press conference that he would not contest the presidential elections due in November. Significantly enough, Vajpayee announced the decision in response to a query on what steps the party proposed to take to bridge the "communication gap" between the leadership and the workers.

The party's ambitions have not been pruned: Vajpayee noted with satisfaction that the report had said the BJP should put up candidates for all 542 Lok Sabha seats in the next elections. And the attempt to give the party a clearer image has already begun. The Bhopal resolution that India should make a nuclear bomb, a stand which raised memories of the Jan Sangh's hawkish postures on defence, was the first step in repositioning itself as the party most concerned with the nation's security. Said Vajpayee: "We pre-empted Rajiv."

But as a member of the working group said, the party will not make the same mistake it did in 1980 of hastily accepting ill-defined policies and stands. Vajpayee himself was categorical that the issue of becoming a reincarnation of the Jan Sangh was closed for good. "Whether I remain the president or not, there is no going back," he told INDIA TODAY. But the debate will go in the party on all other issues. As Jaswant Singh said: "The mistake will be to conclude that the debate has concluded."

—AJAY KUMAR in Bhopal

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ASSASSINATION TRIAL

Courtroom Dramatics

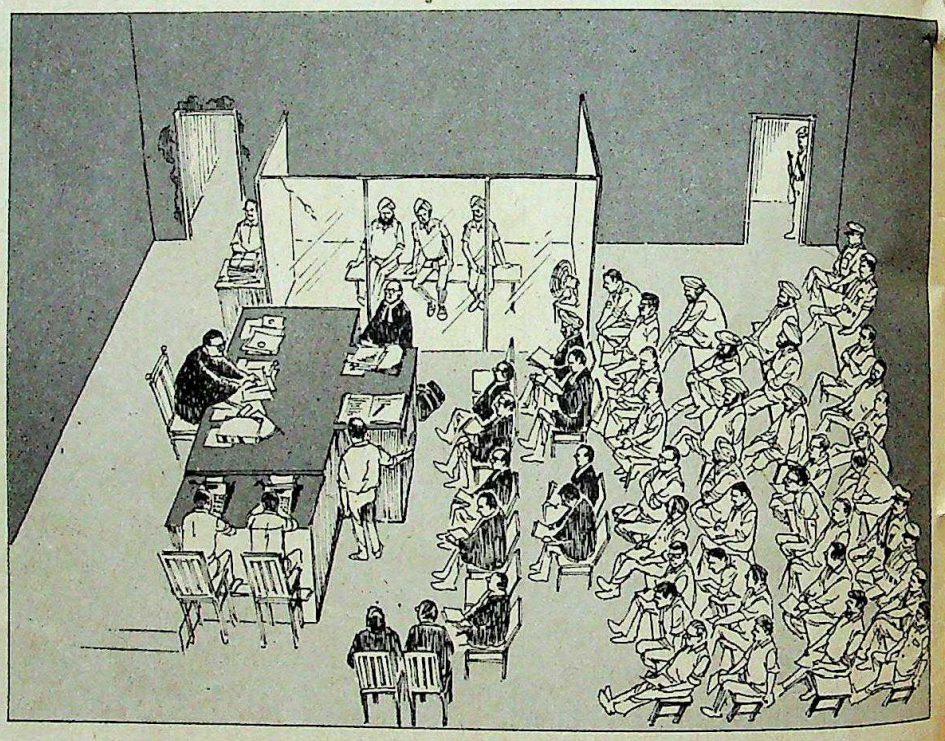
Beyond, in the bare room of the (Red) Fort's military barracks the eight faced charges of murder and conspiracy to murder... the accused laughed and joked. Water-carriers wandered in to stare at the proceedings. And while legal briefs occupied the benches, banana skins strewed the floor....

Brian McConnel's *Assassination*

ALMOST four decades later, the setting for the trial in another Gandhi assassination was remarkably similar, even down to the mood of the accused. Instead of the Red Fort where Nathuram Godse and his co-conspirators were tried, it is a maximum security cell block in one corner of Delhi's Tihar jail that has been hastily converted into the makeshift stage for the trial of the three men accused of conspiring to assassinate the late prime minister Indira Gandhi last October. But apart from the bullet-proof glass cubicle that separates the three men, Satwant Singh, one of the two alleged assassins, his uncle Kehar Singh and Delhi police sub-inspector Balbir Singh, from the rest of the courtroom, the setting and historic significance is probably much the same as it was for the trial back in 1948.

The courtroom itself is bare and freshly whitewashed with barred windows shrouded for the first time in printed curtains. Access is through a Judas gate in one of the high, steel prison gates where all privileged to attend the trial—mainly journalists—are frisked physically and with metal detectors. Inside, armed personnel of the Tamil Nadu Special Police lounge around in the small courtyard and in the dank corridor leading to the rectangular courtroom. Despite the extra-precautionary security and the historic importance of the trial, however, there is a surprising lack of tension or expectancy in the air. The accused are brought in early from their nearby prison cell and wander around the courtroom, laughing and joking with the gaggle of rustic relatives who attend the sessions every day, or in whispered conversation with their defence counsels. At certain moments, the scene seems to resemble a rehearsal for a play.

Satwant, dressed in skin-tight jeans, sneakers and a synthetic sweat-shirt, appears the most unconcerned of the three. A wiry, well-proportioned man with a scraggle of beard framing his youthful, aquiline face, he looks more like a delinquent college student than the man who, even as over 300 of his security colleagues stood within shouting distance, allegedly gunned down in cold blood the woman he was sworn to protect. Neither is there the feral glint of the fanatic in his light-coloured eyes. There is instead, a quiet and deliberate defiance in his demeanour and the sudden smiles that he flashes frequently during the proceedings at his friends at the back of the courtroom. Unlike the other two accused, he is not afraid to look the curious reporters in the assembly in the eye. He walks with a limp, a legacy of the bullet still lodged in his spinal column, and excuses himself often to visit the bathroom opposite. Not that his presence is necessary. The proceedings are conducted in English, a language he is obviously unfamiliar with and he sits inside his glass cage, flanked by his co-accused, looking restless and bored.



An artist's impression of the special court

The other two, the stout bushy-bearded Balbir and Kehar, a meek-looking clerical type, seem more conscious of the seriousness of their position and the sanctity of the courtroom. They, like the rest of the assemblage, respectfully rise when the Additional Sessions Judge, Mahesh Chandra, a no-nonsense and erudite man, enters the court.

But even governed by a man of Chandra's obvious judicial capabilities, there was an eerie, *Alice in Wonderland*-like atmosphere in the court when the trial resumed earlier this month. Not so much because of the studied nonchalance of the accused or the casual attitude in the court with curious onlookers and security men wandering in and out which effectively belies what is supposed to be one of the most historic and sensational trials in decades. Neither is it the sight of the Senior Public Prosecutor, K.L. Arora, absently doodling on a legal pad throughout the proceedings.

The real reason is a short, bespectacled, balding man with a resonant voice and a mischievous glint in his eyes who has dominated the show, upstaging even Satwant Singh and Judge Mahesh Chandra. With his black coat and exaggerated gestures, P.N. Lekhi, Satwant's defence counsel, looks suspiciously like an out-of-work magician. The theatrical flourishes and the dramatic change in his

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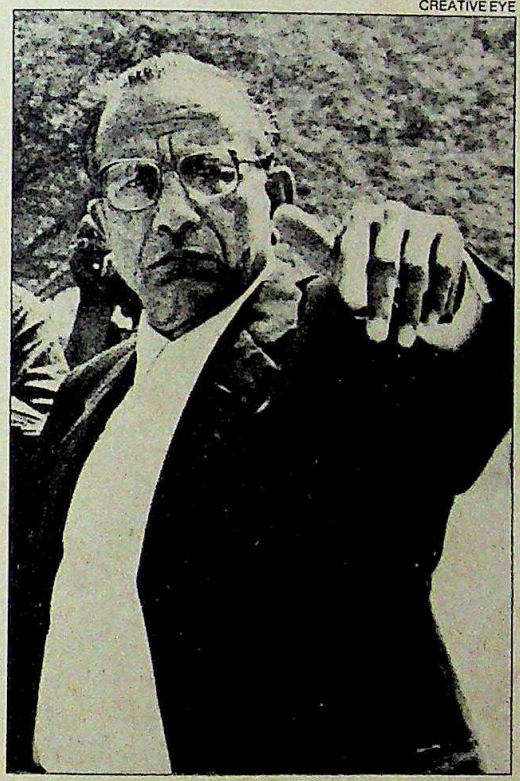
vocal tone when making some telling remark only adds to the image. Even when extracting files from the two bulging canvas carrybags his aides bring, he makes it look like he is producing rabbits from a hat. Lekhi, if anything, is a consummate showman, turning towards the audience each time he makes a particularly dramatic point, and if the first few days of the trial are anything to go by, he is determined to squeeze every last drop from this case however enormously the odds are stacked against him.

Judging by his reputation, however, that was somewhat expected. Lekhi first hit the public eye during the Janata regime as government counsel in the headline-grabbing Shah Commission hearings in 1978. His judicial standing, however, has been largely coloured by the fact that he is a senior member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, in fact, its vice-president till just before the start of the Indira Gandhi assassination trial when he resigned after being refused permission by the party high command to represent Satwant Singh. It is obvious that Lekhi has staked his reputation on a case few lawyers were willing to accept because of its sensitive connotations. He also seems to have chosen the related strategy of dragging out the trial as long as possible and so far, he seems to have succeeded admirably in this intention. He is a scrappy, pugnacious legal bulldog and the bones he has so far been worrying at may belong to the wrong skeletons but they are skeletons all the same.

Last week, for instance, he tore gaping holes in the manner in which doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences had left glaring discrepancies in the official records for the treatment and post-mortem on Mrs Gandhi. He established that many columns had been left blank leading to confusion about the time of death and whether or not, in fact, a post-mortem had actually been performed on Mrs Gandhi's body. The doctor who had done the actual post-mortem testified that Mrs Gandhi died at 2.23 p.m., whereupon Lekhi dramatically produced hospital records to show that Mrs Gandhi had been given nine pints of blood at 3 p.m. "I want to prove to the court that there was no post-mortem done on Mrs Gandhi. The report they have produced is a forged document. I have visited the institute and myself paced out and timed the activities of the doctors involved. What happened in the hospital was all a farce," he says.

The prosecution, in turn, accuses Lekhi of staging the farce and wasting the time of the court on irrelevancies. But Lekhi has the stage at the moment and he is determined to keep it. Often, he has the doctors under cross examination fumbling and hesitatingly evasive. But they are evidently reluctant to reveal that the stature of the woman contributed to the shoddy record-keeping and so the show goes on, with Lekhi contriving to use every trick at the disposal of his nimble fingers. Earlier, he electrified the soporific court by charging that the reason her skull was not opened during the post-mortem was to conceal the fact that she was drugged—and that too by members of her own family. What Lekhi was explicitly implying was that the conspiracy was hatched by members of Mrs Gandhi's own family. "Why," he thundered at one somewhat less than coherent point, "was Menaka Gandhi thrown out of the house lock, stock and barrel?" Making a juxtaposition that seemed mystifying, he went on: "Sonia Gandhi had received Indian citizenship only a few months before."

CREATIVE EYE



Defence counsel P.N. Lekhi: playing to the gallery

Whatever his reasoning, his outlandish and sometimes rather far-fetched theories have, however, succeeded in turning the case on its head. He has, for instance, also adopted the stubbornly-held line that there was a third assassin present who is being shielded as part of an allegedly elaborate cover-up and that none of Satwant's bullets hit Mrs Gandhi. (Satwant himself has claimed that there were bullets being fired from all directions but the investigators did not care to look beyond him and his alleged accomplice Beant Singh who was shot dead within minutes by commandos.) Lekhi is out to prove that some of the fatal bullets were fired from behind Mrs Gandhi, insinuating that there was a third assassin involved. In support, he produces voluminous medical encyclopaedias and diagrams to prove his point that certain bullets could not have taken the trajectory they did unless they were fired from somebody behind her. Lekhi's tenacious and aggressive arguments stem from the careful homework he does and doctors can only grudgingly admit that though his theories cannot be proved, they cannot be totally disproved either.

The elaborate and complex legal web that Lekhi is trying to spin has succeeded in throwing the prosecution on the defensive. Arora only occasionally interrupts his doodling to raise objections but they are usually overruled by Chandra who seems determined to play strictly by the judicial book. A sharp, intelligent man with over 100 murder cases behind him, Chandra is bent on allowing Lekhi to vent his steam. But conscious of the defence strategy of prolonging the case, he does his best to hurry it along, rephrasing complicated questions and eliminating others. "This court will not be influenced by any extraneous factors," he says, "I will make my decisions strictly on the merits of the case."

That final decision may be a long time in the making. So far, only a handful of the 188 witnesses have been called to testify and the case could well drag on for months which suits Lekhi admirably. He is well aware that the key witnesses like R.K. Dhawan, H.Y. Sharada Prasad and the other actual eye-witnesses to the assassination or its immediate aftermath are the prosecution's main weapons, and he is trying to score all the points he possibly can before putting them under his microscopic scrutiny. In that sense, the trial is only going through a warming up process. But like everything connected with her life, the trial connected with Mrs Gandhi's death promises to get hotter and more controversial as the wider dimensions of the courtroom drama unfold.

—DILIP BOBB

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UTTAR PRADESH

The Householders

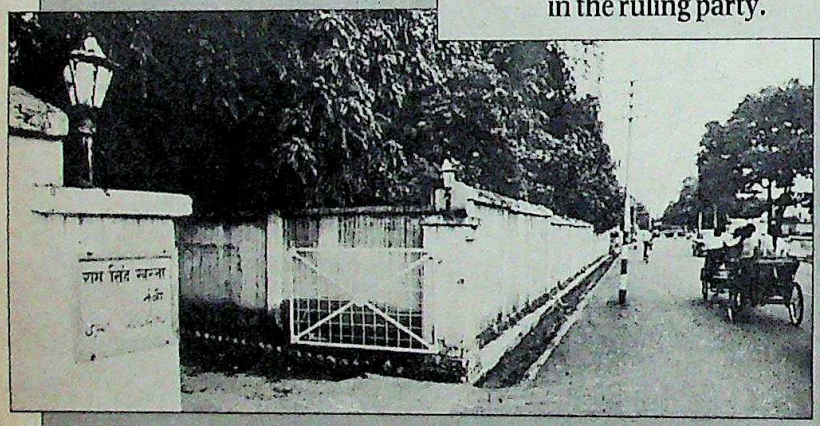
OLD HABITS die hard, as is amply demonstrated by former legislators and ministers in Uttar Pradesh. Deprived of yesterday's pomp and power, many of them now cling to the remnants of their past glory with amazing tenacity. Among these held-over loaves of office are the well-guarded, palatial houses that were given them when they were in power. It is this enduring love of theirs for reminders of the past that has forced the state Government to sit up and take note. Last fortnight, the authorities started legal proceedings against over a dozen former ministers, including two former chief ministers, and over 50 MLA's to evict them from the houses they have been unauthorisedly occupying. Admitted Chief Minister Narain Dutt Tiwari: "It is true that we have given a number of notices to irregular occupants who are both politicians and journalists but unfortunately they have not responded. The Government has now decided to launch legal cases against all of them."

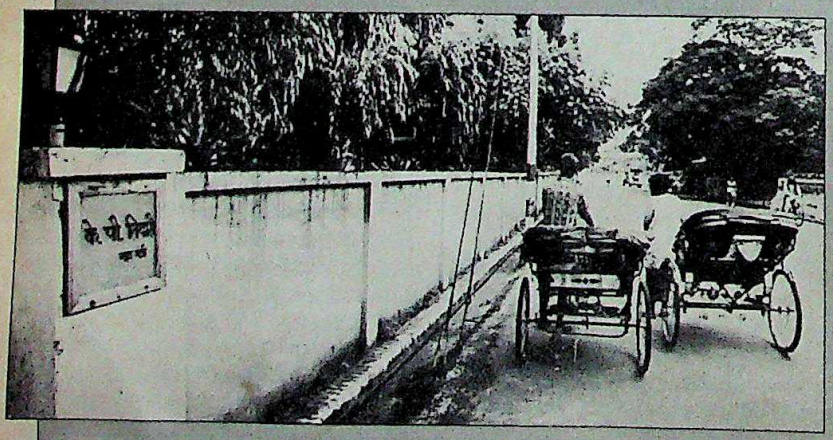
The Government chose the soft line on the eviction of former ministers and MLA's from official residences because many of them are still powerful politicians and lobby leaders in the ruling party.

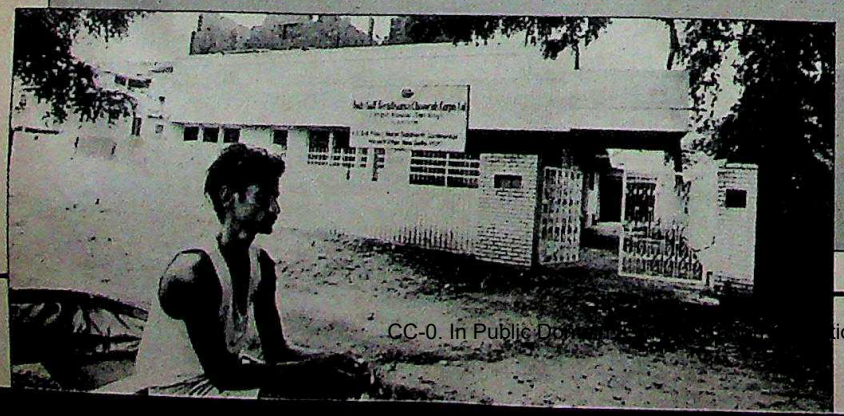
The Government's belated action against the recalcitrant politicians came when Tiwari's persuasive tactics failed to move them. The Government chose the soft line because many of them are still powerful politicians and lobby leaders in the ruling party. Among the former ministers who are not entitled to ministerial bungalows but have not vacated the houses allotted to them earlier are Balaram Singh Yadav, Brahm Dutt, former chief minister Sripat Misra, Nirmal Khatri, Yashpal Singh, Swami Prashad Singh and Satyendra Gudia. Though all of them have been allotted flats in New Delhi after their election to the Lok Sabha in December, they have yet to vacate their houses in Lucknow.

But they are only the latest in the long line of such politicians. In the state capital itself, there are at least a dozen Congress(I) leaders, like Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mohsina Kidwai, the Congress(I)'s Working President Kamalapati Tripathi, Lok Dal's Vice-President Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna and Union Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who have retained their official houses in Lucknow. Barring Singh, who is the first politician to pay market rent of Rs 900 a month for a government house none of them has even cleared his house rent arrears and some of them, like Kidwai and Tripathi, have had the houses in their possession for over a decade now. The Government's objections are not so much to the politicians who hold some elected posts even now, but to those who do not have any excuse for retaining the expensive six-room houses in the city's posh localities. Even former ministers like Ammar Rizvi, K.P. Tiwari, Ram Singh Khanna, Bachcha Pathak, Sri Krishan Goel, and Gulab Sehra, who were denied party tickets for both the Lok Sabha and the legislature, refuse to vacate their bungalows. Discloses an Estate Department official: "These politicians have created an awkward situation for us. Since we are reluctant to take action against them, we can't haul up any other illegal squatter on government land."

Photographs by S. PREMI







(From top) Name-plates adorn unvacated official residences of ex-ministers Ram Singh Khanna and K.P. Tiwari; and former chief minister Sripat Misra's own house which has been rented out

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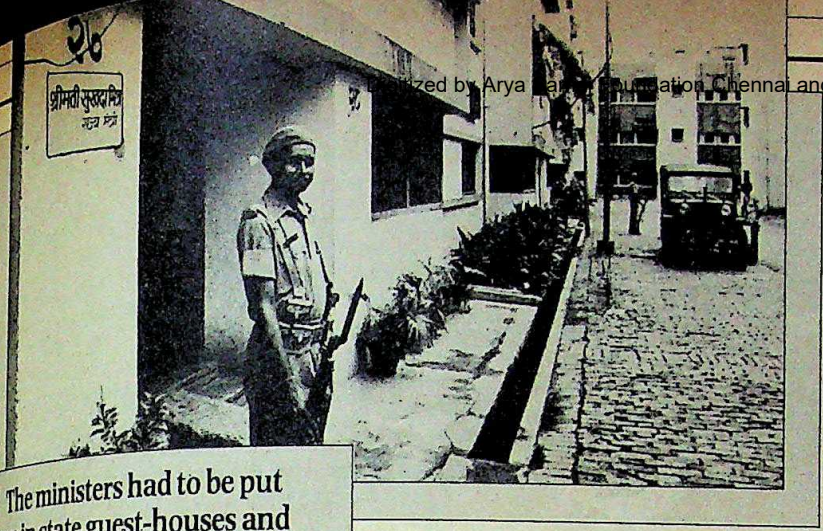


Entrance to Sukhda Mishra's one-room apartment: cramped

The ministers had to be put up in state guest-houses and private accommodation rented by public sector undertakings, while some had to make do with small, one-room apartments in an MLA's hostel.

Congressmen themselves have protested to the party high command over the housing episode. Says Salig Ram Shukla, a former state Congress(I) general secretary: "In the centenary year of the Congress, it is the duty of all of us to project a clean image. All former ministers, MLA's and MP's can contribute to this by vacating the houses and clearing their arrears. If they don't do it now, our image will badly suffer." Over a dozen Congress(I) MLA's have asked the chief minister to at least direct those ruling party leaders who own houses in Lucknow to vacate their official residences. The names of Rizvi and former chief minister Sripat Misra were specifically mentioned in this context. While Rizvi owns an old ancestral house in Kaisarbagh and is constructing a new one in Alganj, Misra's sons too have a palatial house in Lucknow's prestigious Dalibagh locality. But both Rizvi and Misra have retained the huge houses allotted to them during their tenure as minister and chief minister respectively.

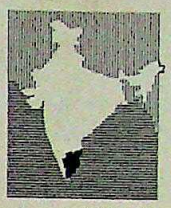
Delay tactics by these unauthorised occupants have added to the Government's problems. It has so far failed to find suitable accommodation for 17 ministers of the present state Cabinet and over 200 of the 425 newly-elected MLA's. As the assembly's session began last fortnight, there were ugly scenes in the MLA's hostel where legislators from both the ruling party and the opposition groups fought with hostel officials, demanding accommodation. The ministers had to be put up in the state guest-houses and private accommodation rented by public sector undertakings. While Cooperation Minister Arun Kumar Singh spent over five months in a suite in the state guest-house, many others like Sibte Razi, Ajit Pratap Singh, Mrs Sukhda Mishra and Jai Ram Verma have had to make do with small, one-room apartments in one of the MLA's hostels.

While 20 of the 37 ministers in Tiwari's cabinet have been lucky enough to retain their ministerial residences due to their continuity in office, the remaining 17 had to write over a dozen times to the chief minister, who holds charge of the Estate Department, to provide them with accommodation. After two months of correspondence and reminders, 13 of them were finally given houses in May but when they sent their staff for taking possession, they found the houses still occupied by the previous allottees. Similarly, of the 212 MLA's who were given accommodation, only about 150 could take possession of the flats allotted to them. The harried Estate Department officials have thrown up their hands in despair. With only 553 houses available for allotment to MLA's and MLC's they have been unable to provide a residence to each one of them, because over half of the houses are already illegally occupied. It is a measure of sorts that there were only 20 such cases in 1967, while the present figure stands at a shocking 200. Says a senior officer of the department: "In four out of 10 cases, the MLA's and MLC's refuse to move out after their defeat. I think the Government must evolve a scheme under which they are entitled to retain houses and get pension also." The whole unsavoury episode can only be taken as a sign of the times since never before has the state politician's credibility plunged so low.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with S. PREMI

TAMIL NADU

Curious Case



MADRAS Police Commissioner S. Sripal finds himself in the unenviable position of being damned if he does and damned if he does not. On the one hand he is obliged to arrest A.M. Paulraj, editor of the trade weekly *Vaniga Ottrumai* on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by state Assembly Speaker P.H. Pandian for breach of the Assembly's privilege. On the other, the first bench of the Madras High Court specifically ordered that Paulraj should not be arrested pending the disposal of his appeal against the dismissal of his earlier petition challenging the arrest warrant.

With contrary directions emanating from the judiciary and the legislature, Sripal found himself the helpless victim of a curious constitutional crisis in the state. If he arrests Paulraj he could be hauled up for contempt of court. If he does not he could be cited for the same offence as Paulraj—breach of the Assembly's privilege. The police commissioner was tight-lipped about what he planned to do, but it was apparent that this was one instance when no action was the best action. Paulraj was in hiding, and the police could say they were unable to trace him.

Paulraj's dilemma perhaps best symbolised the growing legislative storm in the state that has been brewing for some time and has now predictably set the state legislature and the judiciary on a confrontation course. It all began with an editorial by Paulraj in the February 1983 issue of his weekly in which he wrote: "Recently our chief minister announced that the incidence of rowdyism in the state has been drastically reduced. Only now we realise that all the rowdies in the state have contested elections, become honourable MLA's and entered the legislature. Naturally rowdyism on the streets has decreased... The dignity, honour, decorum and discipline so native to the state of Tamil Nadu have been scattered to the winds by the antics of rowdies, *goondas* and loafers who had gained entry to the legislature as MLA's."

Strong words, and they brought the wrath of the MLA's down on Paulraj's head. The privileges committee of the then assembly recommended one week's imprisonment for him, but the recommendation was not acted upon. However the next—eighth—assembly took up the

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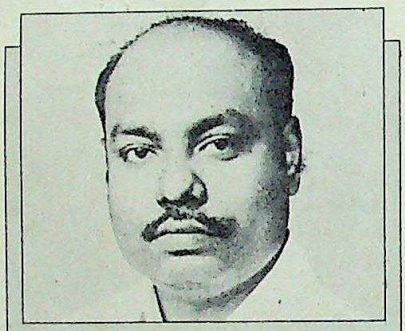
matter again and sentenced Paulraj to two weeks imprisonment, and initially the legislators received a measure of satisfaction. Judge S. Mohan of the high court refused to admit Paulraj's petition on the ground that the legislature was a continuing body, and therefore the editor's contention that it was not in order for the eighth Assembly to act on the recommendations of the privileges committee of the seventh was not applicable. The judge also cited Article 212 of the Constitution which lays down that "the validity of any proceedings in the legislature shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure."

Only a day before the judgement Pandian had crowed: "The House is supreme. Nobody, no power on earth can interfere with us." But a closer look at Mohan's judgement revealed that it was not as great a victory for the legislators as it was made out to be. The judge had not conceded blanket immunity to the legislature. He had not laid down that nothing happening in a legislature could be called into question in a court. But what was most responsible for raising the legislators hackles was an *obiter dicta* Mohan tacked on to his judgement in which he quoted former President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan as saying: "Our representatives who will speak on behalf of our nation should be cultured, disinterested and public-sprited persons and not those who are lost in petty personal, local, caste and communal squabbles and succumb to the seduction of power." After the quotation the judge posed a relevant question: "Is it too much of an expectation or too high a demand? Let history answer."

"His lordship should not have said that. I shall deal with this on behalf of the House," threatened Pandian. He was clearly brandishing his sword of legislative privilege. And as if he was replying to the judge's quotation from Radhakrishnan, he came up with a quote from the late US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "We have therefore reached the point as a nation where we must take action to save the constitution from the court and the court from itself. We want a supreme court which will do justice under the Constitution, not over it. In our courts we want a government of laws and not of men."

Paulraj's defence before the first bench of the high court was the same as before Mohan: that the eighth Assembly could not work on the recommendations of the privileges committee of the seventh. And this time the bench stayed his arrest. But in a consequent statement the speaker said the Assembly's arrest warrant was still "operative". He went a step farther by reiterating categorically that "no officer of the House, or members of the legislature in whom powers are vested for regulating the procedure or conduct of business shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in the exercise of their powers and performance of their functions authorised under the Constitution and the House."

The irony of the situation is that the sensitivity of the legislature in Tamil Nadu to breaches of its privilege is in direct proportion to growing attacks from people like Paulraj and satirist Cho Ramaswamy against what they feel is its abuse of that privilege within the House. Ramaswamy, the redoubtable editor of the popular Tamil fortnightly, *Tughlaq*, has launched what leader of the House and Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan termed "repeated assaults on the dignity of the House" while referring to a privilege motion against him to the Committee.



"The House is supreme. Nobody, no power on earth, can interfere with us."

P.H. PANDIAN
Tamil Nadu assembly speaker

Though Ramaswamy does have a reputation for taking up cudgels on behalf of all manner of causes, Paulraj does not fit the image of a crusading journalist. The 42-year-old editor belongs to the Christian Nadar community, and his journal—the circulation of which has never exceeded 10,000—had been conceived as a mouthpiece for the Christian Nadar business community that would help it wrest concessions from the Government. The editorials would lambast the Government if promised concessions to the community did not materialise. It was apparently during one of those depressed moods of the community that Paulraj picked on the legislative Assembly. A lower-middle class man who lives in a dingy slum in west Madras, Paulraj is a devout Congress(I) loyalist who wears only khadi and according to his wife "wept uncontrollably when he heard the news of Mrs Gandhi's death."

Ramaswamy and Paulraj seem to have reason enough for their persistent broadsides if the record of the Tamil Nadu assembly proceedings is anything to go by. Once, when he was deputy speaker, Pandian had actually challenged DMK member Rahman Khan to a physical duel. He has been guilty of uttering unprintable epithets quite often, and gained notoriety in the earlier assembly for expunging his own remarks on quite a few occasions when he was in the chair. The general standard of debate in the House can be gauged from the fact that when Nedunchezhiyan proposed the two weeks imprisonment for Paulraj and Rahman Khan of the DMK brought an amendment to reduce the sentence to one week, every bit of the 45-minute-long proceedings had to be expunged. On the day Pandian asserted the supremacy of the House while referring to Paulraj's petition before the high court he had to expunge 15 minutes of unsavoury mudslinging between no less a person than Local Administration Minister P.U. Shanmugham and the ever ready Rahman Khan. But Pandian, now serving his third term in the Tamil Nadu Assembly is the most notorious of the MLA's for pugnaciousness.

If the whole issue of the judiciary versus the legislature comes to a boil it is difficult to predict the possibilities. The Supreme Court has ruled that the legislature and the judiciary are both supreme in their respective spheres. The unanswered question is: who is more supreme when their spheres overlap? Cho Ramaswamy says: "Courts are entitled to see what the privileges of a House are. They can go into whether a particular thing is a privilege or not. But whatever it is the right of obscenity is not one of the privileges of even this House with all its aptitude for it. People are entitled to know how their representatives behave inside the House." Over to Pandian.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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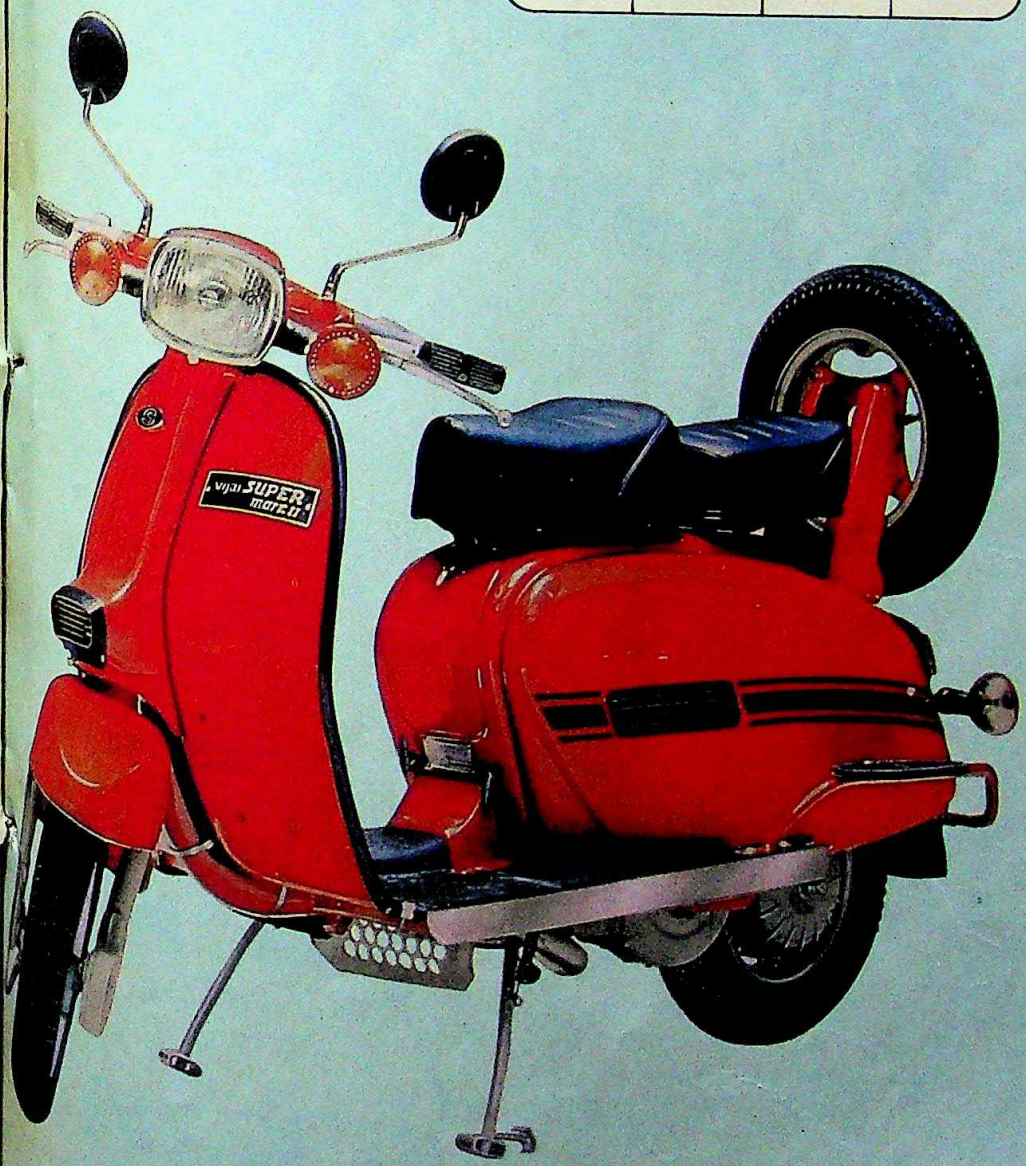

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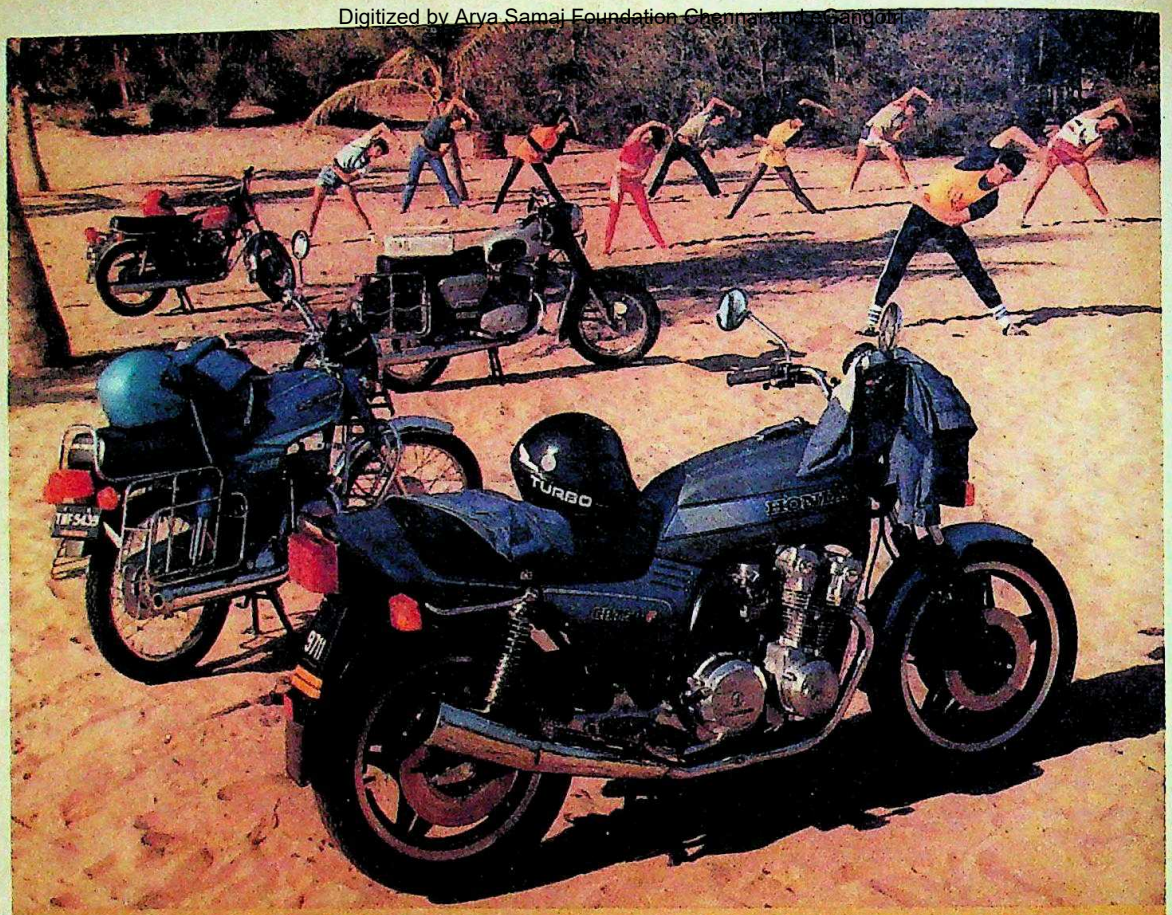

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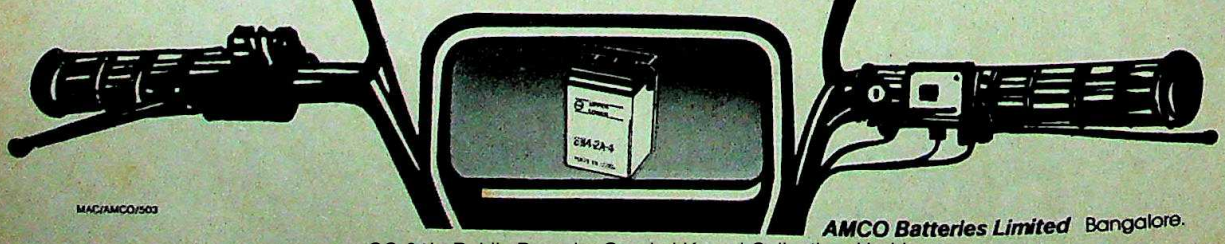

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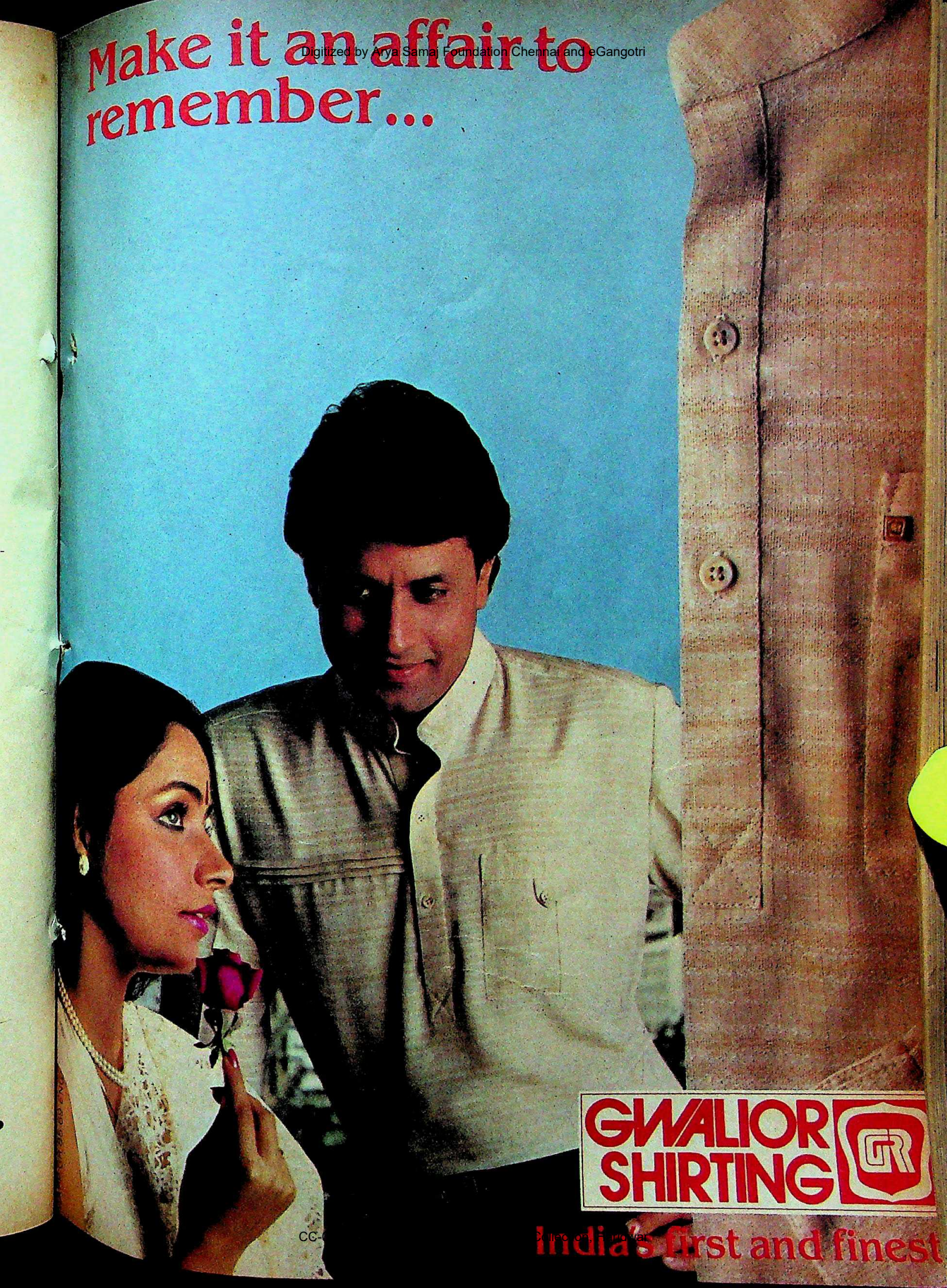

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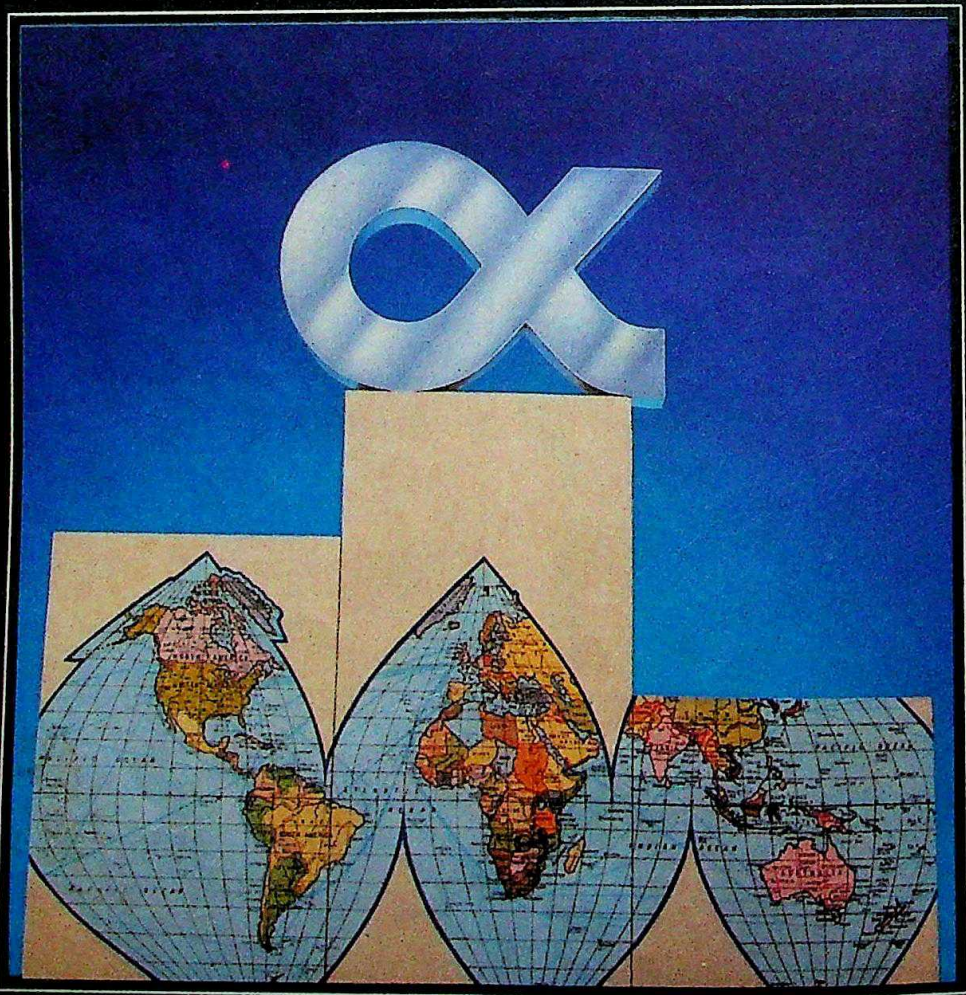

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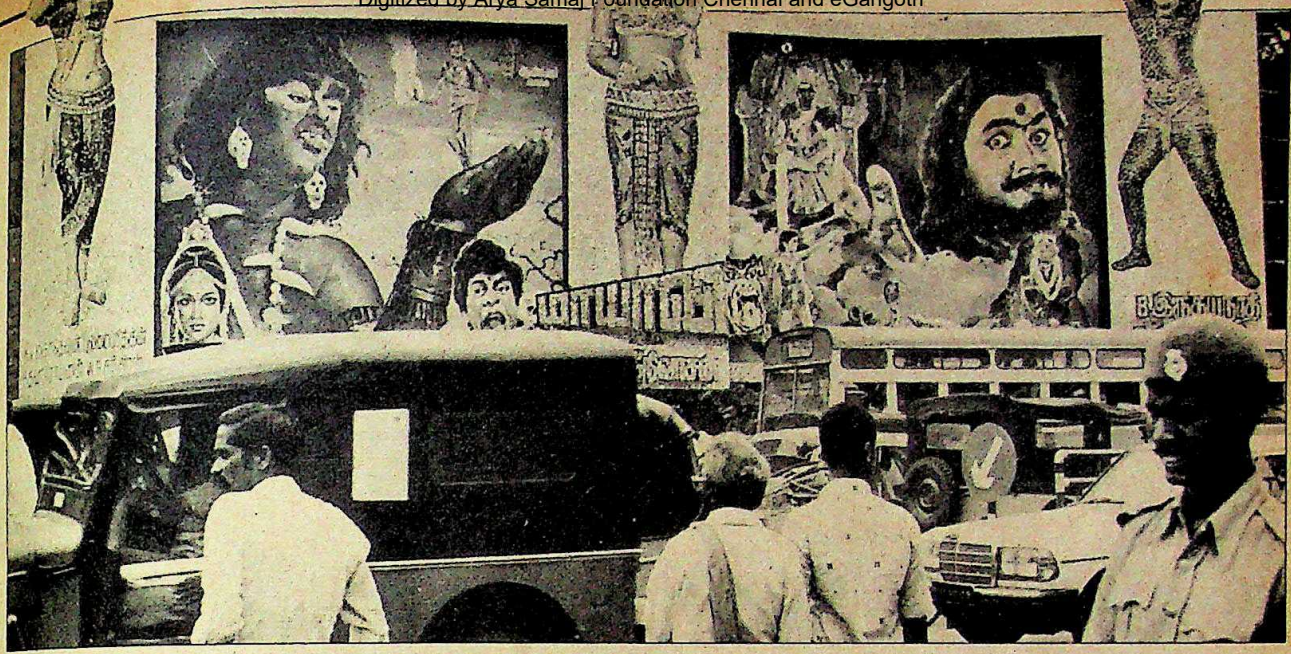

Hoardings on a busy thoroughfare: traffic hazards

TAMIL NADU

Board Ban

IT WAS an ironic step for a state which has been ruled for the past eight years by a former matinee idol. Last fortnight the Tamil Nadu Government successfully pushed through a Bill in the state Assembly empowering it to take over all cinema hoardings in the state as well as those being used for political or commercial purposes. Piloted by Local Administration Minister P.U. Shanmugam, the novel and sweeping Bill went to the extent of banning the erection of any hoardings by private parties in Madras city with immediate effect, and would cover the entire state as soon as the President gave his assent to the Bill and it became an Act.

The reasons for the rather drastic move had been staring the citizens of Madras in the face. Seductive, if not downright obscene and vulgar hoardings had been mushrooming throughout the state, especially in Madras city. Scantily-clad heroines loomed over the traffic at busy intersections, and were assuming, if they had not already, all the dimensions of a serious traffic hazard. For example, bus drivers and motorists hurtling down the steep Gemini fly-over in Madras were distracted by the sight of a larger-than-life bikini-clad belle, with unfavourable consequences for traffic safety and human life.

The statement of objects and reasons for the Bill noted that "there has been a haphazard growth of hoardings in the state leading to traffic hazards and numerous accidents. Certain persons are unduly enriching themselves by erecting hoardings indiscriminately and exhibiting indecent and obscene advertisements on such hoardings." The Government was not off the mark in averring that obscene hoardings were being put up deliberately by private interests. A gigantic hoarding on a busy thoroughfare showing a half-naked woman suckling a baby was certainly not put up with the intention of plugging mother's milk. And an equally huge frame of a village belle bathing while a goat brought her brassiere had not been visualised to bring the delights of village life to city dwellers or promote the sale of undergarments.

The obscene hoarding menace had reached such a state in the city that even the generally low-key women's rights activists of Madras felt compelled to protest. A 50-strong procession of women marched down busy Mount Road on two occasions and pulled down what they considered obscene posters. Remarked Kalavathy Iyer, one of the marchers: "Our demonstrations were successful. Obscenity in the hoardings was beginning to know no limits, so we welcome the Government move to curb the menace."

The traffic police concur that the hoardings are a major traffic hazard. Said a senior police official: "We have not conducted any survey about accidents in the vicinity of hoardings. But it is the definite view of policemen enforcing the traffic rules that distracting hoardings on busy thoroughfares and traffic junctions greatly increase the chance of accidents."

But the moot question is whether the new piece of legislation will curb the obscene hoarding menace and prevent distracting hoardings from coming up at traffic junctions. The Bill, for instance, does not explicitly ban hoardings at traffic junctions. All that it does is enable the Government to take over all private hoardings—in other words all hoardings will henceforth be put up by the government agencies instead of private parties. The Bill also exempts any hoardings which carry advertisements about the trade or business being carried on at the site of the hoarding. Film hoardings in front of theatres can continue to inveigle and entice the drivers of passing vehicles with impunity.

Perhaps the only tangible effect of the Government measure will be to drive out of business the 50 or so large hoarding contractors in the state. Madras city itself has nearly 25 large, medium and small companies which lease hoarding sites from the Madras district collector and erect hoardings for their clients. The Government contends that the hoarding companies and contractors indulge in profiteering. In fact the Madras collectorate raised the rents for hoarding sites four years ago and said it would not renew the leases. But many of the contractors went to the high court chal-

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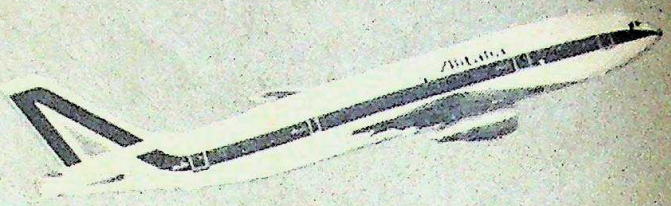

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lenging the collectorate's action.

The high court's final judgement is expected soon, but it will not make any difference to what is going to happen; the hoarding companies will lose their hoardings. But they at least will be compensated. What is causing greater anxiety is the prospect of unemployment for the 5,000-odd casual and contract labourers in the state engaged in erecting and painting hoardings. A typical case is that of 32-year-old S. Perumal, who supports a family of eight by erecting scaffolding for hoardings and earns over Rs 1,000 a month. Perumal has been in the business for 13 years, and says: "I have studied up to class five. But somehow with God's blessings I have been able to earn my livelihood in this trade. If the Government takes over the hoarding business altogether I don't know if I can continue to find work. I am worried about how I will feed my family."

The hoarding contractors are willing to compromise. Says Kishan Shah, president of the Tamil Nadu Outdoor Advertisers Association and a partner of one of the oldest hoarding companies in the state: "We are willing to negotiate with the Government. We are prepared to pay higher rents and will remove obscene hoardings. If the police show us hoardings that are traffic hazards we will remove them also." Sunder Swamy, a partner of Swamy Advertising, refutes the Government contention that the hoarding companies indulge in profiteering. Says he: "The hoarding companies make very modest profits. By the most liberal estimate the turnover in Madras city will not be more than Rs 2.5 crore, and outdoor advertising in Madras is the cheapest in India. So where is the necessity for this bill in Madras?"

The wide sweep of the bill also perplexes many. Says Geeta Rameshan, a lawyer: "If it was obscenity in hoardings that the Government wanted to tackle this bill wasn't necessary at all. The existing provisions in the Indian Penal Code are enough to proceed against obscene hoardings." Adds R.Vasudevan, chief executive of an outdoor advertising company: "What the Government should do is regulate the hoarding business, not take it over completely. Where is individual freedom if the state Government can take over a communications medium like this?" But with the state Government seemingly determined to go ahead with its plans, the city of Madras will somehow never look the same again.

—S.H.VENKATRAMANI

RAJASTHAN

Murder Charge

RAJASTHAN's best publicised criminal case took a major step forward last fortnight with the filing of a charge-sheet in court by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The CBI charged 16 policemen—including Deputy Superintendent of Police Kan Singh Bhati and Station House Officer Veerendra Singh—with February's murder of independent legislator Man Singh of Deeg in Bharatpur district. Two other policemen were accused of forgery and preparation of false reports.

The charge-sheet was the culmination of a massive exercise undertaken by the CBI in which nearly 500 people were questioned, including Adarsh Kishore Saxena, secretary to the former chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur, who resigned on February 23, 1985, in the wake of the incident. The CBI has also filed a list of 199 witnesses and 206 documents in the court of Giriraj Prasad Sharma, special judicial magistrate for CBI cases in Jaipur.

On February 20, Man Singh had rammed his vehicle, a remodelled weapons carrier, into a ruling party podium and then the helicopter that had brought Mathur to Deeg. According to the charge-sheet, Bhati was all set to leave for Jaipur in connection with these cases the next day, when he got calls from his superiors in Jaipur and Bharatpur.

The charge-sheet states that soon after, Bhati got together a posse of about two dozen policemen and went towards the market-place, with himself and Veerendra Singh in the lead. The tail was brought up by Bhati's jeep, whose driver was instructed to block the escape route.

When Man Singh, in his jeep full of supporters, approached them Bhati raised his hand to ask him to stop. Man Singh responded with a similar gesture and the carrier rolled forward and came up just short of Bhati's jeep. The market-place was crowded and Man Singh turned around to look before putting his carrier in reverse.

At that point, a constable, under Bhati's instructions, shot at and drove his bayonet into the vehicle's rear tyre. By now the police had ringed the legislator and his supporters from three sides, the front being blocked by the jeep. According to the charge-sheet, Bhati fired his revolver and also ordered his men to open fire. At least 10 shots were fired: Man Singh was hit in the head, chest and arm and his two supporters, Sumer Singh and Hari Singh, were also killed.

The CBI has not been able to explain Bhati's belligerence but it has found several holes in the initial police explanations. Contrary to what the police said, at no stage did Man Singh try to escape from the police nor did he ram his weapons carrier into the police jeep or open fire at them. The police allegation that

BHAWAN SINGH

The spot where Man Singh was killed

Man Singh and his supporters were armed and had created a law and order problem in the market was patently false because Man Singh and his group were unarmed. Also, after smashing the podium and the helicopter, Man Singh had made no attempt to hide.

There was other evidence of continuing discord between the CBI and the state Government. The CBI had sought permission to charge 18 policemen with murder but the Government gave its sanction, belatedly, to prosecute only 13. But the CBI took advantage of a loophole in the sanction order to prosecute three more policemen. The standard format of the sanction order ends with a clause which permits prosecution for "(and) any other offence punishable under the law in connection with this case". The CBI capitalised on this opening. Whether the judge finds the allegation of murder against all of them valid, will be decided when the charges are framed by the court.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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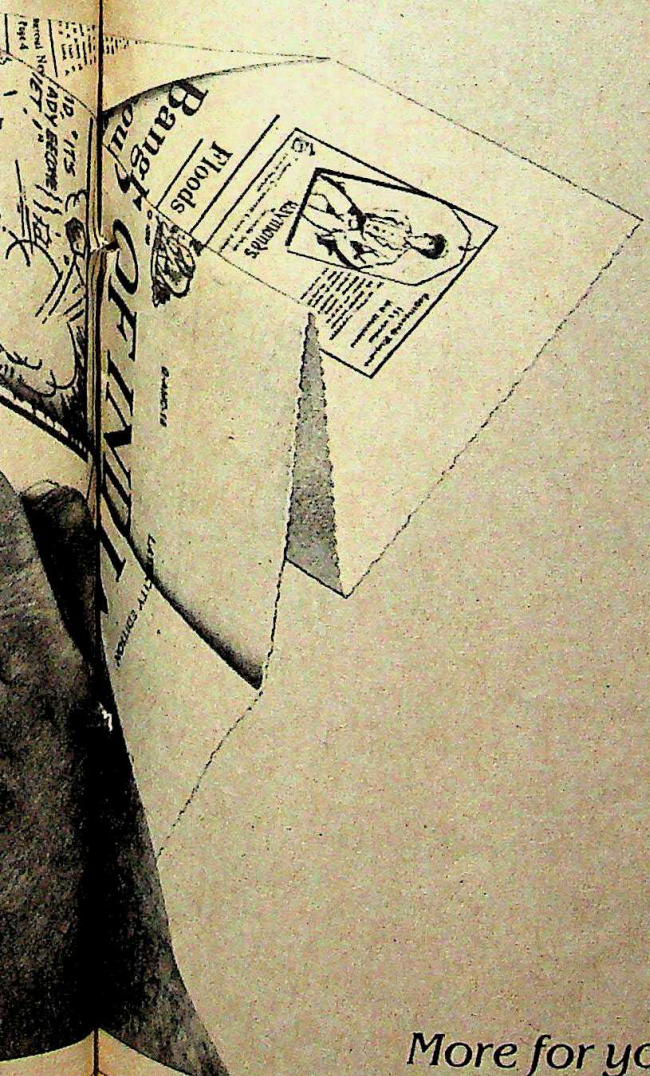

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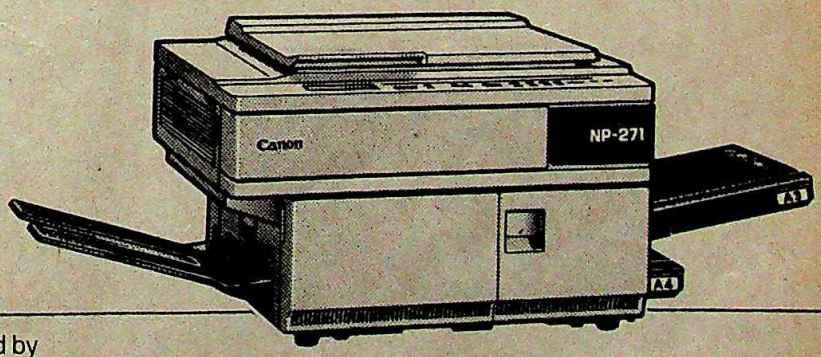

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MANIPUR

The Siege Within

MANIPUR Chief Minister Rishang Keishing's official residence at Imphal resembles a small fortress with squat watch-towers, guards patrolling the perimeter and rifle snouts poking from behind sandbags. The precautions are meant to keep off Naga insurgents, but last fortnight Keishing was under siege from a somewhat more familiar set of adversaries: dissidents in the Congress(I). At fortnight's end Keishing was still the chief minister but the attacks had not ceased and odds on him becoming the seventh Congress(I) chief minister to be changed in the nine months since Rajiv Gandhi came to office were embarrassingly low.

Though Keishing was still ahead in the numbers game—22 of the party's 35 MLA's in a house of 60 were behind him—the uncertainty persisted because he had antagonised powerful elements within and outside the party. A powerful faction of the Congress(I) headed by PCC(I) chief Lalit Singh and including two ministers was in open revolt. More important, he had antagonised Governor K.V. Krishna Rao by openly accusing him of refusing to swear in six MLA's as ministers in defiance of his 'advice'.

Dissidence has been endemic ever since Keishing took charge in 1981 but the current crisis began in late June when Lalit Singh, who was also finance minister, Education Minister Tompok Singh, and Agriculture Minister Soso Lorho, collectively known as the "big three", staged a revolt. Together with nine other MLA's they took a memorandum critical of Keishing to Rajiv Gandhi. The note listed his alleged acts of corruption, anti-party and anti-national activities and demanded his ouster.

Lalit Singh then followed up by suspending Keishing's close political adviser and PCC(I) general secretary, Laokhapao Kom, early last month. Next, on July 14 he suspended local self-government minister Radha Binode Koijam from the party for superseding the Imphal municipality against the party's directives to that effect.

It can hardly be a coincidence that the same day Keishing decided it was time he inducted six more ministers into his 13-member ministry. But if he had hoped to strengthen his position with that, he hadn't reckoned with Governor Rao who clearly had very different ideas of what his role was. Instead of taking decisions on his own, Rao soon began to function like a conduit to Delhi. His first advice to Keishing was specific: to refrain from making any percipitate announcement. Rao seemed aware of the high command's reported instructions to the chief minister not to do anything till the prime minister, who was in Madras, returned to New Delhi on July 16.

Keishing

Keishing's future is uncertain because he was under attack from dissidents and had antagonised Governor Krishna Rao.

Krishna Rao

Disregarding Rao, Keishing sent in a list of the names of ministers he wanted along with a request that they be sworn in the next day, July 15. At this point Rao's role becomes somewhat difficult to understand. When Keishing asked about the swearing-in, Raj Bhawan said he would be informed as soon as New Delhi sent further instructions. Matters became still more curious the next day when Keishing sent in a fresh list, amending the earlier one. Convinced that the chief minister had not cleared the list from New Delhi, Rao sat tight.

The denouement was predictable: as Keishing recalled, the next day PWD officials put up a shamiana at the Raj Bhawan, the publicity department made all arrangements for covering the occasion and the Manipur Rifles' band actually marched to the Raj Bhawan while the MLA's waited in Keishing's house in vain. Keishing accused Rao of disregarding his advice but sources close to the governor pointed out that the governor had not categorically refused to swear in the MLA's. Rao had merely informed Keishing that "the precise date of the swearing-in would be made known".

Though the chief minister insists that as long as he is the leader of the party's legislative wing, the governor is bound to act according to his advice, even on the date of the swearing-in, the Indian Constitution is maddeningly ambiguous on this point. For, according to Article 163 Section 2 of the Constitution, "If any question arises whether any matter is or is not a matter as respects which the governor is by or under this Constitution required to act in his discretion, the decision of the governor in his discretion shall be final, and the validity of anything done by the governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in his discretion." But Keishing was categorical that the implications of Rao's decision were ominous. As he told INDIA TODAY: "The governor's action has set a precedent and will have repercussions in all other states."

The Keishing Rao-confrontation, which recalled other controversial acts by governors in the recent past such as in Sikkim, when Nar Bahadur Bhandari was dismissed, and Jammu and Kashmir when Farooq Abdullah was toppled, rang alarm bells in Delhi. A fire-fighting operation on predictable lines was launched. The party's General Secretary in charge of Manipur, A.K. Antony, flew to Imphal the same day. Antony was later joined by Rajesh Pilot, MP, and when the two returned a good five days later, a tenuous peace had been established: Lalit Singh had withdrawn his suspension notice on Koijam and Keishing had withdrawn his expansion proposal. But Keishing continued to maintain that he had the party high command's approval for expanding his ministry. "I had expressed my desire to expand my ministry before the state budget session opening on June 11 but I was advised to carry out the expansion after the budget session and this is what I tried to do."

Keishing, who had met Rajiv early last month, added: "The prime minister had asked me why I could not handle the dissidents. I told him that I had accommodated the three dissident leaders in my cabinet despite knowing that they are my rivals. So what more could I do?"

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The dissidents are known to feel that Keishing, being a member of the minority Naga community (he is a Tangkhul Naga), does not have the interests of the majority Meitei community at heart. Leaders like Tompok Singh, who had been Keishing's close confidant till recently, also say that Keishing had increasingly come to rely on his relatives and "purchaseable" MLA's. "The chief minister's son, Namputin, had become so used to having ministers do as he wanted that last year he once threatened me with a revolver for holding up the file," Tompok alleges.

Tompok, Lalit Singh and other disgruntled elements are not yet ready to throw in the towel. INDIA TODAY learns that they are currently preparing a list of detailed charges against the chief minister to continue their campaign. Nor are they relaxing the overt pressure on him: Lalit Singh flew to Delhi to make the dramatic accusation that Keishing's brother's business associate had threatened to wipe out Singh's entire family.

The titans continue to confront each other. Says Tompok Singh: "Keishing has lost the moral right to continue as chief minister since he has lost the confidence of the high command and the governor." In return, Keishing boasts: "I even command the loyalty of half the opposition members in the 60-member house." But there is an edge of anxiety in his boast and there are reports, which he has still to deny, that he had personally visited opposition MLA's. Either way, Keishing is in an unenviable position.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Imphal

TELUGU GANGA PROJECT

Troubled Waters

MOST inter-state rows over sharing river waters rise and fall like the level of the river, but the raging conflict between Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh last fortnight was on the question of sharing the water flowing down the 1,440-km-long Krishna at the turn of the century. Karnataka Congress(I) leader Veerappa Moily stoked the controversy when he charged the Ramakrishna Hegde Government with neglecting the state's interests. Moily argued that the Rs 688-crore Telugu Ganga Project (TGP) of Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao would irrigate over two lakh hectares of land in Andhra with water meant for Karnataka. He alleged that the project, scheduled to be ready in 1989, would draw water over and above the quota Andhra was entitled to and since neither Karnataka nor Maharashtra was utilising its allotted share, Andhra would press its claim for greater allocation when the review of the Krishna waters agreement came up in 2000. Charged Moily: "Hegde is jeopardising the state's interests to retain rapport with NTR."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Work on the project in Cuddapah (above) and (below) NTR and Hegde

Karnataka Public Works Minister H.D. Deve Gowda promptly denied the charge and termed NTR's plans as "distortions" of the 1976 accord on the sharing of waters. To that NTR responded with the statement pointing out that Andhra Pradesh had satisfied all doubts before initiating work on the project and that Hegde knew of Andhra Pradesh's increased need. "We are not begging or asking for favours but proceeding with the project in accordance with our rights," he declared. Hegde backtracked by acknowledging NTR's clarification but added that he had reservations on the project which he had told the Centre about. The war of words ended when Gowda told the council that the concerned states should meet, discuss and finalise once and for all as to how the surplus of 333 TMC feet should be shared. If a solution could not be found, he added, a Krishna Valley Authority should be created to apportion the water.

The problem arose because of different interpretations to the 1976 Bachawat panel award on the sharing of the Krishna waters. The panel permitted Andhra Pradesh, which had a large number of irrigation projects on stream, to tap the surplus flow of the Krishna but not claim the additional water as a right. NTR however claims that the panel had given Andhra the right to use the surplus water. Karnataka feels Andhra would not have gone in for the Rs 688-crore TGP unless NTR had his eyes on getting hold of more water.

The dispute also lingers because nobody really knows the extent of the surplus. Gowda's estimate may just be a rough guess. Also, it is not known how much the TGP will take: will 27.5 TMC feet be enough or will it take more since the canal has been widened? NTR's Government is not telling.

There was mystery also about Moily's reasons for raking up the issue. That Hegde and Gowda have differences is well known and observers feel Moily's charge was calculated to widen this wedge. The assessment gained some credibility when G. Havanur, Congress(I) MLA, declared in the Assembly: "We will wholeheartedly support Gowda against Hegde." The Congress(I)'s likely game plan had only half succeeded; it did not create a crisis in the Janata Government but it did cloud Hegde's friendly relations with NTR.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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"For 20 years we had been saving for Mini's wedding . . . almost from the day she was born. Skimping even on bare necessities. Adding bit by bit . . . a saree now, a little piece of jewellery then, a bed cover sometimes. Slowly, painfully we had built up a wedding our only daughter deserved. It would have all been worthwhile when next week she took it all to her new home, new life. But before she could, the burglars did."

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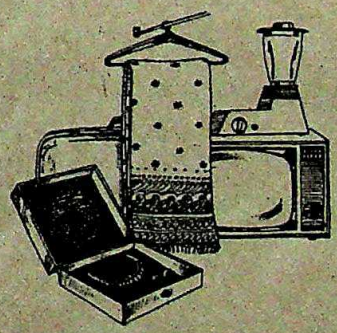

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CRIME

In Cold Blood

HE WAS one of the rising stars of the ruling party. Young, personable and a go-getter, Lalit Maken, 35, Congress(I) MP from south Delhi, was obviously a man with a bright future, popular with his constituents and his political colleagues. But last week, he paid the price of that popularity—in his own blood. In a senseless, unforgivable act, two unidentified assailants sprayed him with a burst from a Sten gun when he was leaving his house in a busy industrial area to attend Parliament on July 31. Bleeding profusely, Maken staggered towards his house but the killers followed him and fired another burst, killing Maken. His wife, Gitanjali daughter of Andhra Pradesh Governor, S. D. Sharma and a party worker who were injured in the firing, succumbed in hospital a short while later.

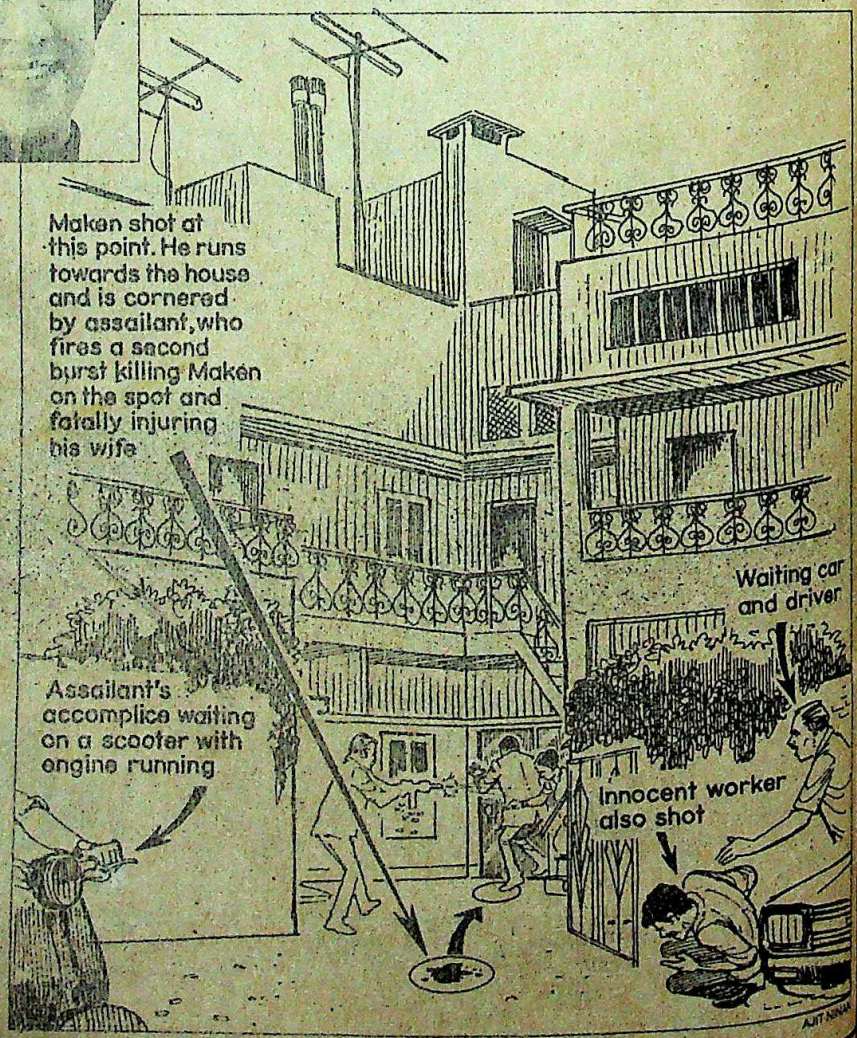
Maken's driver was also injured by the assailants who managed to escape on the two-wheeled scooter they had arrived on. Neighbours rushed out of their houses on hearing the shots but were unable to stop or properly identify the killers except for the fact that they were clean shaven and in their early 20s. In Parliament, news of the tragedy was received with shocked incredulity. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Home Minister S.B. Chavan rushed to the hospital where the bodies had been taken. Heavy police contingents fanned out into sensitive areas in the city to prevent expected violence. Maken was a powerful and popular trade union leader and his sudden and brutal death sent tremors of tension throughout the city. "He was the type of MP we are trying to encourage," Rajiv stated in Parliament, "he will be remembered for his fight for workers and his outspokenness." In a rare and unusual gesture, both Houses adjourned for the day. Usually, only the House to which the member belongs adjourns as a mark of respect.

Delhi police chief Ved Marwah quickly announced a Rs 1 lakh reward for information leading to the capture of the killers but till the time of writing, there were very little clues as to the identity of the assailants. The only possibility being discussed was that his trade union activities had some connection with his murder. Maken first came into prominence as a union activist who joined the Sanjay brigade but he fell out with the group after a short stint and joined the Congress(S). He returned to the Congress(I) fold in 1982 and was nominated member of the Delhi Metropolitan Council.

But his real forte was trade unionism and within a remarkably short while he was being referred to as "Delhi's Datta Samant". In the short span of two years, Maken had succeeded in wresting control of the two prominent unions in Delhi. The Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (DESU) and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) from, ironically enough, another rival faction of the local Congress(I). He had also taken up the cause of the Delhi textile workers. His election as president of the DTC union was contested in the High Court by his chief rival, Laxmi Narain, also a Congress(I) MP. The court, however, upheld Maken's election. Maken operated independently of the Indian National Trade Union Congress-I (INTUC) and in the last two years, concentrated on winning over the key core of Central Government employees to his fold. In that, he seemed to have succeeded admirably and at the time of his tragic death was president of the National Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers. He was elected to the Lok Sabha with a thumping majority during the last elections earlier this year.

His union activities, however, were not without controversies. The DTC strike he orchestrated in 1984 ended in violence. But his growing influence and

Sketch of the slaying and (inset) Maken: senseless act



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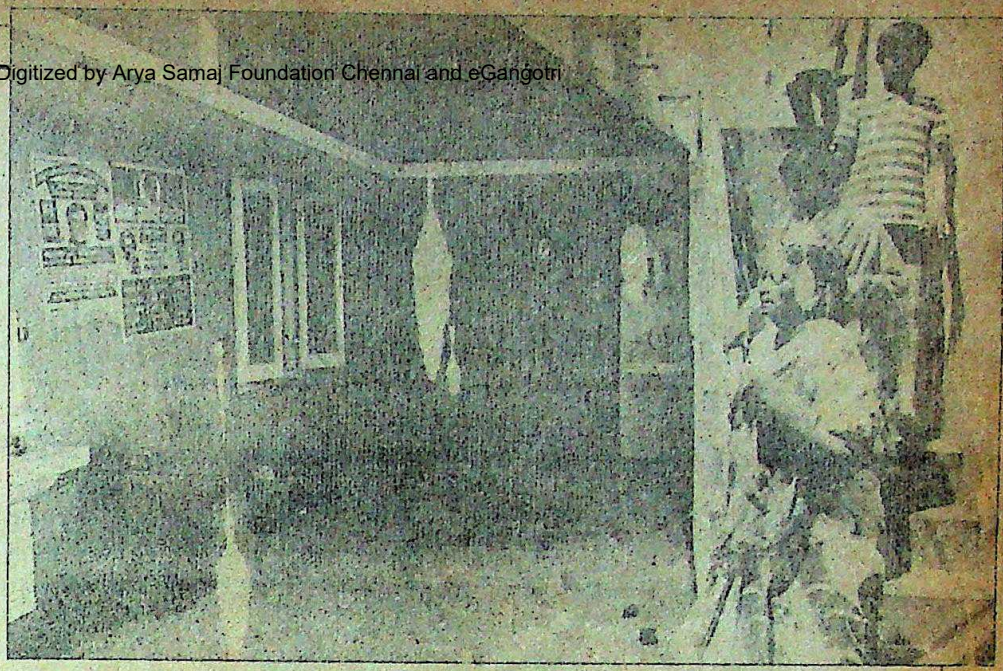

Photographs by HARI OM GULATI

(from top) The blood-stained spot where Maken was shot; a grief-striken mother and sister-in-law; and President Zail Singh with the doctor who examined Maken at the hospital

popularity obviously created rivals and even within the Congress(I), there were powerful senior leaders who showed their open jealousy and dislike. But within trade union circles, there was little credence given to the theory that Maken's death was the result of trade union rivalry. Maken had built his reputation on his genuine commitment to the workers and even his rivals grudgingly admit that he put in tremendous effort and time into not just his union activities, but into his south Delhi constituency as well. Basudeb Acharya, CPM MP and fellow trade unionist said; "He will be remembered for his valiant struggle for the downtrodden." Added veteran parliamentarian and CPI leader Indrajit Gupta: "When journalists asked me at the last session who was the most impressive newcomer, Maken was the first name that came to my mind." On the day after his tragic demise, Maken was scheduled to speak at a government employees' rally at the Boat Club in Delhi to press for a constitutional amendment to restore the right of the employee to be heard before the issue of an order of dismissal.

However, the mystery surrounding Maken's death is not likely to be resolved soon. Delhi police sealed off all the borders and exit points within a few hours. But the theory doing the rounds was that Maken could have been the random victim of extremists. Maken had apparently received a threatening letter a few days earlier in which the writer had stated that two men trained in Pakistan were after his life. Furthermore, trade union rivals would not normally have access to a Sten gun and neither is it likely that a union rival would take recourse to such an extreme step specially involving a person as prominent and popular as Maken. Intelligence sources say Maken was on the Punjab extremists' hit list after the November riots but ironically, his police guard was removed on July 25, the day after the Punjab accord was signed. Whatever the final truth, the act is as senseless as it is brutal. Maken, who leaves behind a seven-year-old daughter (his only brother died in an accident in 1973), was an inspiration, not just to the thousands of workers whose rights he fought for so valiantly, but for virtually everybody who knew him and respected his dynamism and commitment. Tragically, those very attributes appear to have marked him out as a target for assassination.

—DILIP BOBB

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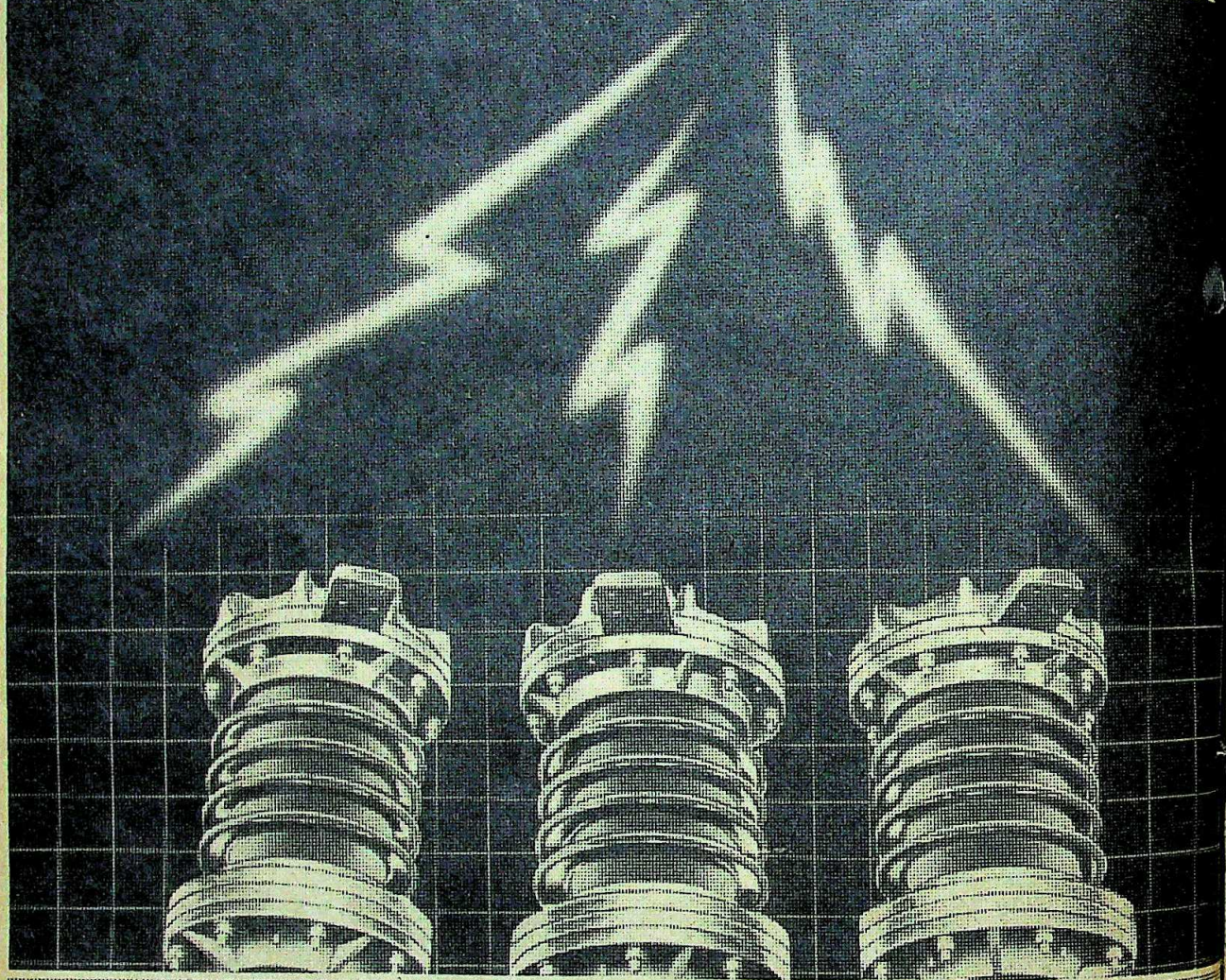
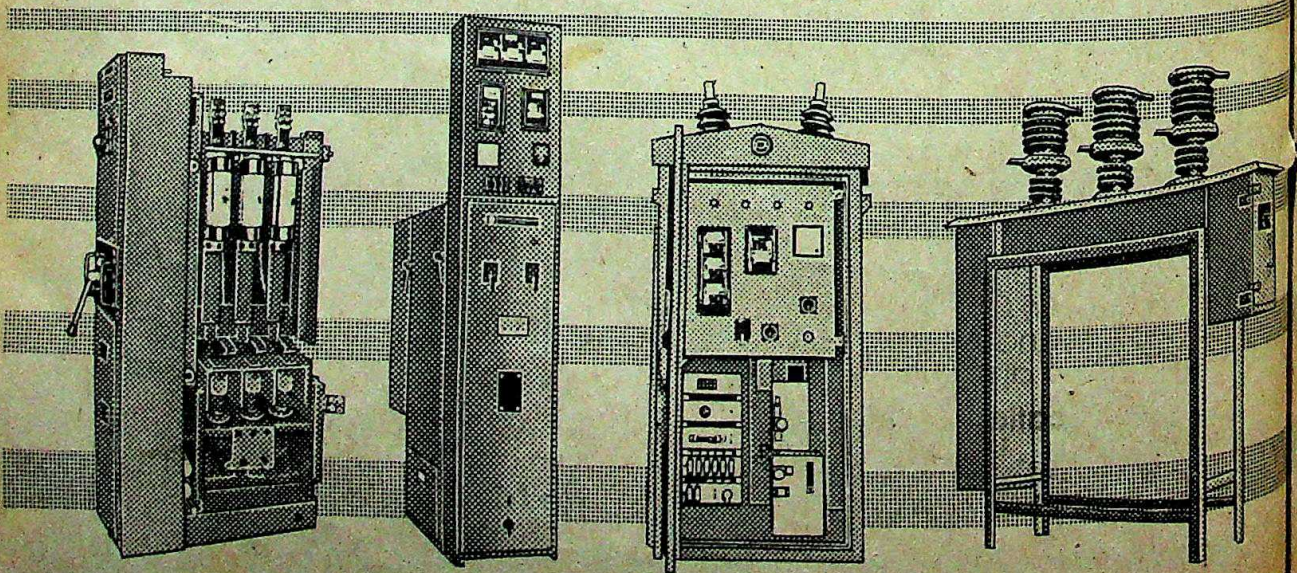
THE VERSATILE RANGE OF VACUUM SWITCHGEAR FROM S&S.





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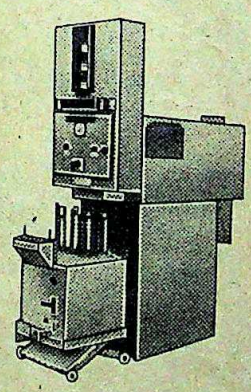

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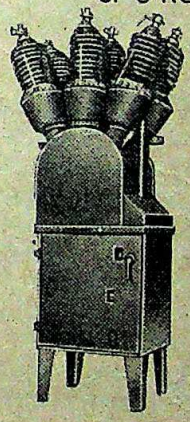
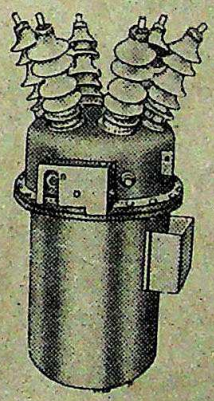
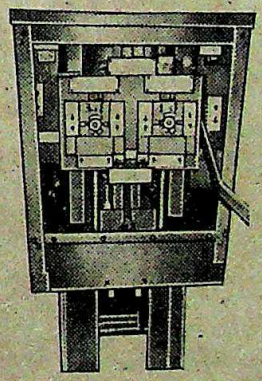


36 KV Outdoor SF 6 Circuit Breakers



12KV SF 6 Pole-mounted Auto Reclosers



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GUJARAT

Ineffective Accord

GUJARAT heaved a sigh of relief on July 18 when the new Amarsinh Chaudhuri Ministry reached an accord with anti-reservationists ending the five-month-old agitation which had taken a toll of 275 lives. But in Ahmedabad, the centre of most of the violence, the scenario only worsened. In the eight days between July 18 and 25, more than 60 people were killed and over 200 injured in firing, arson and stabbings. The city was again terrorised by trigger-happy communal elements. In just one day last fortnight, the police fired as many as 52 rounds in Chandan Talavdi as residents started firing and even hurling bombs at patrolling policemen. Such shoot-outs have become daily occurrences in the communally sensitive areas of Kalupur, Dariapur, Shahpur, Bapunagar and Nagoriwad.

Chaudhuri: swift action

In a departure from the past, however, the Government acted swiftly and firmly. Chaudhuri invoked the Anti-Terrorist Act on July 23 and a day later announced that punitive tax would be imposed on areas where communal violence is a recurring feature. Director-General of Police Julio Francis Ribeiro organised a series of raids against purveyors of illegal arms. The raids revealed mini gun and bomb manufacturing factories at two places on the outskirts of the city.

At Juhapura, a primus stove repairer was found using his shop as a front to clandestinely manufacture guns out of iron pipes and iron scrap and supply them to residents of Kalupur. The police described him as a master craftsman, single-handedly manufacturing all the parts himself to maintain total secrecy.

The bomb factory at Dudheshwar was unearthed after police found bombs concealed in an autorickshaw. The police also discovered that arms and ammunition were being collected at a supply point in Himmatnagar in Sabarkantha district and then despatched to Ahmedabad's walled city. A raid yielded 200 detonators meant for supply to Ahmedabad. But these raids only scratched the surface of the problem. Clearly arms were still getting through in large numbers. Ribeiro knows that his twin priority tasks at the moment are to prop up the morale of the police force and stop the frightening inflow of arms (*see interview*).

One theory explaining the sudden upsurge of communal violence was that both Hindus and Muslims were just lying low and waiting for the army to withdraw. As soon as that happened, trouble spontaneously broke out in almost all areas of the walled city. Another theory is that bootleggers who have had to close down business after Ribeiro moved in, are behind the current wave of violence. Opposition leader Chimanbhai Patel said on the floor of the Assembly that Ribeiro's enemies in Bombay were now conniving with their counterparts in Ahmedabad to create trouble to discredit the new police chief.

Fed up with the protracted agitation, citizens had hoped that peace would return to Gujarat after the withdrawal of the stir. The renewed violence soon dispelled the myths. Shopkeepers who had bravely reopened their shops, hastily pulled down shutters after bomb blasts in areas like Relief Road and Lal Darwaja.

But the accord itself was comprehensive enough to hold out hope. Signed after a nine-hour meeting, its salient points were:

- The 18 per cent hike in the reservation quota for socially and educationally backward communities announced by former chief minister Madhavsinh Solanki in January would now not be implemented until a national consensus was reached.
- Reservations for 82 backward communities identified by the Baxi Commission, scheduled to go on till March 31, 1988, would be reviewed by a commissioner headed by a sitting judge of the Gujarat High Court.
- A judicial probe would be made into the incidents of violence which began in February.
- Students arrested in connection with the agitation would be released and the cases against them withdrawn.

In essence, the accord added little to Solanki's offer. The review of reservations for the Baxi Commission communities was the only new concession. While, president of the Parents' Association Shankerbhai Patel tried to save face by claiming that the agitation had been withdrawn because all their demands had been met, the fact is the anti-reservationists were under heavy pressure to withdraw the stir as people were fed up with the continuing warlike situation. Moreover, the opposition parties withdrew their support once they accomplished their task of removing Solanki.

Not everybody was satisfied. A meeting of backward class MLA's under the chairmanship of Budhaji Chauhan (Congress-I) resolved that they must pressurise the Government into not reducing reservations any further. They felt that the Government had sacrificed the interests of 70 per cent of the population to appease a vocal 30 per cent.

But perhaps more ominous was the split in the Navrachna Samiti, the students' body spearheading the agitation. Gaurang Shah, convenor of the samiti, charged that Shankerbhai Patel and Vivek Patel, persident of the samiti, had betrayed the people by signing an agreement in which the agitationists had gained hardly anything. The splinter group which Shah heads vowed to keep the agitation alive until the Government

J.F. RIBEIRO

Firm Steps

THE GUJARAT police have got a no-nonsense chief after a long time—a chief who has made it more than clear that he will not bow to any political pressure. Bespectacled, tall and grave-looking, 56-year-old Julio Francis Ribeiro took over as director-general of police early last month. He spoke to Correspondent RAMESH MENON *on the challenges ahead. Excerpts:*

Q. *What are your immediate concerns?*

A. The police force here has been ruined due to heavy politicisation. Even transfer used to take place at the behest of politicians. Police officers were pressurised to do what politicians wanted.

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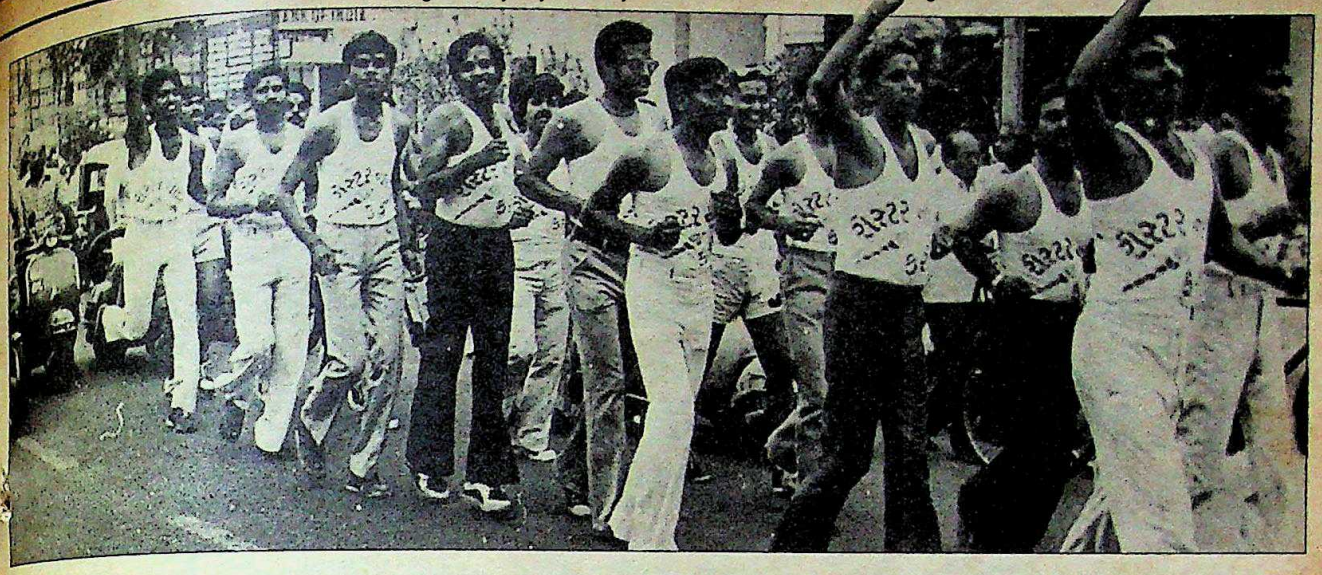
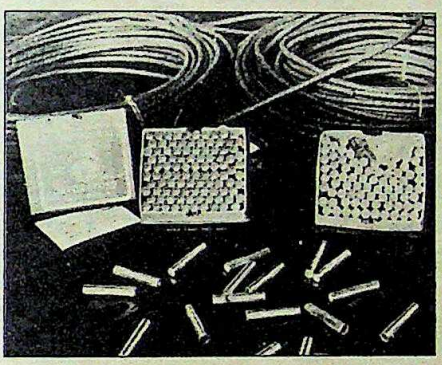




Agitationists in Ahmedabad (above); and (left) detonators and fuse wires seized in a raid: violent ways

agreed to abolish the 18 per cent hike and gave a commitment to end concessions for the Baxi Commission castes when the reservations expire in 1988.

Political opportunists like former students' leader Bhaskar Bhatt immediately rallied around Shah but Shah knows that public opinion, the press and opposition parties are not behind him. An overwhelming majority of the state's 40,000 students have also lost interest in the agitation. Says student leader Mahipal Patel: "The students are waiting for schools and colleges to open again." But Shah is undaunted. "We shall fight alone and as soon as colleges open we will use the hostilities to ignite the agitation," he warned.

But Shah's group has clearly overestimated its clout. Their Ahmedabad bandh call on July 22 flopped miserably. A similar bandh call in Baroda also failed. The boycott examinations call has also been ignored by students in some schools. Said Shankerbhai Patel: "If the accord did not have the blessings of the people, I could not have signed it. The handful of boys opposing it are just paper tigers."

The accord has been hailed even by the Opposition. Former chief minister Babubhai Patel (Janata) said the way should now be clear for peace and development activities. Bhalchandra Trivedi, secretary of the state CPI described it as a step in the right direction. Even industry was behind the Government. Businessman I.J. Desai, former head of the South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, called upon the Government to clamp down on the handful of troublemakers who were trying to keep the agitation alive.

Though Chaudhuri has earned laurels for getting over the vexed reservations issue within 12 days of assuming office, he is still on trial. Apart from failure to curb the renewed communal violence, he had still to settle the strike by 30,000 government employees demanding abolition of the roster system.

The Centre too was doing its bit to help him. Union Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh was again deputed to Gandhinagar to help Chaudhuri but he made it seem that he had come to discuss the taking over of closed textile mills. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, speaking to members of the executive committee of the Congress(I) parlimentary party, went out of his way to mention Chaudhuri's efforts. The coming weeks will decide Chaudhuri's future but for the moment he is certainly in no envious position.

—RAMESH MENON

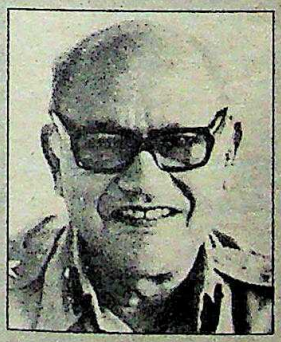
criminals had a heyday. We are not here to take directions from politicians. It is the director-general who should be deciding on transfers, promotions and arrests. I am going to call the shots now. No political interference will be allowed.

Q. How will you stop the inflow of arms?

A. We are having combing operations daily, and we are ready to give rewards for information about arms.

Q. Why this sudden crackdown on bootleggers?

A. They are the main troublemakers. Some of them are gun-runners. All this while they were reigning supreme in the walled city as they had political patronage. Gujarat is a classic example of the nexus that politicians build up with bootleggers. The police were also involved. But now, they are going to be told that the police is no more on their side, no matter how powerfully connected they are. I may not succeed in keeping them behind bars for long but they will not be allowed to rule the roost.



Rebeiro: calling the shots

Q. What will you do to defuse the communal tension?

A. I personally went around some of the tension-ridden areas to talk to the citizens. This is not my job. Social scientists, intellectuals and politicians should step in here.

Q. Are you confident of success in your assignment?

A. Of course, but it will take time.

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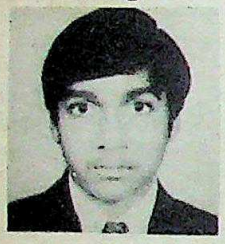
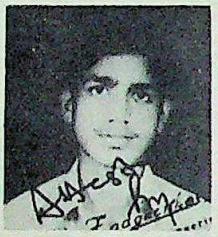


FIRST IN INDIA

SHREESH JADHAV
Raipur



SECOND IN INDIA

PARTHA PRATIM MITRA
Calcutta

THIRD IN INDIA

RAJIV VERMA
Patna

FOURTH IN INDIA

KUMUD KUMAR SANWAL
Kanpur

FIFTH IN INDIA

		All India Rank
Partha Niyogi	N. Delhi	6
Shantanu Sarkar	Port Blair	7
S. Aravind	Madras	8
Raju Narayana Swamy	Changanacherry	10
Vigyan Singhal	N. Delhi	12
V. Ramesh	Madras	13
Anurag Sah	Calcutta	14
S. Sriram	Kanpur	15
K. Vivekanand Rau	Bangalore	16
Bharat Kalyanpur	Bombay	18
Ajay Kripa Sreekanth	Madras	19

		All India Rank
Alok Kumar Ramsisaria	Chandigarh	20
Navindra Singh Gambhir	Rajasthan	21
V. Guhan	Nilgiri	22
Sanjay Arora	N. Delhi	23
Subhrajit Bhattacharya	Sindri	24
M. R. Bharat	Bhilai	25
Surajit Basu	Calcutta	26
V. Sridhar	Madras	27
Pradhan Sandip Mukundrao	Baroda	28
T. S. Naga Bhushana	Bangalore	29

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Future Tense

THE CONGRESS(I) is trapped between the devil and the deep sea in Jammu and Kashmir. If it withdraws support to the Ghulam Mohammed Shah Government it will be seen as having surrendered to Farooq Abdullah's agitation; if it continues to back Shah, its image in the state will continue to suffer. It was to solve this dilemma that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi summoned all 26 Congress(I) MLA's and the four party MP's from the state to New Delhi last fortnight, followed a week later by a frank discussion with Shah and his other cabinet colleagues. But even though he met all of them individually, the party high command seemed no closer to a solution. None of the state leaders seemed to be in a position to offer themselves as viable alternatives and the status quo continues. Said Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, the party's general secretary responsible for J&K affairs: "After careful examination of all facts and dialogue with the state leaders, the high command has decided to continue its support to Shah's government. But we have directed our party unit to keep a close vigil on the state Government and strengthen the Congress(I).

Though Bajpai's vital announcement provided a second but a temporary reprieve to the shaky Shah regime, it failed to set at rest doubts about the party's wisdom of supporting Shah. According to Congress(I) sources, all the state MLA's and MP's spoke negatively about the Shah Government and wanted the Centre to haul it over the coals for its alleged corruption and inefficiency. was led by veteran Jammu Congress(I) leader Girdhari Lal Dogra who, along with others, told the central leaders that not only was Shah ungrateful to the Congress(I), he was even giving the impression that it was the Congress(I) which actually needed his help in the valley's politics to defeat Farooq Abdullah.

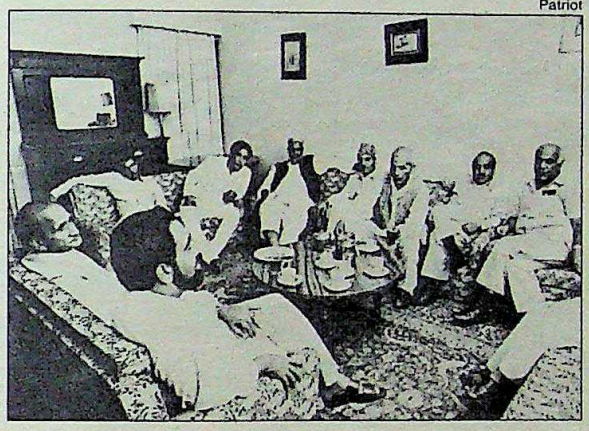
The decision to speak in one voice against the Shah Government was, in fact, taken at a breakfast meeting held at the residence of Janak Raj Gupta, a former state unit general secretary and Congress(I) MP from Jammu. During the two-hour discussion, in which the state party chief Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Assembly Speaker Mangat Ram Sharma also participated, there was unanimity that the Shah Government should be booted out. But there was no agreement on how to do this. Admitted a senior Congress(I) MLA from the Jammu region: "Frankly speaking, finding a workable solution was beyond our scope of discussion. All of us are convinced that Rajivji is capable of getting rid of a corrupt government if he chooses to. How he does it, it is for him and his advisers to decide."

However, all of them did discuss with Rajiv and Power Minister Arun Nehru the alternatives in case Shah was dropped. These were:

- Governor's rule for a temporary period and keeping the Assembly under suspended animation;
- Installation of a Congress(I) government by encouraging defections from both the factions of the National Conference;
- A purely Congress(I) government with unconditional support from outside by Farooq Abdullah's party,
- Dissolution of the state Assembly and fresh elections.

While the last suggestion was turned down by all the Congress(I) leaders, they supported the idea of putting the state under Governor's rule temporarily. But the high command vetoed the suggestion on the plea that it would amount to conceding exactly what Farooq was demanding. Moreover, the biggest danger implicit in the move was the possibility of Shah crossing over to his brother-in-law in panic. The Centre is already aware that Shah is in touch with his mother-in-law, Begum Abdullah. In fact, the Congress(I) leaders have already been warned by some prominent pro-Shah elements that they would not hesitate to even bring back Farooq as chief minister if the Congress(I) betrayed Shah.

The Congress(I) high command will do its utmost to prevent such a political marriage, but it is also convinced that only a Congress(I) government can provide the state with a stable government. Indications are that the high command is in favour of a temporary spell of Governor's rule followed by the installation of a Congress(I) government. Since the party has only 26 MLA's in the 78-member house, it cannot obviously form a government—unless at least a dozen MLA's from both National Conference factions defect to its ranks. Some of them have already expressed their willingness to join the Congress(I). But if the party wins power in this manner it will be accused of violating the anti-defection law. In addition, J&K has its own anti-defection law which is pending in the Supreme Court for final hearing. But the state leaders feel that none of the laws are applicable to the state because it has its own constitution. The state Assembly has not adopted the central law on defection so far. This is why the MLA's who visited New Delhi, in fact, spoke about the possibility of forming a Congress(I) government by no later than October this year.



Patriot

Congress(I) MLA's in New Delhi after meeting Rajiv: status quo

But the delay in taking any decision will prove very costly for the state. Aware that the reprieve may be temporary, the state government officials and ministers are continuing their corrupt practices. In addition, the ongoing battle between Shah and Governor Jagmohan has also taken a serious turn. Ignoring convention, Jagmohan sent the complaint of alleged corruption against a minister's son directly to the vigilance commissioner instead of routing it through the chief minister. According to Union Home Ministry sources, Jagmohan has been instructed to keep the Shah Government under a tight leash and its activities under scrutiny. The Central Government hopes that since the Government is tenuously held together, it may fall if the governor applies enough pressure. If that happens, the Congress(I) will be saved from the embarrassment of the public outery over its betraying a "friendly government."

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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KERALA

Estranged Partners

THERE are few things as pathetic as a marriage that has gone sour, yet continues to drag on for fear of what the neighbours will say. A case in point was the 11-year-old alliance between the CPI(M) and the All India Muslim League (AIML), partners in the opposition Left Democratic Front (LDF) whose relationship soured quite a while ago. Last fortnight came the final break. A meeting of the state executive of the AIML in Calicut decided that it would part with the LDF due to the CPI(M)'s attitude towards Muslim divorce laws and Muslim personal law in general.

Said P.M. Abubaker, AIML strongman and leader of the party in the Kerala legislature: "We were smoked out of the LDF for our stand on the *Shariat* issue. The Marxists had no business to attack the Muslim faith and practices." With the departure of the four AIML legislators, the LDF's strength has come down from 64 to 60 in a House of 141. The four legislators will sit as a separate block and later plan to merge with the parent organisation from which they had been estranged, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). The IUML, a member of the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF), has called for an unconditional merger of the two parties, "forgiving and forgetting the past". Chief Minister Karunakaran too has welcomed the move for conciliation.

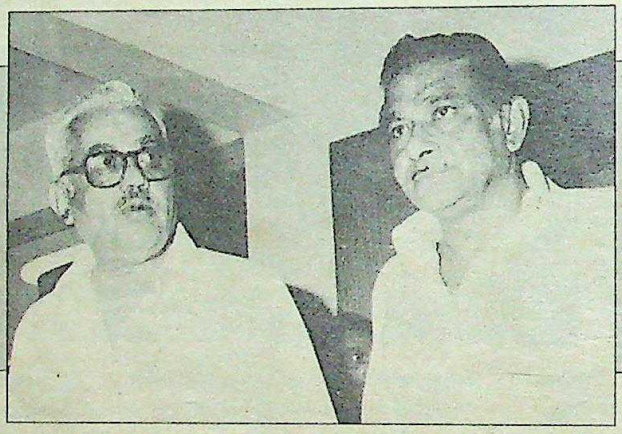
The CPI(M), on its part, is not having any second thoughts. Party General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad, who is in the forefront of the party's campaign against the *Shariat* laws, hailed the AIML's decision as a "turning point". This is the first time the CPI(M) finds itself without any regional or communal parties. Asserted E.K. Nayanar, the former CPI(M) chief minister and opposition leader: "We are starting on a clean slate and even if we have to be in the wilderness we will not have any truck with communal parties."

There is an element of irony in the events: Namboodiripad and Nayanar were primarily responsible for joining hands with communal parties in 1967 to defeat the Congress. The move backfired later because the communal parties cut into their own base. The Marxists now hope that the people will appreciate their boldness in ridding themselves of their communal allies. Said M.V. Raghavan, a Marxist MLA close to Namboodiripad: "Let the present UDF rule its full term. By that time the people would have got disgusted with them and they will not win the next elections."

The AIML has long been a millstone around the CPI(M)'s neck. In the March 1982 assembly elections all the four AIML candidates won from what had till then been Marxist strongholds. Whenever it was pitted against the IUML in its Malappuram Muslim fortress it has lost. In the last Lok Sabha elections, the AIML candidate who was supposed to oppose IUML President Sulaiman Sait in Manjeri backed out, and asked the CPI(M) to contest the seat. Said Raghavan: "The AIML could never win an election without our support."

But it was after the Supreme Court judgement in May allowing alimony for divorced Muslim women that Namboodiripad and his party launched a crusade against polygamy and the Muslim personal law, thereby hoping to penetrate the IUML vote banks among Muslim women. Any AIML hopes that it would be able to isolate the CPI(M) on the *Shariat* issue inside the LDF vanished when none of the other major LDF partners like the Congress (S), CPI and Janata agreed to support them.

Only time, however, will tell whether Namboodiripad's gamble will pay off. But the parting of ways has been bitter. Said Abubaker: "During the Emergency we shared our cells with Marxist leaders but today they seem to be growing closer to Rajiv Gandhi than ever before." Though Namboodiripad's importance in the CPI(M) can be gauged by the alacrity with which it threw out its long-time ally, the AIML, Abubaker says: "Namboodiripad and the CPI(M) in Kerala are like a century-old banyan tree with its trunk chewed out by white ants, ready to collapse any moment."



"Even if we have to be in the wilderness we will not have any truck with communal parties."
E.K. NAYANAR
leader CPI(M)

"The Marxists had no business to attack the Muslim faith and practices."
P.M. ABUBAKER
leader AIML

Chief Minister Karunakaran, on his part, regards the merger of the two Muslim Leagues as a mixed blessing. He knows that Sulaiman Sait, MP, who has been a thorn in the Congress(I)'s flesh, is behind the merger and that in the coming weeks the IUML may become the most powerful party in the state. Says Kadannapally Ramachandran, a prominent Congress(S) leader: "Karunakaran will see that the two Muslim leagues don't merge as that would spell trouble for him."

Ramachandran feels that ultimately Chief Minister Karunakaran will be eaten up by the two powerful communal parties the IUML and the Kerala Congress, which have made rapid strides in the last two years at the expense of the Congress(I). Namboodiripad is probably right when he says that Kerala's politics is at "a turning point". The CPI(M)'s bold stand is bound to affect the direction it takes.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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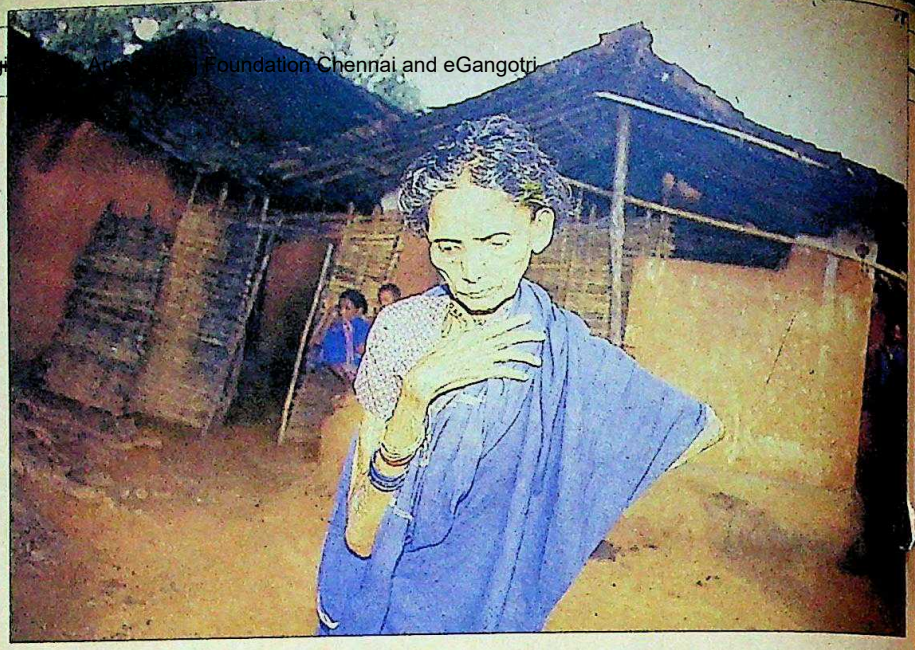
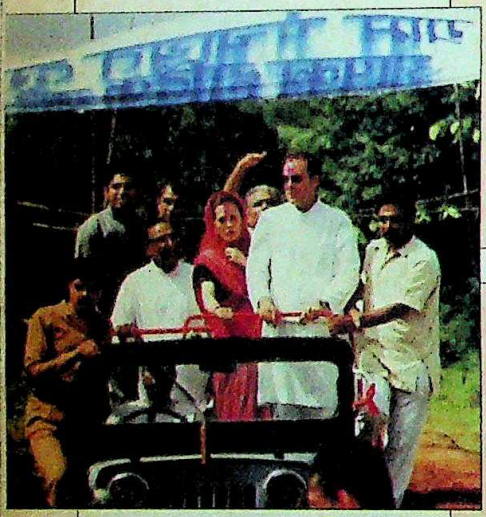
Tribal Trail

PRIME MINISTER Rajiv Gandhi's recent visit to the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have left behind a wake of controversy. Many of the poverty-ridden hamlets on his itinerary were being visited by government officials, not just the prime minister, for the first time and the appalling conditions of neglect and the heart-rending tales of misery was a shocking revelation. Rajiv also ostensibly saw through the transparent attempts by the state government to give the areas a hasty facelift but the tribals themselves are sceptical of any dramatic changes in their unfortunate lives.



Before

Villagers of drought-hit Kalahandi who have lived without food, water and government help for 20 years: neglected humanity



Rajiv and Sonia touring the country's most backward areas: breaking new ground

After

A freshly commissioned water pump, a recently built road and a well-stocked grocery store: overnight change of fortune

To report on the visits, the events that preceded them, and the aftermath, Principal Correspondent RAJU SANTHANAM *and Chief Photographer* BHAWAN SINGH *toured the areas in Madhya Pradesh immediately following Rajiv's visit to talk to the tribals who had managed to meet Rajiv and detail their personal impressions of the visit, while Patna-based Principal Correspondent* FARZAND AHMED *toured Orissa's tribal belt just before and during the prime minister's visit. Together, the correspondents and accompanying photographers travelled a distance of over 4,000 km in both states. Their report:*

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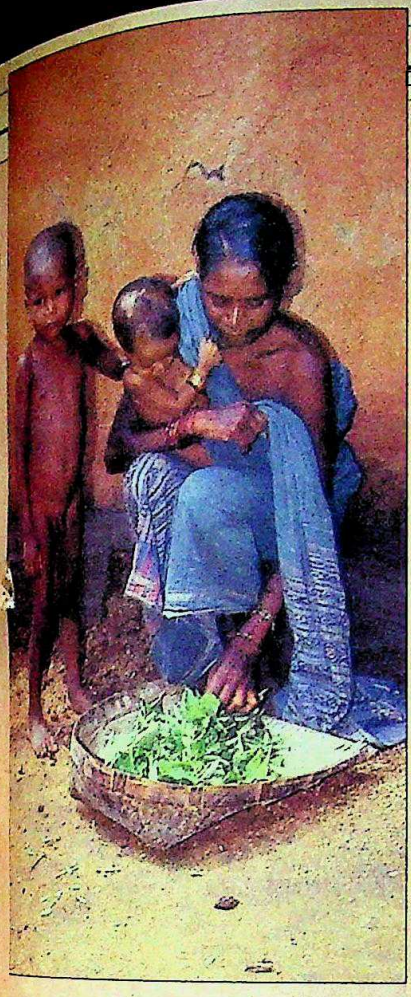
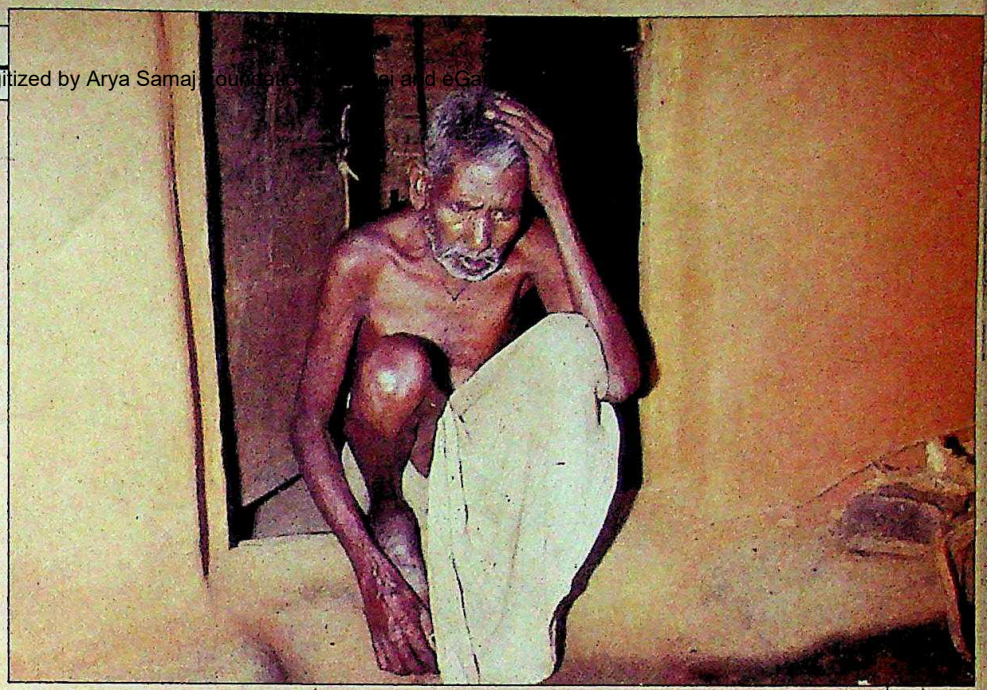
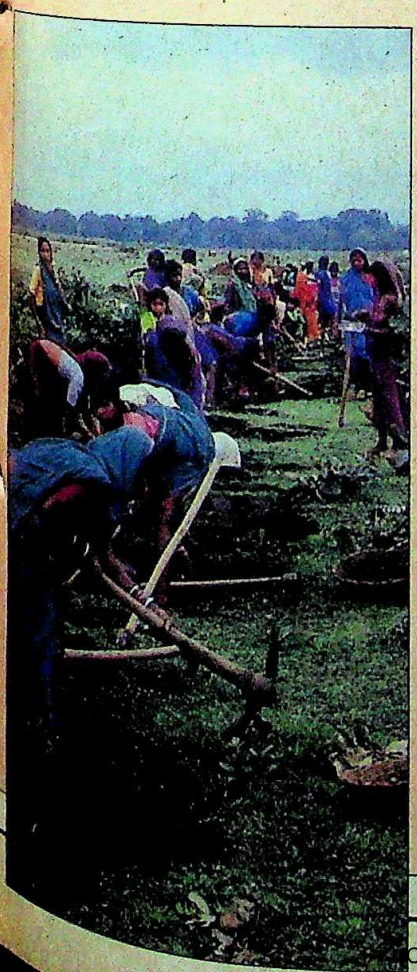




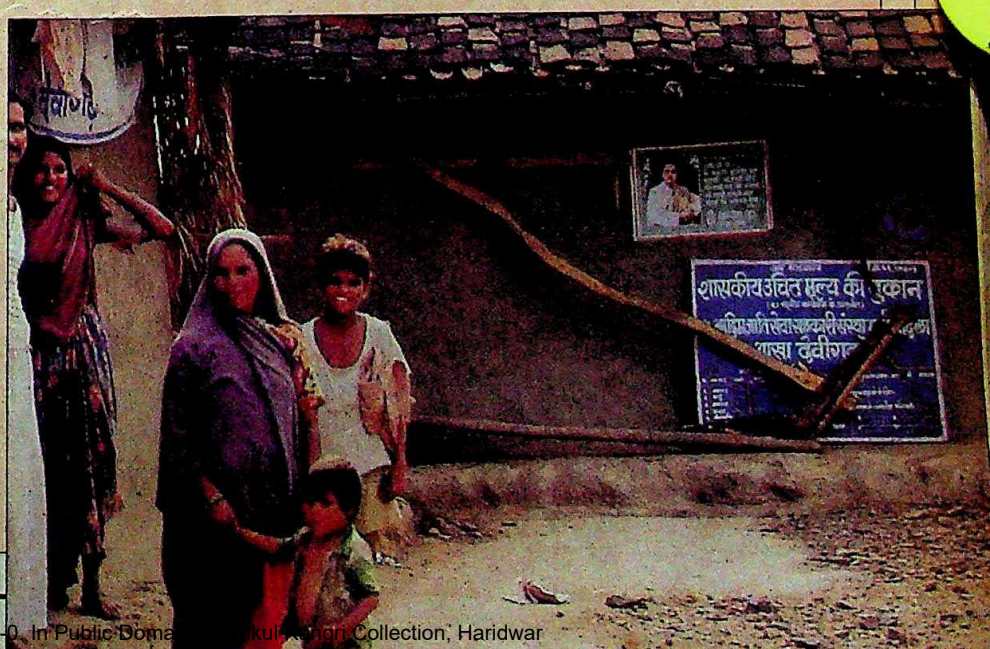
ORISSA

The prime minister had telexed strict instructions from Delhi not to do any window-dressing. The state Government panicked but found a much more ingenious way to hide the sufferings of the people: the villagers were warned not to open their mouths at all. The message was clear: keep quiet and the Government would provide relief. Speak and the gravest of consequences would follow.



MADHYA PRADESH

It had the dreamlike quality of a fairy-tale. Into the arms of the dumbstruck villagers government officials dropped sewing machines, bicycles and buffaloes, roads came up, workers found themselves with jobs, electricity poles were dug, shops were quickly built and thatched huts were repaired and whitewashed. Overnight, one of the country's most wretched areas was turned into a smiling countryside.



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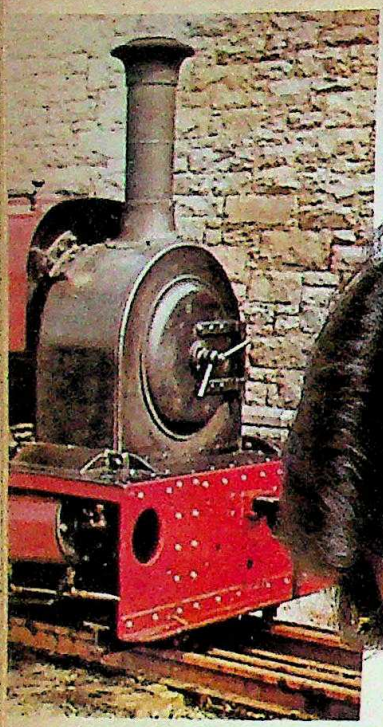

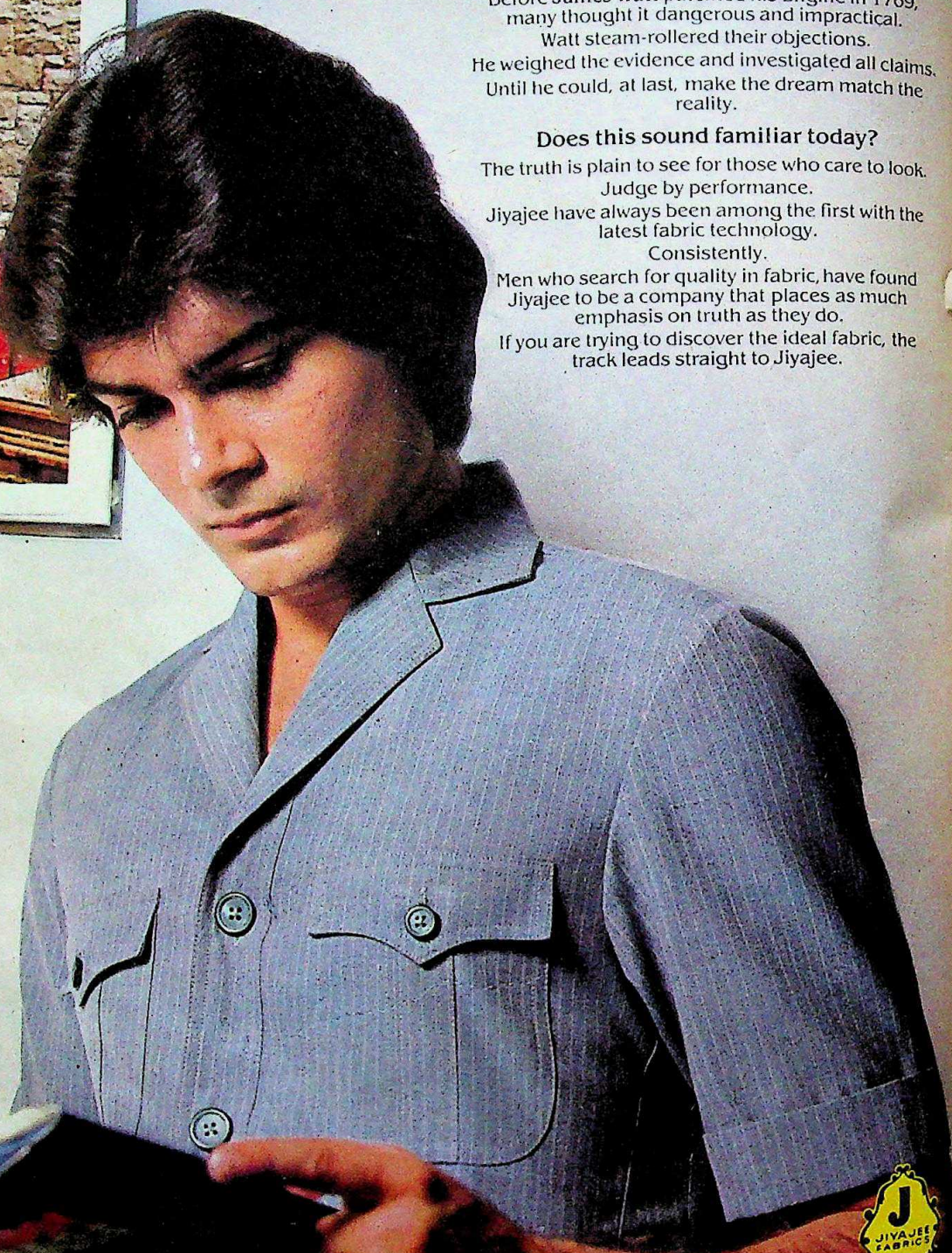

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ORISSA

The Black Pot

THE NAME is particularly apt: Kalahandi, the black pot. For 20 years, Kalahandi in Orissa has been one of the country's most cursed areas, ignored even by the gods. There has been no food, no water and consistently empty skies. The drought has lasted 20 years and may continue for several more. Much worse than nature, though, has been the attitude of the state Government. Like an ostrich, it has long pretended the problem does not exist. Few officials, if any, have had time for the black pot and its many problems. Till last week.

When Rajiv Gandhi, shocked by news reports of the distress sale of children (INDIA TODAY, July 31) sent an urgent telex announcing his immediate visit to the area, the ostrich quickly pulled its head out of the sand. The Government of Janaki Ballav Patnaik did not know quite what to do. The prime minister had given them no time to whitewash the area and worse, had telexed strict instructions from Delhi not to do any window-dressing. The state Government —which had chalked up an emergency plan to plant roadside trees, sink tubewells and distribute doles—panicked for a while and then simply gave up.

Well, not quite. It found an easier —and much more ingenious—way to hide the sufferings of the people from the inquisitive prime minister. Congress(I) leaders and senior officials of the state Government suddenly descended upon the district in dozens, ostensibly to make arrangements for the trip, but in reality for a much more devious purpose: to warn the villagers not to open their mouths at all. The message was clear: keep quiet and the Government would provide relief ultimately. Speak and the gravest of consequences would follow. Said Agrasain Punji, sarpanch of Amlapalli, where Panasi Punji had recently abandoned her 12-year-old sister-in-law out of despair: "Jagannath Patnaik, Congress MP, came and asked the villagers not to complain before the prime minister or tell him about the distress sale of the little girl." They were threatened that if any villager opened his mouth, he would be arrested. In Komna block, 25 km from Amlapalli, most of the villagers say they felt they were being closely watched throughout.

In Chatta village in Komna block, in fact, seven deaths had marked the start of the prime minister's tour. Deaths, which even at that point, District Magistrate Radha Ballav Patnaik refused to believe, had happened. "I have received no such report," he shrugged, "let the people say what they want." But Bhella medical officer Dr B. Negi has reports of these fatalities and their cause, which he states quite simply: "Malnutrition and undernutrition are common in Chatta and the people there need only one prescription—food."

PRASANTA PATNAIK

Famine-stricken mother and child in Chatta: lips sealed

Fortunately for the state Government, though, Chatta village had been cut off from Komna due to overflowing *nullahs* and rivers and so it had been conveniently kept out of the prime minister's itinerary. Said Chabiram, a Harijan who lives in Chatta and whose mother died due to hunger: "As it was raining continuously for three days, we could not go out to collect wild leaves which most of the villagers boil and eat for survival. While my wife and I could withhold hunger for three days, my 60-year-old diseased mother could not stand it and collapsed."

And yet, however sorry may be the plight of Chatta or Brandapatti, they are certainly not the worst-hit villages. An old Congress worker at Komna felt that the prime minister should have seen at least one of the villages where the condition of the people was really pitiable—villages such as Rajna, Jharnamal, Kalimati, Mathia, Deodhara, Kundrapada and Dharabhatta.

Instead the authorities selected two villages in Komna block—Karamahul and Mahulbhatta—to present to the prime minister. Mahulbhatta is a comparatively well-off village with not so many destitutes. To perk it up further, on July 25, two days before the visit, the entire local administration rushed to the village and started an emergency feeding programme under which 80 gm of rice and 20 gm of dal was distributed per day per head.

In other areas too, authorities largely succeeded in showing Rajiv those villages which were neither very good nor very bad. Local officials disclosed that the Government tried hard to strike off both Sinapalli and Boden blocks, two of the most god-forsaken areas, from the itinerary. But it seems the prime minister insisted on visiting particularly those areas that INDIA TODAY had mentioned in its report. Officials argued that both these areas had been cut off from all sides and were impossible to approach but the prime minister insisted and helipads were quickly constructed.

At last the truth came tumbling out. Although Boden block proved to be inaccessible, the reality in the villages of Sinapalli and Nawapara blocks was quite an experience for the prime minister. The poor with their empty bowls

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laid themselves before his open jeep, unmindful of the threats of the state Government. Those who have nothing, have nothing to lose. Rajiv listened to them with his characteristic patience while the chief minister looked on embarrassed and crestfallen.

At one stage, both Rajiv and Sonia —who was accompanying him—jumped out of the jeep and walked into the house of Narhari Pande, 60, asked him now how he was. "My two sons are bonded labourers," he cried before Rajiv, "they get paddy worth Rs 500 a year." Later the same day, a young villager came and stood in front of Rajiv's jeep pleading for help. Rajiv asked him how much he earned for a day's work. "Three rupees" he replied in Oriya. Unable to understand Rajiv turned to the chief minister. Patnaik replied that the villager got six rupees for a day's work. Those around who understood the language were aghast at the chief minister's words. But the prime minister, it seemed, had got the message.

This happened in Kapsi, which is fairly close to the block office. "You can imagine what the condition is like in the interiors," said Somnath Das. No one had received old-age pension and last year only four people got loans under the Integrated Rural Development Programme. Kapsi is not as bad as other villages in nearby Mangalabre panchayat, only 29 km away, but there are no communication links so everyone has forgotten that they even exist.

What was encouraging though was that this was the first time that a prime minister wanted to come down from Delhi and see life as it actually was. At a public meeting in Nawapara subdivision, villagers complained before Rajiv that no one had come to see them before, that no one had cared. "I have come here and I have seen the condition," said a moved Rajiv, "I heard a lot of complaints about corruption, non-implementation of anti-poverty programmes and the inefficiency of local officials. I promise you that something will be done."

The chief minister himself has not been exactly comfortable since Rajiv announced his intention to visit Kalahandi. Patnaik was preparing for September when Rajiv was supposed to come and inaugurate the Rengali dam. Officials close to him revealed that when he received Rajiv's telex, he panicked and rushed to Kalahandi—for the first time since December 1981 when he had gone there to lay the foundation-stone of some industries which till now have not taken off. Patnaik was not a little shocked by what he saw. He went to two villages, Sakhapara in Nawapara block and Chatta in Komna block. He found women boiling leaves since there was no grain. Before he could reach Chatta, five people had died. The chief minister had no words to express his sympathy.

The next day, when he returned to his capital, he filed an eight-page note to various department heads. The note was intended to suggest guidelines for future action. It pointed out that 57 posts of doctors and paramedics were vacant, doctors appointed on an ad hoc basis had disappeared, kits distributed to farmers contained spurious medicines or had not been distributed at all. Not even half of the anti-poverty programmes had been implemented. The chief minister then sanctioned emergency funds to meet the situation, including Rs 5 lakh for cashew plantation in Sinapalli, Boden and Khariar blocks. He sent ministers and officials to see if something could still be done.

In all the five blocks that Rajiv visited, an emergency feeding programme had been started. But villagers are sceptical: they say the programme was started on July 23, barely four days before the prime minister's visit and may be withdrawn soon. Moreover, in 20 villages, such feeding was covering only about 90 people, mostly children, expectant and nursing mothers. The aged were still waiting.

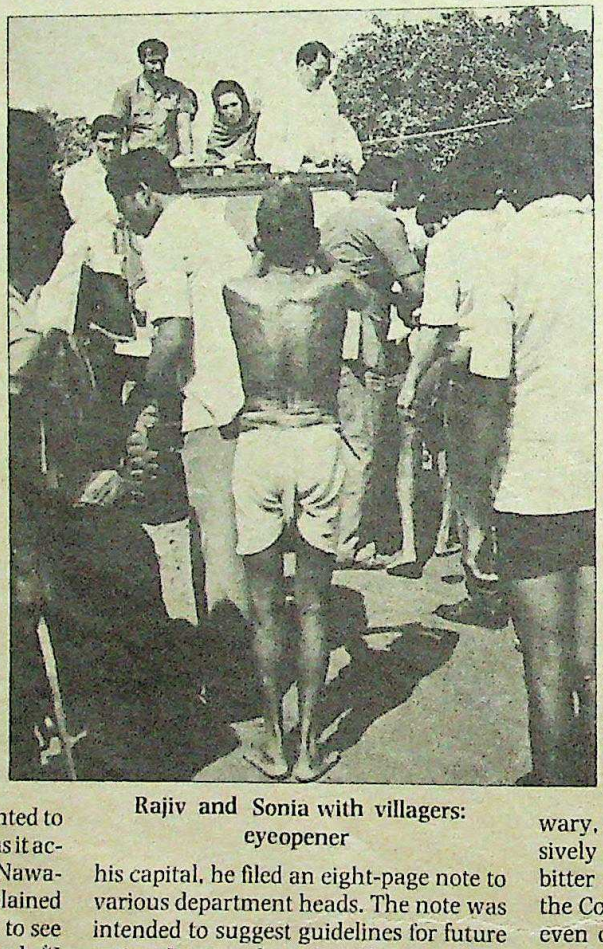
The district magistrate claimed that the Government had sanctioned Rs 35 lakh for drought relief and on July 24, got the go-ahead for Rs 20 lakh to start work under the project division of roads and buildings. But even for an emergency such as this, the administration worked in its own ham-handed way. The magistrate revealed that in Nawapara subdivision Rs 7.3 lakh had been sanctioned for renovation of tanks but only Rs 32,000 could be spent till June and against a sanction of Rs 1.38 lakh for the repair of roads, only Rs 7,000 had been utilised.

Those who have lived the longest are the most cynical of all. The unlucky few who were alive when the 20-year drought started in 1965 and are still alive now, recall that at that time Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister, had come rushing to see their plight and had made many promises. This time her son Rajiv was doing the same. "Nothing could be done for us in 20 years," says elderly Ram Chandra of Komna, "what can happen in the future?"

To Ram Chandra's acerbic question, nobody seems to have a ready reply. Kapil Narain Tiwary, an ex-MLA who has been extensively studying the area, has grown bitter with his research. Why blame the Congress(I) or Rajiv alone? he asks, even opposition leaders are a party to the crime. "What local leaders and the state Government could not realise in 20 years, how can Rajiv realise in a few hours?" he asks. The fate of Kalahandi, it seems, is at the mercy of no one. To many people, Rajiv Gandhi's visit on July 27 had roused hopes but barely a few days later they were likening it to the illusory clouds in their skies that thundered but never rained. Now that Rajiv's visit and its accompanying storm is over, manna must continue to elude Kalahandi.

—FARZAND AHMED in Kalahandi
with SIMRAN BHARGAVA

PRASANTA PATNAIK



Rajiv and Sonia with villagers: eyeopener

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MADHYA PRADESH

Fairy Story

IT HAD the dreamlike quality of a fairy-tale. One day last fortnight, a flurry of little elves descended upon Madhya Pradesh's most backward villages, waving their magic wands, turning pumpkins into carriages and dingy hovels into mansions. In hordes came the senior officials of the state Government to areas they had neither seen nor cared for in years, bringing manna from heaven. Into the arms of the dumbstruck villagers, they dropped sewing machines, bicycles and buffaloes. Within a week, roads came up in the villages, hundreds of workers suddenly found themselves with jobs, electricity poles were dug and for the first time, many villagers switched on lights in their homes. Shops were quickly built and filled with provisions from the city, the thatched huts were repaired and whitewashed. Overnight, one of the country's poorest and most wretched areas was miraculously transformed into a smiling, prosperous countryside.

Something, however, did not ring quite true about the speed and the sudden philanthropy. And as the villagers soon discovered, all this milk of human kindness had flown for no altruistic reasons but to present the picture of a well-developed and prosperous state to the prime minister on his visit to Madhya Pradesh. The state ostensibly spends Rs 80 crore a year on tribal welfare and this year the new prime minister decided to drop by and see for himself just where all that money was going.

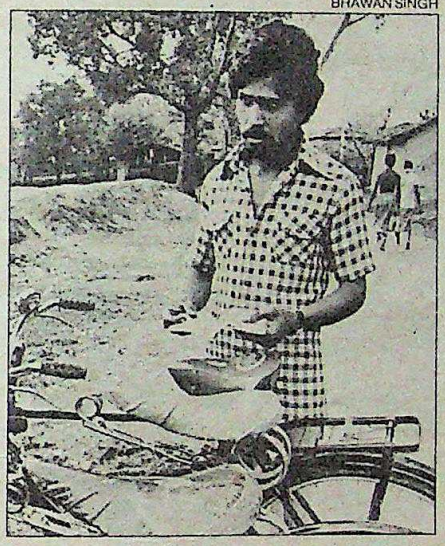
Unfortunately for the diligent little elves, the window-dressing was apparent not only to the villagers but also to the prime minister. Severely ticking off both, the chief minister and the tribal welfare minister, Rajiv insisted on seeing it like it was. He pulled on his rubber boots and walked through the slush into the interiors of the village where the true story behind the fairy-tale emerged:

▶ In Ranjana village in Bilaspur district, over 400 workers were engaged for 10 days to build approach roads, plant seedlings, construct helipads and repaint huts. Electric poles were hastily planted and electricity brought to the village in a matter of days.

▶ Anandpur, a desolate and ignored village in Sargunja district, also felt some of the magic. The Forest Department gave overnight employment to over 300 workers in a four-acre plantation; a government-run shop sprang up next to a freshly painted veterinary hospital —complete with beaming cows. A well costing Rs 20,000 was sunk, a 3-km approach road was built for the occasion and even lined with freshly planted shrubs. Schools were repainted and all children given fresh uniforms.

▶ At Kusma village, 10 trucks were engaged at the astronomical rate of Rs 900 a day and 400 workers hired, who within 10 days transformed their godforsaken hamlet into a sparkling village of the future. Electric poles were brought from a village 6 km away, a nearby irrigation dam was repainted and a huge platform erected for the prime minister to gaze from at the picturesque site.

BHAWAN SINGH



Bharat Lal with bicycles: windfall

Other villages too got their share of the goodies. In Bastar, the crumbling roof of a children's playhouse was replaced with bricks and given a shiny coat of paint. In a school building in Raipur, fresh new cots were donated and elsewhere in the same village, waiters in a restaurant peddled the most exotic dishes as the staple diet of the tribals.

What turned out to be the costliest mopping-up operation in any state began with a polite remark in June by Chief Minister Motilal Vora to the prime minister asking him to visit his state. To Vora's utter surprise, Rajiv said he would and by end-June, messages were rolling in announcing the visit of the VVIP, complete with the list of villages to be visited. A panicked chief minister hastily called a meeting of his district officials. "The prime minister is interested in finding out what is happening in Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and other schemes," he warned them.

The next day the officials rushed back to their districts and started operation cover-up. Some, amazingly enough, did not even know where some of the villages were and had to look up old vintage maps to locate them. Vora admitted to INDIA TODAY that he did order a little window-dressing. "I asked some officials to spruce things up. We wanted to present to the prime minister a good picture of the state." Tribal Welfare Minister R.S. Shastri went a step further. "Yes," he said, "the prime minister did tell me that *leepapotinahi chalegi* (whitewashing won't do), but he was actually referring to the fact that huts were repainted. He did not seem upset with the window-dressing."

Wherever he went, the prime minister asked the villagers whether they were happy, if they had enough and one question that made state officials tremble everytime: whether everything they had was new or if they had had it from before. Still, Madhya Pradesh officials were happy enough when, after a few tense days, Rajiv said he was impressed with what he saw "except in one place". About the obvious window-dressing, Rajiv said: "In a way it is good that at least people have benefited."

The villagers themselves are not so sure now. They have become cynical with the times. Said Kitab Singh, sarpanch of village Ranjana: "We have got the benefits, but for how long? The villagers were given electricity, clothes but everything was done to show Rajiv that all is well here. In reality, it was a total farce." Initially, though, they were euphoric that they would finally get electricity after many years of crying for it. But they soon realised that the electric poles that had sprung up overnight would reach only nine of the 300 houses in the village. "What about the rest?" asks Kitab Singh angrily. "Do we have to wait for the prime minister's next visit?"

Like electricity, some of the villagers were favoured with sudden loans, even those who didn't want them. Two days before the royal visit, Bharat Lal, a grocery shop owner, was given Rs 5,000 for six cycles. The loan was given under the IRDP. However, a day later bank officials had second thoughts about asking Bharat Lal to parade his new wheels before the prime minister. Said Lal: "They told me not to show them to Rajiv since they all look new." More important, the loan of a bicycle is hardly the kind that

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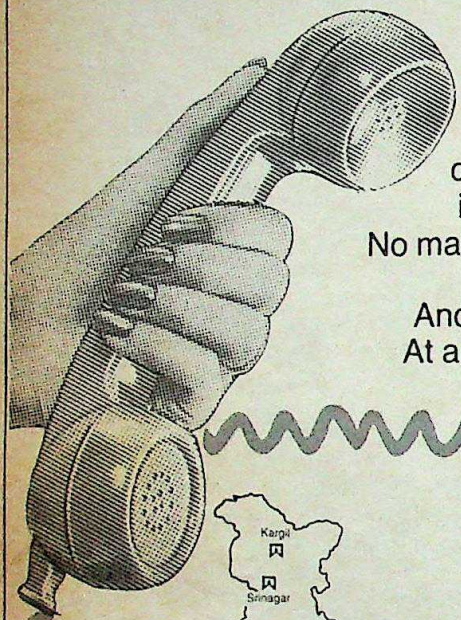

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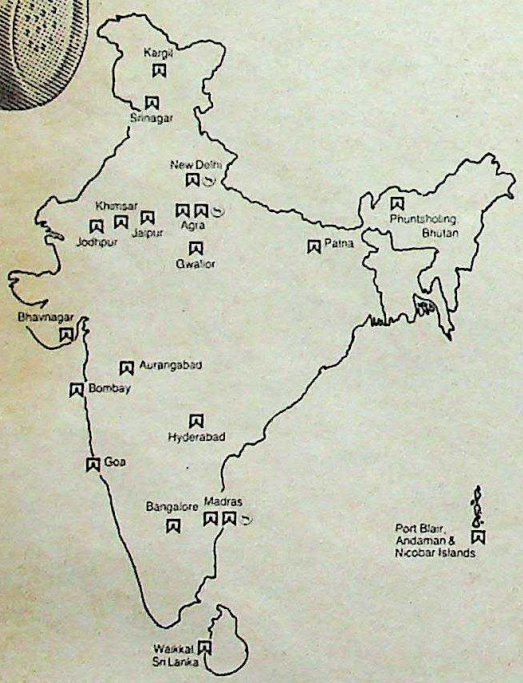

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will alter the state of the rural economy.

If official records are correct, only 15 families in this village have benefited under the IRDP and most have been grocers. Till December '84, no loans were given for buffaloes at all. But in an amazing burst of speed before Rajiv's visit, bank officials decided to sanction villager Chandrika Prasad's loan application filed a year ago. Chandrika had asked for a bullock-cart, but in the hurry, he received only the bullocks. "Will I ever get a cart now?" he asks mournfully.

In Anandpur, the villagers have had no water for years and have had to walk 4 km even to fetch their drinking water. On the eve of Rajiv's visit, a well worth Rs 20,000 was constructed in one short week. Now the villagers wonder how soon it will go dry. Said Shatrugan Prasad Sonkar, who made frequent trips to the village with officials: "I suspect that four tankers had come and filled the well with water." A drilling pump kept on display when Rajiv came, has now disappeared. So has a mobile van selling groceries. The well-decorated van had zipped around the village hoping to catch Rajiv's eye as his motorcade went past. The empty well, the disappearing luxuries are not the only things the villagers are peeved about. Many with genuine problems were deliberately kept away from Rajiv. Said Banda Ram, a tribal: "When they realised that some of us would complain, they carefully screened us. I wanted to garland Rajiv, but they asked me whether I have a *patta* (a land registration certification). I replied in the negative. I was then told to stay back." Only those with *pattas* were allowed to see the prime minister.

Yet, in spite of such precautions, Rajiv did manage to visit the poor home of Ram Charan who lost his hands working in a colliery. Ram Charan bowed at Rajiv's feet and asked for help. Now that the prime minister has gone home, he is unsure that he will get it. "The prime minister said he would get me a job. But since he left no one has come here. Are these merely empty promises even from the noble one?"

Hemanti, a mother of two children, is growing desperate. "After Rajiv left there is no work," she laments. "The price of rice, sugar and kerosene sold cheaply to us when he was here has gone up again." Rice per kilo has jumped from Rs 2.50 to Rs 2.60, sugar from Rs 3.75 to Rs 4 and kerosene from Rs 2.50 to Rs 2.75. "Saab, please tell this to Rajiv," she pleads, "he must help us."

There is more than suffering under the whitewashed surfaces of the villages of Madhya Pradesh: there is trouble brewing that may well escalate into a crisis. For two years, there has been no rain in Jhabua district. The land is barren, the earth parched and the forests dying. As a result of no food and no money, tribals have taken out their old bows and arrows and have begun to attack and loot motorists. In Jhabua proper, the market-place was looted by tribals in broad daylight. Khazi, a villager, managed to acquaint Rajiv with the problems. "There is no irrigation facility, no water. People are fleeing the villages. Cattle are dying." Rajiv promised to do something about it.

BHAWAN SINGH

Thanks to Rajiv's visit, Jhabua got a new motorable road overnight

Whether he is able to ultimately reach out to his wretched villagers or not, his visit has certainly left behind a new awareness. "Unless you speak up," he has been telling the tribals, "we won't know your problems." And now, it seems villagers are getting ready to do just that. Kitab Singh, for instance, threatened to write a personal letter to the prime minister. Said he: "The whole system is corrupt and the only way out is for people like Rajiv to visit us more often. If that happens, then these officials can be taught a lesson."

Whatever the benefits that may come out of Rajiv's visit, there is no denying that a phenomenal sum has been spent on the visit itself and some wonder whether it has been worth it. According to local officials, the expenditure on only one part of the prime minister's tour of Bilaspur and Sarjunga districts is estimated to be about Rs 50 lakh. Much more was of course spent in converting a pock-marked, poverty-ridden area into paradise in one short week.

The worst of it, of course, is that in this paradise nothing is real. In Katghori village, a shop was quickly set up and stocked with provisions. But according to the shop-owner Sunder Sheth: "Months before Rajiv's visit we had only three quintals of rice, four quintals of sugar and one drum of kerosene." The quota was instantly increased a week before the visit to 23 and nine quintals and eight drums respectively. "For several days tribals were given the essential commodities and were expected to tell the prime minister that all was well," says a villager.

In this land of plenty, officials had also arranged interviews with smiling and well-to-do villagers. Bechu Singh, a crippled tailor, was duly presented before Rajiv. Bechu told him how great everything was in the villages and how pleased he was with the loan arrangements of the banks. Talking to INDIA TODAY, however, he told a different story. He had been given a sewing machine through the bank and bank officials had visited him the previous day and briefed him on what to say. As a neighbour admitted: "He was coached to say everything . He got the machine only a day before Rajiv came here."

But, sewing machines and bicycles are not going to help the villagers—and now they seem to be realising this. Seventy-year-old Gosai Jaggu from Anandpur put it quite bluntly: "We don't want electricity. We want fodder for our cattle and someone sympathetic to our problems." If that sympathy—and more important, action—doesn't come from the high command soon, the fairy-tale that began in Madhya Pradesh's most backward villages last fortnight may end up as a horror story.

—RAJU SANTHANAM with SIMRAN BHARGAVA

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SHAHNAWAZ BHUTTO

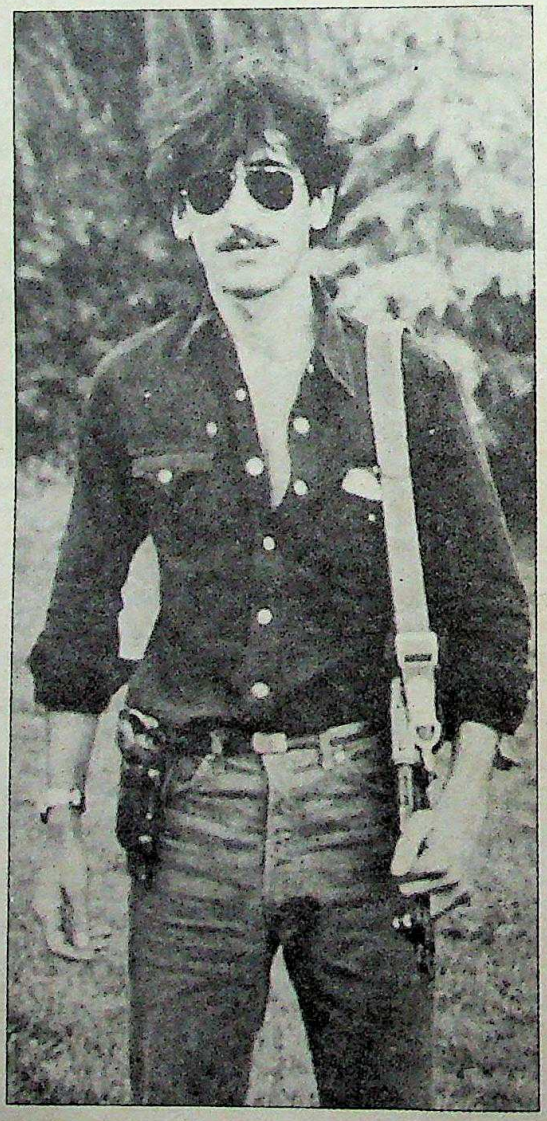
Death on the Riviera

WITH unfaltering tenacity, tragedy continues to stalk the Bhutto clan, after the hanging of its patriarch, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1979, the long incarceration of the Bhutto women, Begum Nusrat and Benazir, the discovery of a debilitating illness afflicting Nusrat Bhutto and their eventual exile abroad, the family was back in the news last fortnight following the mysterious death of its youngest member, Shahnawaz, aged 26, in the ritzy French resort of Cannes. The discovery of Shahnawaz's lifeless body in the living room of his sumptuous apartment situated at one of Cannes' most elegant addresses—Avenue Du Roi Albert—spurred many a vacationing journalist in sunny Cote d' Azur into action.

There has constantly been a touch of mystery and hidden menace in the activities of the swashbuckling Bhutto brothers—Shahnawaz and Murtaza (32)—who were the "military commander" and the "chief" of the shadowy organisation, Al Zulfiqar. Their movements were enigmatic and ever since the hijacking of a PIA airliner in March 1981, they sacrificed to an extent their buccaneering image to maintain a resolutely low profile. Al Zulfiqar ('Sword of Ali') originated in London soon after Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's hanging—which was widely condemned as a travesty of justice. A small faction of leftist students, ex-army officers and members of the disbanded Federal Security Agency—Bhutto's dreaded secret police—took a solemn pledge to oust the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq. Murtaza and Shahnawaz's life-style underwent a dramatic change—from the scholarly (and often leisurely) precincts of Harvard and Oxford to one of leading a guerrilla network: they travelled to capitals in north Africa and the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States, often cultivating their late father's contacts, to raise both funds and arms for their organisation. The brothers—married to daughters of an Afghan official working with the foreign ministry—were sometimes reported to have been sighted in Tripoli or Damascus, Paris or London, and once even Bombay. Shahnawaz, with his wife Rehana and their three-year-old daughter Sassi—reportedly moved into their swanky Cannes apartment only recently. While his mother Nusrat was recuperating also in the south of France, the Bhutto family maintained apartments in neighbouring Nice.

Following the discovery of his body, a crack French investigating team from the "Brigade Criminelle" in Cannes quickly moved into action. First reports suggested that there was no evidence of 'foul play'. However, Rene Gasiglia, the doctor commissioned by the police to examine Shahnawaz's body, refused to issue a death certificate. Following this awkward development, the public prosecutor's office in Grasse ordered an autopsy. At the time of going to the press, the findings have not yet been revealed. The principal commissioner of the "Surete Urbaine de Cannes", who is investigating the case, also refused to make any comments to the press until the investigations had been fully completed. In the past four days, the commissioner, aided by a selected team of top police officers, were busy interrogating Shahnawaz's wife and other family members.

Shahnawaz in Kabul in 1981



Overnight, a welter of bizarre theories concerning Shahnawaz's death were circulating in Cannes, some of which were picked up by the regional press whose front-page coverage at this time of the vacation season is usually confined to spotting and photographing the most curvaceous bronzed beauty on the beaches of Cannes. It was alleged that an empty vial that presumably contained poison was found near his body. The strongest of the rumours stated that he had been administered poison by someone. According to this speculation, Shahnawaz, as well as his brother Murtaza, always carried a poison pellet with them to avoid torture in case they were kidnapped by agents of the Pakistan Government. The three different versions spoke of Shahnawaz's alleged differences with his mother Nusrat, his brother Murtaza and his wife Rehana.

According to the first, the Begum was unhappy that he had married an Afghan official's daughter and had personally preferred a girl of Iranian descent. The second concerned incompatible differences of opinion over tactics and strategy with Murtaza regarding the Al Zufiqar organisation. The third spoke of a quarrel with his wife on the eve of his death, ostensibly because she wanted to "go dancing" and he preferred the casino. As to why such seemingly inconsequential issues should provoke someone to poison Shahnawaz is unclear. A fourth version—reported from a Parisian radio station—claimed that Shahnawaz had suffered a serious motorbike accident in Czechoslovakia and he was in agonising pain. He was under heavy sedation and often took pain-killers. Unable to endure

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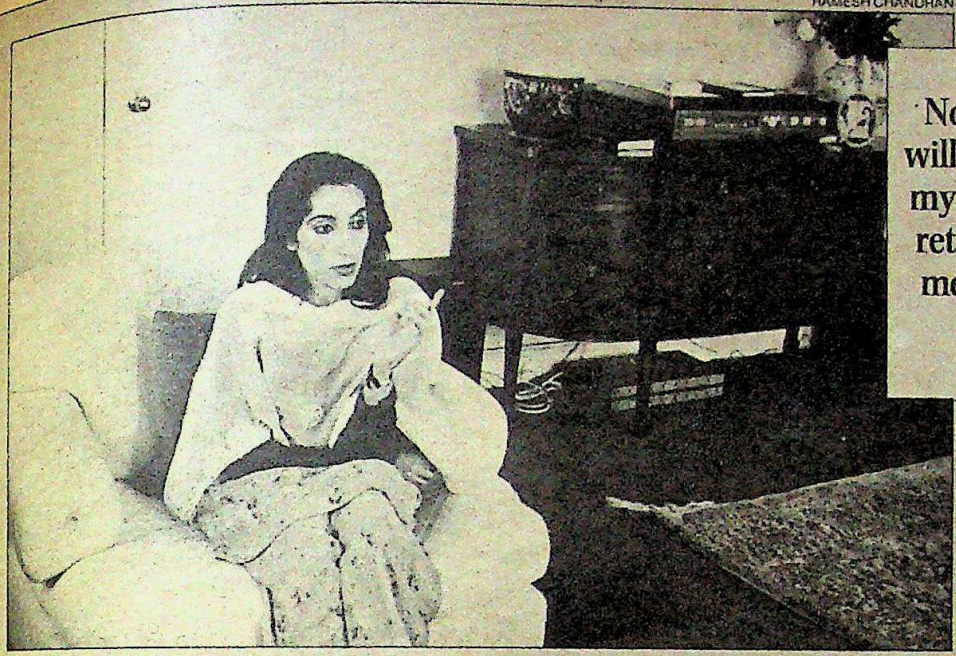
RAMESH CHANDRAN



None of these threats will stop me. Pakistan is my country, I intend to return and along with me my party workers will also go.

BENAZIR BHUTTO

"There was no family feud"

FOLLOWING the sudden death of her brother Shahnawaz, the demands on Benazir, acting chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) seemed to have multiplied. While waiting for the French investigating authorities to pronounce their verdict on the causes leading to Shahnawaz's untimely death, Benazir flew into London from Nice for a three-hour emergency conclave with party activists to finalise her plans to return to Pakistan and also to meet the hundreds of callers offering condolences. Among the callers were such leading figures of Pakistan's opposition such as Wali Khan, Ghulam Jatoi, Mustafa Khan and Mumtaz Bhutto. Benazir also responded to written questions put by INDIA TODAY *communicated through Amal Magazine*—the official organ of the Pakistan People's Party. Excerpts:

On Shahnawaz's death:

Shahnawaz did not die a natural death. How this tragedy happened we can't say for the moment. The French police are investigating into all aspects of the case and say it will take another two weeks. If it had been a natural death, the investigations could not have taken so long. Now only after their findings are officially announced, then all the facts leading to his death will come to light. And until then I cannot make any specific comments.

On his behaviour the previous night:

The death of Shahnawaz came about under mysterious circumstances and it had nothing to do with his health. The day before he was with of us—myself, Begum Sahiba, her sister Mrs Hariri and her husband, Shahnawaz's wife Rehana and her little daughter Sassi. We talked until late at night. Shahnawaz promised to take me for a long walk the following morning but who knew we were not destined to meet after that? When we bid farewell for the night, he was cheerful, in high spirits and in perfect health. The next day when his wife rang to inform me about the tragedy, I could not believe it. It was his little three-year-old daughter who found his body. She had gone to wake up her daddy. Often Shahnawaz used to tell that he wanted to visit Shaheed Baba's (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) *mazar* (grave). God willed it otherwise and instead he will now lie next to my father's grave. With his death I have lost three brothers this year. The others were Nasir Balloch and Ayaz Sammo (both PPP activists who were executed by the military government this year).

On their mother, Nusrat Bhutto:

It was a severe shock to her since Shahnawaz was the dearest of all for the Begum Sahiba. When she saw his body she was crying and kept asking him why he didn't wake up? It has had a shattering effect on her although like the rest of the media reporting of this case, there is no truth whatsoever that she had been admitted to hospital.

On press speculation about family feuds and poisoning:

It has been scandalous reporting with absolutely no basis whatsoever. There have been no family tensions or feuds and all this press speculation is completely absurd with no foundation. A great tragedy has stricken our family.

On returning to Pakistan:

As a sister it is my duty that I take the body of my brother back to Pakistan and bury it in the graveyard where my father, grandfather and other forbears are all buried. I am not at all worried about the risks of re-arrest. I will go back to Pakistan under any circumstances. This is not a political issue. Where is the politics when a sister takes the dead body of her brother back to his own country?

On General Zia's conciliatory gestures and sympathetic statements:

I fail to understand how on the one hand the general has been issuing condolence messages whilst on the other issuing orders to arrest a number of our political workers. If the Government wishes to convert it into a political issue, so be it. But for us, the members of his family, it is a human issue. None of these threats (arrests, army alert, ban on PPP workers entering Larkana, etc) will stop me. Pakistan is my country, I intend to return and along with me my party workers will also go.

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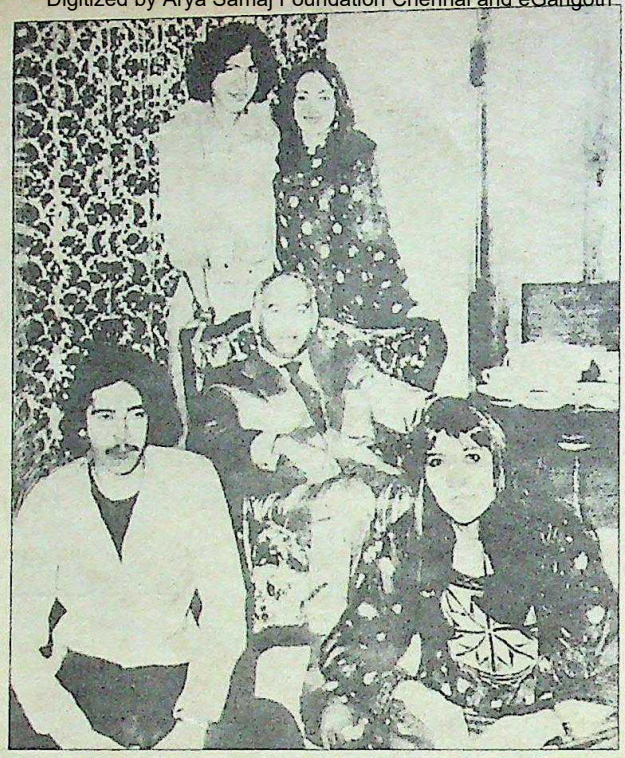
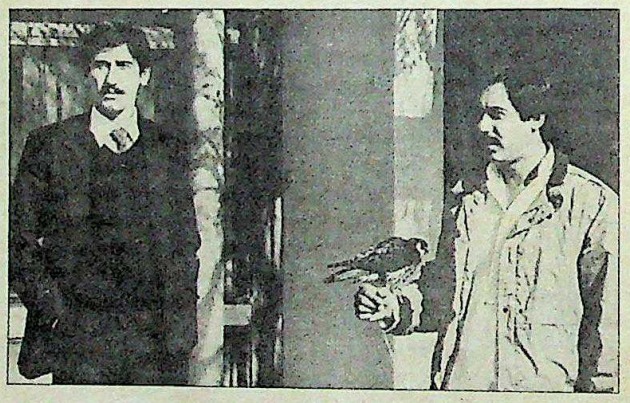
the pain any longer, he opted for suicide.

The poisoning hypothesis raises a number of conflicting questions: if it was not a suicide, it seems unlikely anyone could have forced a death capsule on him since Shahnawaz was an acknowledged karate expert as well as a crackshot. A fierce struggle would no doubt have alerted the rest of the family. Or was it administered in a drink by someone he trusted? All these various versions have been dismissed as "absurd" and "nonsense" by the Pakistan People's Party and Benazir Bhutto's principal spokesman, Bashir Riaz. In a telephonic interview to INDIA TODAY from London, Riaz, who also edits *Alam* magazine said: "Obviously all these rumours and speculative theories have been deliberately fed by interested sources to the press. There is no truth whatsoever that Shahnawaz Bhutto had serious differences of opinion with any of his family members. The previous night (of his death) he was in excellent spirits and could hardly have been described as being in a suicidal mood. His death clearly is an assassination."

Riaz recalls two previous assassination attempts on the Bhutto brothers by Pakistani agents, one of which in 1981 was widely publicised in the Pakistani press when it reported that Shahnawaz had been shot dead in Kabul. In past interviews, Shahnawaz had been quoted as saying: "Zia would give his right arm to have us killed." The Bhutto family members were maintaining a strict silence until the autopsy findings were officially revealed. French authorities now realise that they have on their hands a case of far-reaching dimensions. In Shahnawaz's apartment they found as many as "300 coded names", 22 puzzling cassettes yet to be deciphered as well as seven passports under different names. Besides French detectives are also said to have found photographs of Shahnawaz with the Libyan leader Colonel Gadafy as well as Rifaat-el-Assad the highly influential brother of the Syrian President Hafez-el Assad.





The Bhutto clan in happier days (above) and Shahnawaz with Murtaza: stalked by tragedy

Some of the various theories that quickly found its way in print in the local press have had no verifiable sources. With some justifications, Riaz demanded to know the identity of the source which was "planting" these stories. Although sources close to the Bhutto family have accused the Pakistan Government of being involved in Shahnawaz's death, here again no evidence has been produced. One source however told INDIA TODAY that a Pakistani intelligence official named "Azhar" who maintained a diplomatic front working in the Pakistani mission in Copenhagen, was sighted in Cannes a day after Shahnawaz's death.

As soon as the body is released by the French investigating team, Benazir intends to return to Pakistan, accompanied by her younger sister, Mrs Sanam Bhutto Hussain, and her closest aides. She will proceed to Garhi Khudabux, the Bhutto ancestral family home in Larkana in Sind for the burial.

Already there have been numerous reports of a wave of sympathy not only in Sind but across the country. Surprisingly, even the tightly controlled Pakistani press has written sympathetic pieces with one particularly laudatory leader in *Dawn*. The PPP headquarters in London has reportedly been "deluged" by calls of condolence. The outpouring of sympathy has stirred even President Zia. He told reporters that he "shared" the sorrow of the Bhutto family. But the fear that Benazir's return from exile could turn into a sweeping political movement has made the Government in Islamabad react with a wave of arrests. The acting head of the People's Party, Makhdum Khaliquzzaman, who is also in charge of the funeral and Mir Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, chief of the Pakistan National Party, have both been arrested while leading PPP figures, including Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, ex-Sind governor, are barred from entering Pakistan.

The spectre of Benazir being rearrested also haunts PPP figures here. Already comparisons are being made with her return from exile with that of the late Filipino opposition leader, Benigno Aquino, who was shot dead on his arrival in the Philippines. For Benazir to have any viable office as the country's most influential opposition voice, she will have to return to Pakistan. However unfortunate it is, nothing could have been more dramatic than returning for the funeral of her brother who headed an organisation that is committed to the overthrow of the martial law regime. This scenario could now only go wrong in the next fortnight if the French detectives decide that the death of young Shahnawaz Bhutto involved his own family members. —RAMESH CHANDRAN in Cannes

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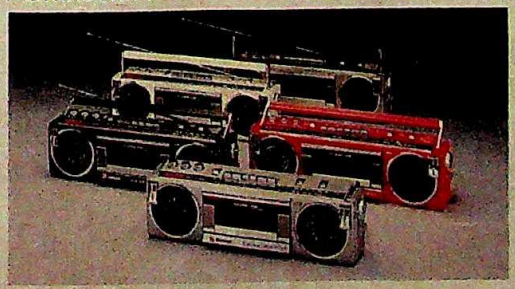

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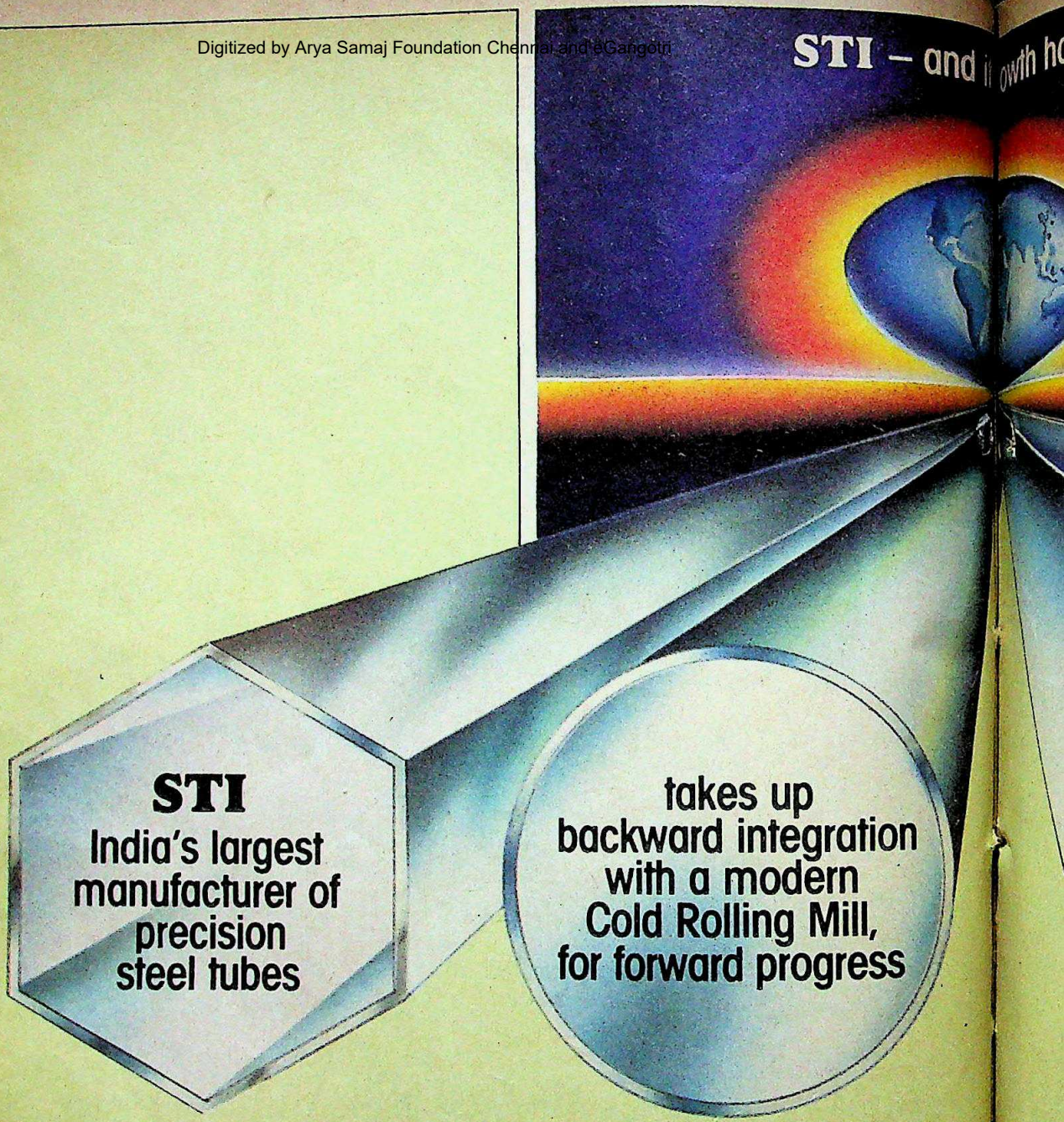

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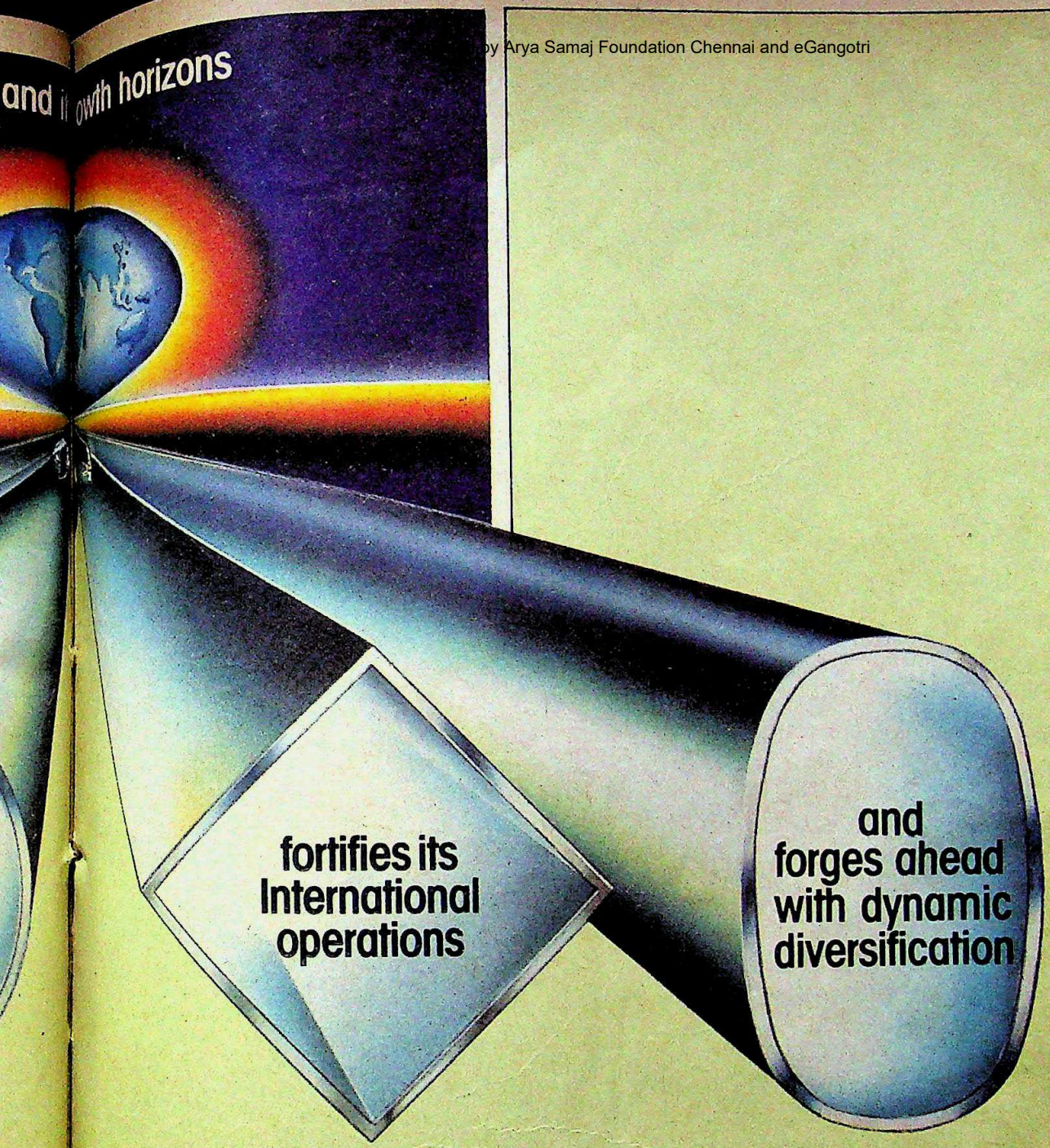

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DOORDARSHAN

Child's Play

HE TALKED intelligently but with ordinary intelligence. He wasn't extraordinary and he lacks charisma," says one. "He didn't say anything that he hadn't said before," added another. "He had an avuncular approach," opined a third. The "He" in question happens to be Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the opinions being expressed were by three of the 11 children who interviewed Rajiv last fortnight with astonishing confidence and astuteness. Refusing to be overawed by the occasion, the group of schoolchildren aged between nine and 16 often made the assembly of journalists who had a similar encounter with the prime minister at his first press conference a fortnight earlier, seem a positively slow-witted, long-winded and tedious lot.

In fact, Doordarshan's telecast of the interview turned out to be something of a landmark programme, memorable for its high intelligence quotient, its skilled coordination and the brisk candour on display. As it transpired, Doordarshan had little to do except set up the cameras. The original idea was mooted last May by the well-known, Delhi-based children's magazine, *Target* (circulation: 40,000) which is a sister publication of INDIA TODAY. When the Prime Minister's Secretariat was approached with the idea, it was agreed to with alacrity with the additional suggestion of televising it.

Target's Editor Rosalind Wilson and Associate Editor Vijaya Ghosh selected the children at random by telephoning school principals to ask for nominations. Before the actual interview, the 11 children recommended were rounded up for three sessions of jointly evolving questions, streamlining them and eliminating any elements of undue aggressiveness. Both Wilson and Ghosh, however, insist that they did not tutor the children. "We only helped in rephrasing certain questions to make them more comprehensible and to ensure that everyone got a chance," says Wilson.

The questions themselves covered a wide area of the prime minister's personal and working life: his views on everything from Reagan's "Star Wars" programme to the image of Indian politicians, his promise of providing a clean government, a new education policy or restoring a true meritocracy. Several times the prime minister was brought up short when he began to ramble. For instance, while discussing the burdens of his office, a voice piped up suddenly to ask, "Before we take exams we have sleepless nights. Do you?"

BHAWAN SINGH

Target children interview Rajiv: rare candour

The disarming tactics varied from pure cheek to subtle stealth. A sweetly-smiling girl began by asking if the prime minister missed being a pilot. Rajiv Gandhi was beginning to bashfully admit that, yes, he sometimes did, when promptly came the question: "Well, what's the difference between steering a plane and the world's largest democracy?" Once or twice he was seen to gasp visibly and slump back exclaiming, "My God!"

His style of running the Government also came up for close scrutiny. He explained how he collected information from a variety of sources and used the word "input" again and again. There were departmental inputs, parliamentary inputs and inputs from intelligence sources. The children patiently hung on to every word. Then one of them wanted to know what, if any, were the "outputs" from his office and how were they effected. The prime minister then had to diligently explain that he sometimes let the complaints against a particular government department collect before he wrote off to the minister concerned or summoned him to ensure action.

It was only the viewer's good luck that the children's interview with the prime minister succeeded in scrapping a great deal of rubbishy political jargon. For example, the word "nepotism" was never used in all the questions and answers about it. He was asked why it was a continuing fact that, all around them, the children witnessed undue privileges doled out to the undeserving?

But the prime minister either misunderstood the question or misheard it because he began to explain the principle behind caste reservation. And the questioner, Projjal Dutta, a 16-year-old student of St Columba's School, when asked a few days later what it was like interviewing the prime minister said, "I had asked a specific question about nepotism. He kept explaining reservation. It wasn't fair—don't you think nepotism and reservation are two quite different things?"

Others among Rajiv Gandhi's youthful interviewers also noticed his tendency to glibness. "He's very, very pleasant and a very, very nice person to talk to," says Shailaja Pachisia, 15, a student of Modern School. "And obviously quite quick on the uptake. But sometimes I felt he's too smooth, the kind of person who never makes a mistake when he talks." Anuroopa Kalbagh, 15, the daughter of a journalist who asked the question about "Star Wars" was even less impressed. "He kept giving us his long-term plans; he didn't say what his government had already done."

But the frankest opinions came not in comparing Rajiv Gandhi to other political leaders ("Can you imagine Morarji Desai or Charan Singh ever talking so straight?" said one interviewer) but his mother. Almost all the children remarked upon the difference, though they had only seen Mrs Gandhi at her press conferences on television or during public appearances. "She would have remained shy, secretive and withdrawn into her shell," said Bonnie Singh, imagining a similar encounter with her.

—SUNIL SETHI

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JK PAPER LAKSHMI CEMENT

STRAW PRODUCTS LTD.

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

At the 46th Annual General Meeting.

Shri Hari Shankar Singhania

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to the 46th Annual General Meeting of your Company. The Directors' Report and the Audited Accounts of the Company for the year ended December 31, 1984 have been in your hands for some time and before I deal with them, I must place on record the major event of the year which saddened every Indian beyond words. The former Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, who steered the nation and held it together despite serious challenges from within and outside for nearly sixteen years laid down her life for the sake of India's unity and integrity. The best homage we can pay to her would be to do all that we can to make India strong and prosperous as well as to preserve the unity of the country.

It is a happy augury for democracy that the new leader was chosen swiftly and smoothly. The massive mandate that the ruling party received during the recent elections has brought to the helm, young and dynamic Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi. In a very short span of time, he has succeeded in creating a new sense of confidence in the nation. He has tackled promptly and firmly many difficult domestic and international issues. A new direction has been given to the country with emphasis on efficiency, modernisation and technology, so that India may enter the twenty-first century with a firm base and competitive strength. Number of policy changes have been made to reduce control & red tape and simplify procedures. The Union Budget for 1985-86 has attempted to give a thrust to the country's economy through a series of bold and innovative steps. There is an endeavour to make Indian industry competitive and cost effective. The attitude towards foreign investment and technology is more open and liberal. All this has generated a new enthusiasm and confidence in India and abroad. This has also put responsibility on industry and trade to respond positively. Your Company will do all it can to play its constructive role and seize the opportunities that unfold themselves. A number of new areas of investment are already under our active consideration.

The Sixth Five-Year Plan has just ended with substantial achievements. We have been able to achieve average annual growth of 5.2 per cent per annum as targeted and sustain foodgrains production of nearly 150 million tonnes for the last few years. The rate of growth of industrial production however has been lower than the target. The Seventh Five-Year Plan envisages a growth of 5 per cent per annum of GNP and 6.7 per cent in industrial sector. A greater responsibility has been envisaged for the private sector. It is possible for the corporate sector to achieve a growth rate of 10 per cent per annum provided certain constraints are effectively tackled. The major problem is of financial resources. The issues of higher debt equity ratio, lower promoter's contribution and removal of convertibility clause need re-consideration in order to stimulate higher investment. Minority foreign investment in some traditional industries could be permitted to raise additional resources.

Problems of infrastructure like power, coal, transport and communication continue to be the weak spots and the Government has to accomplish breakthrough in these sectors to ensure targeted growth. It is not enough to achieve physical targets, it is equally essential to improve the quality performance. Poor quality of coal, frequent interruptions in power supply, wide voltage fluctuations and unreliable communication are not only frustrating and affect production but seriously damage machinery and adversely affect costs.

Labour productivity and discipline is yet another area which needs urgent attention. Trade Union movement will also have to positively respond to the changing economic imperatives.

What is now needed in India is not only new investment but better utilisation of the existing capacities through improved management, consolidation and technology upgradation. We have become a high cost economy and we have to get out of this rut both from the domestic as well as international angle. If India is to achieve higher economic growth so important for the well-being of its masses, it has to earn foreign exchange needed for its development by becoming competitive exporter in many fields, particularly manufactures. To my mind, this basic approach should pervade our decision-making.

For political stability and social harmony, it is essential that there should be price stability and generation of massive new employment opportunities. We will have to search for areas which generate large number of jobs in the short run. To my mind, two areas which can provide the answer are: (i) massive road building; and (ii) extensive house construction. We already have the required basic inputs–steel, cement and other materials. Creation of large scale employment by these activities would also generate additional purchasing power in the hands of rural masses. It has been the experience of Indian economy that the growth of many industries has been stunted because of inadeqate demand due to lack of purchasing power. Moreover, there has also been the problem of increasing migration to urban areas in search of jobs and opportunities, which in turn have given rise to new problems. These activities therefore would have a multiplicity of benefits. The enormous political, social and economic advantages which would accrue from such programmes lead me to suggest that we should not hesitate to resort to even unconventional methods of raising resources for these purposes.

COMPANY PERFORMANCE

Coming to the Company's performance during 1984, I am happy to state that there has been an all round improvement in production, turnover and profits of the Company. The Cement Division achieved a capacity utilisation of 96 per cent with a production of 4.81 lac tonnes. The Paper and Board production at 65,848 tonnes was also higher as compared to last year. Sales and other income of the Company increased to Rs. 106.09 crores against Rs. 87.84 crores in the previous year. Profit before interest and depreciation was higher at Rs. 16.99 crores compared to Rs. 12.98 crores in 1983, showing an increase of 31 per cent.

The modernisation and renovation scheme of Paper Mills in Orissa with an investment cost of Rs. 23 crores is expected to be completed in phases in 1986 and 1987.

As you are aware, your Company has promoted Orissa Synthetics Limited (OSL) jointly with Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Orissa Limited to manufacture 15,000 tonnes per annum of polyester staple fibre at Dhenkanal, a backward area of Orissa with an investment of Rs. 73 crores. I am happy to state that the plant is expected to go in production well within the

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targeted date during 1986. OSL will be entering capital market to raise equity capital in the next few months.

PAPER

Last year, I had pointed out to the gradually deteriorating capacity utilisation in the Paper Industry which had come down from nearly 75 per cent in 1981 to less than 59 per cent in 1983. I am sorry to state that this has declined even further to 56 per cent in 1984. Such a low capacity utilisation is a gross waste of capital resources which our country can ill-afford. The bulk of this unutilised capacity is in the medium and small scale sector which accounts for nearly half of the overall installed capacity in the industry. The basic reason of this is that most of these plants are unviable and have obsolete second-hand machinery. Despite heavy excise concessions and no obligation to produce controlled variety of White Printing Paper, these units are unable to stand on their own because of the inherent weaknesses. In my view, such uneconomic capacity should not be allowed to be created any further and the existing plants should be enabled to become economic by expansion and technical upgradation.

As far as large integrated mills are concerned, the infrastructural constraints, inadequate returns and lack of modernisation are the key problems. The obligation on the integrated mills to produce and supply White Printing Paper at prices which are grossly below cost of production continue to affect the returns. It is unfortunate that the price revisions to compensate even the increase in cost of production are too late and are far from adequate. The last price revision was done more than a year ago in May 1984. Here I would like to suggest that the concept of requiring a particular industry to bear the entire social cost of subsidising supplies to certain sections of society or for important social causes needs reconsideration. For instance, the cost of subsidising paper for the Education Sector has to be entirely borne by the paper industry and that too only by a segment of the industry having less than half of the installed capacity. The burden on the industry should not be beyond its capacity to bear and should not jeopardise its health.

In this context, it might be mentioned that according to an Expert Committee, during the last ten years, the cost of production of the Paper Industry in general increased by 186 per cent whereas the sales realisation increased only by 129 per cent. This points to the continued decline in the rate of return in the Paper Industry over the years.

Modernisation of the existing Paper Mills to economic size requires huge investment. It has been estimated by the Working Group on Paper & Paper Board Industry set up by the Planning Commission that a sum of Rs. 690 crores is required for modernisation during Seventh Plan period. In order to encourage rapid moderisation, it is necessary to ease the norms of lending and the rate of interest.

Availability of raw materials has been one of the key problems facing the Paper Industry for quite some time. The basic raw material in India so far has been bamboo of which very few untapped areas are now available. Recognising this problem, the Government has permitted the import of wood chips, wood pulp and waste paper without any import duty. This is a welcome relief. However, the long term solution lies in replantation. In this direction also, the State Governments have recently shown some interest and I sincerely hope that concrete steps will follow.

CEMENT

Cement Industry has made unprecedented progress as a result of assurance of 12 per cent post-tax return made in 1979 which was reiterated again in early 1982 at the time of partial decontrol. As a result, massive investment has been made in the industry and the installed capacity has increased from 24 million tonnes in 1979 to 43 million tonnes in 1984-85. The industry is expected to continue the pace of this growth during the Seventh Plan when capacity is expected to go up to 60 million tonnes. This will however require Government to take necessary steps, as in the past, to keep investment in Cement attractive.

Unfortunately continuous increase in cost of production, inadequate increase in price of levy cement and steep fall in the prices of non-levy cement have made the working of existing new cement plants unremunerative. These new plants set up at high investment cost are hardly able to meet the interest charges leave alone depreciation and the promised 12 per cent post-tax return. I would earnestly appeal to the Government to grant excise duty rebate of 50 per cent and other remedies requested by Cement Manufacturers' Association to the new plants established in 1982 and onwards without loss of time to mitigate at least part of their financial problem. It is not out of place to mention that the new cement plants constitute nearly half of the present installed capacity.

There was an assurance from the Government that there will be regular review of the levy cement price in order to compensate for increase in cost of inputs. The cost of production, because of steep increases in cost of inputs like coal, power, transport, labour etc., all beyond the control of the industry has been increasing continuously since partial decontrol was introduced in February 1982. The Government made the first price revision after a lapse of more than two years with effect from 18th July 1984 and that too by inadequate amount of Rs. 40 per tonne besides 5 per cent reduction in levy quota. Since then there has been further increase in the cost of production besides rise in the railway freight. It is unfortunate that the Government has decided against granting any increase in levy cement prices and has reduced levy quota by mere 5 per cent with effect from 4th June 1985. This will hardly provide any relief to the industry which is forced to sell levy cement much below cost. There is an urgent need to revise the levy cement prices to compensate for the increase in cost of inputs and such a revision should be made every quarter.

Cement is an energy intensive industry. Therefore level of production and cost of production is dependent on continuous and adequate availability of power. Power situation has been really bad in large number of States where cement plants are situated, particularly in Rajasthan, where your plant is located. Apart from heavy power cuts for long periods, the industry is subjected to frequent power interruptions and very wide voltage fluctuations. To maintain production, your Company, like many other cement units, has installed 15 MW standby diesel generating sets at a huge cost of Rs. 6 crores. Due to serious power situation, these diesel sets are no more standby but have to be operated almost continuously. The cost of power from DG sets is nearly three times the cost of power supplied by the Electricity Boards, apart from high expenditure that has to be incurred in maintaining these Sets. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to continue the DG Relief Formula in one form or the other to compensate for the extra cost incurred to produce the cement from captive diesel generation.

Coal, the conventional fuel used for manufacture of cement, is a source of great worry due to constraints of rail transport. The industry has to work at very low levels of stocks of coal and is compelled to move coal by road raising the cost of production substantially. In order to optimise production and to minimise the cost, high priority should be given to the cement industry in allocation of power and wagons for movement of coal.

Before I conclude, I would like to place on record my appreciation to the management team, the workers and the staff at all levels for their dedication and hardwork to improve production and productivity. I would also like to thank the Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan and the Financial Institutions and Banks for their continued support and co-operation.

Thank you.

This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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KANISHKA CRASH

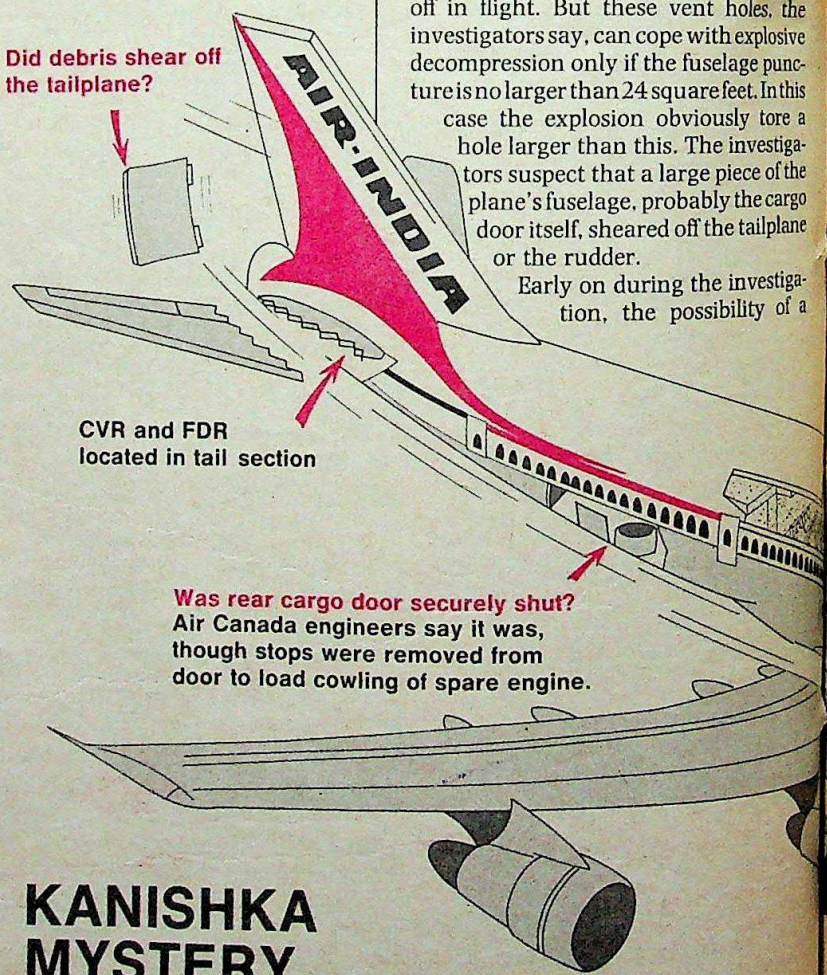
Ominous Evidence

FROM Cork to Bombay and now back to Cork. The spotlight in the *Kanishka* crash investigation has shifted once again to the seabed off the south-east coast of Ireland where salvage crews attempt to retrieve key pieces of the plane's fuselage which now holds the final clues to the mystery of the explosion which caused the plane to break apart and killed its 329 passengers. The preliminary analysis of the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR) tapes, completed in Bombay last week, has indicated the certainty of an explosion about 50 feet away from the cockpit as the London-bound plane was about to begin descending from its cruising altitude of 31,000 feet. That suspected blast in the vicinity of the plane's nerve-centre—the main electronic compartment (MEC), played havoc with the controls, and tore a huge hole in the fuselage, creating a situation of explosive decompression. The big jumbo jet broke into two or more pieces and the hapless passengers tumbled to their death through the oxygenless atmosphere.

The CVR tape, which was analysed in the presence of foreign experts at Bombay, ends with a sound which some investigators have described as an explosion. But in a statement to Irish radio last week, Justice B.N. Kirpal, who heads the official court of enquiry into the accident, said in Cork that the "possibility of an explosion being the cause is very much under investigation". But he was careful to add that the investigation still has a long way to go before a final diagnosis can be made and the exact cause established. Endorsing Kirpal's approach, a senior government official assisting the enquiry said they did not want to close their minds to any possibility till they were certain they had pinpointed the cause. But the scientists and CVR-decoding experts who analysed the tapes, measured the decibel level of the explosion and the intensity with which the sound level rose after reaching the cockpit microphone located above the left shoulder of the co-pilot. By plotting the noise level rise in decibels, and the shock wave, it has been possible to determine that the explosion was about 50 feet away from the cockpit microphone. This puts the location of the explosion in the region of the forward cargo hold which is under the first-class compartment.

The investigators are reported to have informed the Civil Aviation Ministry that the force of the explosion buckled the floor of the passenger cabin (which is also the roof of the cargo compartment) and the plane probably broke apart into two or more large pieces and fell into the ocean. There is some indication of this in some pieces of wreckage recovered. The rivets in the flooring have parted in a manner suggesting that extreme forces were operating on it from underneath. Buckling evidently took place in spite of several venting areas built into the floor for just this purpose—to disperse the force of an explosive decompression. This was ordered to be done in all aircraft some years ago after a Turkish DC10 crashed near Paris after the control cables under the floor jammed due to compressive buckling of the floor after a cargo door fell off in flight. But these vent holes, the investigators say, can cope with explosive decompression only if the fuselage puncture is no larger than 24 square feet. In this case the explosion obviously tore a hole larger than this. The investigators suspect that a large piece of the plane's fuselage, probably the cargo door itself, sheared off the tailplane or the rudder.

Early on during the investigation, the possibility of a



By plotting the noise level rise in decibels, and the shock wave, it has been possible to determine that the explosion was about 50 feet away from the cockpit in the region of the forward cargo hold....In this case, the explosion tore a hole in the aircraft larger than 24 square feet. Investigators suspect that a large piece of fuselage, probably the cargo door itself, sheared off the tailplane or the rudder

KANISHKA MYSTERY
THE POSSIBILITIES

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cargo hold door having fallen off and caused the *Kanishka* crash was seriously probed. After learning that some stops were taken off the rear cargo door of the 747 to enable loaders at Toronto airport to load the cowling (outer shell) of a spare 747 engine into the hold, the investigators sent for the Air Canada mechanics who had done the job. Enquiries convinced them that the door had been fixed properly as it had remained in its place for several hours after takeoff from Toronto. If the door had to fly off, it would have done so much earlier.

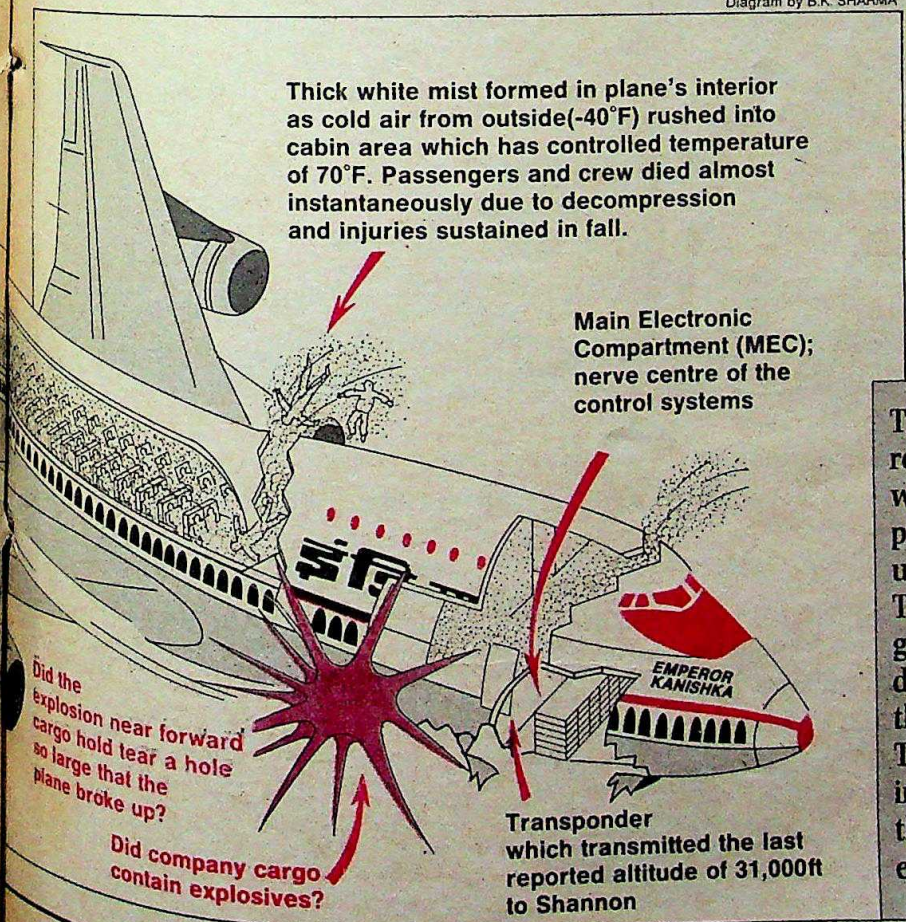
By far the more serious matter now being probed, however, is the possibility of half a dozen crates of company cargo—Air-India goods—being loaded onto the *Kanishka* presumably without going through the bomb detection check. Investigators fear that these crates may have contained a bomb. As one investigator said, "If it was indeed a bomb, then the person who put it there knew exactly what he was doing. The only way to ensure that the bomb was stored in the forward cargo hold near the electronic bay would be to put it in company cargo packages." If that indeed is the way things happened, it reflects poorly on Air-India's in-house intelligence as well as the security procedures at Canadian airports. "What the hell have the Intelligence Bureau DIG and two dozen other intelligence officers (recruited in 1980 after the *Makalu* sabotage) been doing all these years," asked an irate Air-India official after hearing of the company cargo investigation.

Apart from the noise of an explosion at the end, the CVR tape reveals little else. Power supply to the CVR, FDR and the transponder which was sending out altitude readings to the Shannon control tower, were cut off in a split second. The situation in the cockpit before the explosion was one of placid normalcy. A few minutes earlier, co-pilot S.S. Bhinder had given Flight 182's height and heading to Shannon and then asked one of the cabin crew for a customs declaration form. He and captain Narendra briefly discussed one of the air hostesses, who was described as " a nice girl". A gap of a few minutes is followed by an explosive noise after which the CVR goes dead. According to the FDR tape, everything in the aircraft was normal, the engines were running smoothly, the hydraulic and electric systems were operating till the moment the power supply was cut.

But the last action of one of the pilots has given investigators some indication of the post-explosion death throes in the cockpit of the crippled Jumbo. While wrestling with the control column or in a final convulsion, one pilot pressed a VHF transmitter button which carried telltale sounds to the Shannon Air Traffic Control (ATC). The VHF-1 channel gets power from the battery and hence it was able to transmit even after the power failure put the CVR and FDR on the blink. The significance of the Shannon tape emerged after it was synchronised with the CVR. It was found that the CVR and FDR stopped recording at almost exactly the same time as the Shannon radar lost the signal from *Kanishka*. But the Shannon tape recorded the sounds of the cockpit for an agonising 30 seconds after the CVR had stopped recording. The 30-second segment on the Shannon tape has a crackling sound, which according to one engineer, suggests that the plane's structure was either breaking up or straining under tremendous pressure. Another described it as if things were being flung about. This is followed by a boom and a gushing sound suggestive of air rushing out or decompression. The last sound on the Shannon tape is a man's scream, which is believed to be Bhinder. Crash investigators are now running voice analysis tests to confirm this and match the voice of the scream to the recording of Bhinder's voice heard earlier on the tape.

The second boom on the Shannon tape has led some investigators to conjecture that there may have been two explosions—one which cut the power supply to the CVR and FDR and the second recorded a few seconds later by Shannon. If in fact there were two explosions then the second one was caused either by another bomb, or

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



The Shannon tape has recorded a crackling sound which suggests that the plane's structure was buckling under tremendous pressure. This is followed by a boom and a gushing sound suggestive of decompression. The last sound on the tape is a man's scream. The second boom has led investigators to conjecture that there may have been two explosions....

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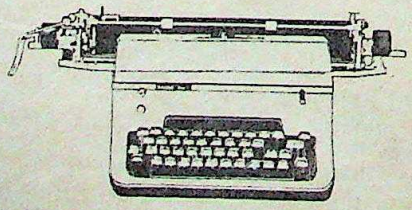

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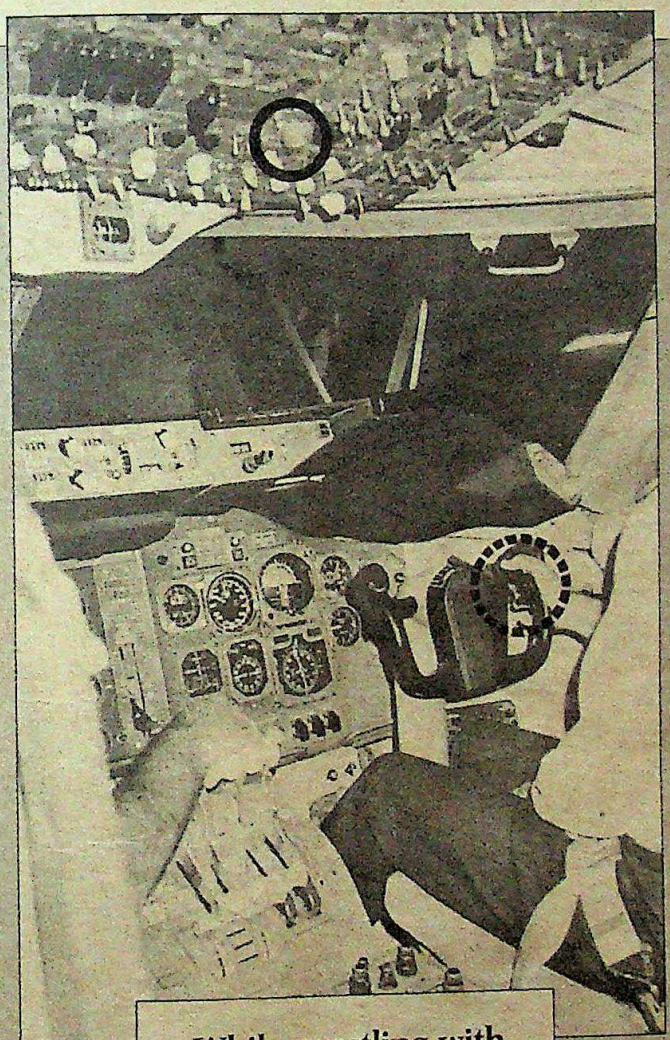
could be the sound of some part of the plane breaking up. The second boom could also have been caused by the forward cargo door, or some other debris severing the tailplane.

A senior 747 commander of Air-India described what happens in the event of an explosive decompression at a height of 31,000 feet. He said the cockpit and the cabin would have filled with a thick white mist which forms due to the difference in temperature between the cabin (70 degrees Fahrenheit) and outside (–40degrees F). Exposed to the rare atmosphere the pilots and passengers would have remained conscious for a bare 15 seconds and then blacked out as their lungs starved of oxygen. The post-mortem reports on the bodies recovered show that most of them have "flailing injuries" (twisting and entanglement of the limbs) caused by an uncontrolled free fall from a great height.

The only evidence that the experts now need to finally sew up the bomb theory is a piece of the wreckage that carries traces of the explosive used in the bomb or shows a crack or deformation caused by the heat generated by explosives. That conclusive piece of evidence has so far evaded the investigators, and it is in search of that evidence that the Canadian ship *John Cabot* is now mapping the ocean bottom near Cork. Experts say the tear caused in a metal sheet by an explosion is quite different from the one caused by metal fatigue. In other words if there was a bomb, the cracks and tears on the remaining wreckage should show it. Even if the explosive decompression was caused by metal fatigue or structural failure it would show. A large part of one wing and other large pieces of the plane wreckage including one large eight- window segment of the fuselage are known to be lying on the ocean floor. The concluding act of the *Kanishka* whodunit will therefore be played out at Cork, where it all began. Justice Kirpal has already inspected some of the wreckage in Cork and will be going on to Canada for on the spot investigations. He may seek from the Irish authorities the original tape recorded by Shannon ATC. The Indian authorities had earlier been given only a copy which was subjected to spectrum analysis at Farnborough in England.

It is now evident that the Government's confidence in the ability of its own scientists to decode and analyse the data on the CVR and FDR was not out of place. To eliminate US, British and Canadian doubts on this score, the Indian authorities allowed foreign experts to be present when the black boxes were opened and the tapes decoded. The DGCA has now received written testimonials from the experts of the US National Transportation Safety Board and Canada's Aviation Safety Board (ASB) saying they were satisfied with the analysis of the tapes in India and that no further analysis was necessary. Said Pierre de Niverville, head of Investigative Operations of Canada's ASB: "We participated fully in the analysis of the recorders. I am satisfied with the way it was done. There was agreement on that among all the parties."

The CVR microphone (solid circle) and the VHF transmit button (broken circle)



While wrestling with the control columns or in a final convulsion, one pilot pressed a VHF transmitter button which carried tell-tale sounds to Shannon Air Traffic Control

With the mystery still unsolved, the international pilot community has decided to re-create a similar emergency in a Boeing 747 simulator in an effort to shed light on what crippled the plane. The general secretary of the Indian Pilots guild, Captain K.M. Balasubramaniam told INDIA TODAY that two senior Air-India 747 captains will be going to Farnborough to conduct the simulation with the help of two senior pilots from the British Airline Pilots Association. Said Balasubramaniam: "Our feeling is that the aircraft disintegrated in mid- air, perhaps due to a sudden explosion, because it did not leave the pilots any reaction time. What caused the explosion we do not know." He hoped that the fragmentation and tear pattern on the *Kanishka* fuselage could yield some clues about the type of explosion.

The International Federation of Airline Pilots Associations (IFALPA) has expressed the fear that "sabotage may in fact have been the cause of the loss of AI 182." In a letter to Rajiv Gandhi, the IFALPA vice-president Stephen Last has enclosed a letter to the US vice-president George Bush saying that the pilot community worldwide was "appalled" to

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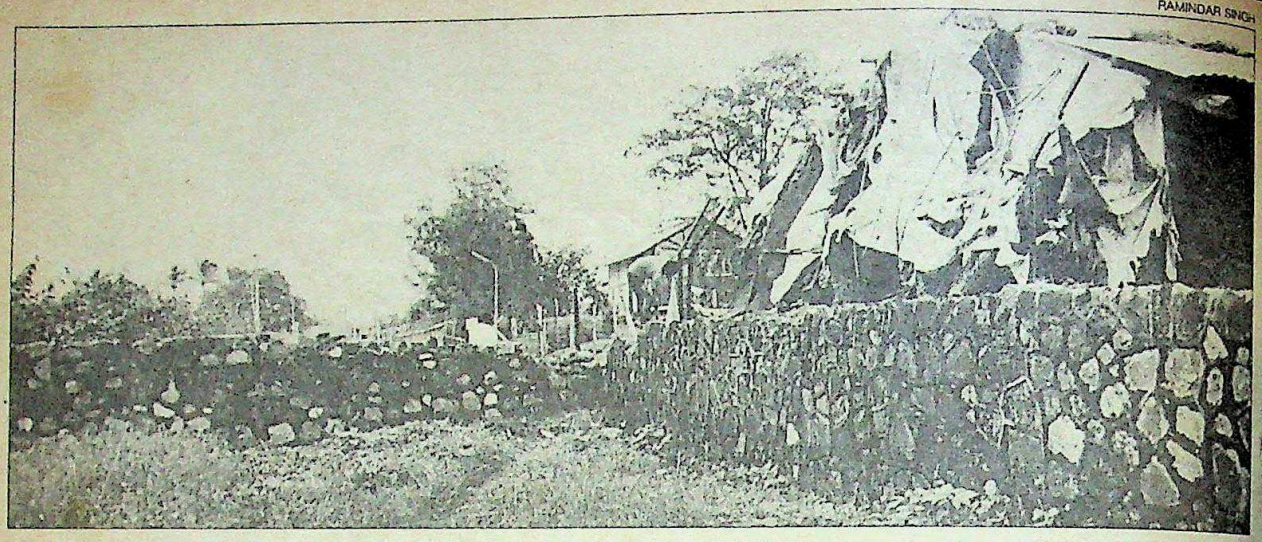
RAMINDAR SINGH



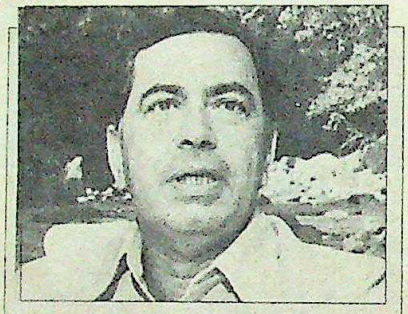
Breached boundary wall of Bombay Airport: security hazard

hear of schools imparting training to terrorists and mercenaries.

One thing however is worrying aviation observers in India and abroad, and that is the time being taken to complete the enquiry and inform an eagerly waiting aviation world about the reasons which caused *Kanishka* to break up. The whole industry has huge stakes in the Boeing 747 and if, for example, it were found that structural defects or fatigue had caused the crash, the repercussions for world airlines would be disastrous. All 747s would have to be grounded and checked for structural fatigue. De Niverville pointed out that Canada had recently changed its crash enquiry procedure and permitted investigators to release technical details of the investigation as soon as these became known. This allowed the airlines to take necessary preventive action immediately after the crash rather than wait for the final verdict of the safety board. This is something that should be considered in India too, say observers, seeing how many diverse and contradictory theories of the crash are being aired in the absence of any official word from the authorities about the results of the ongoing investigations so far.

Meanwhile, there is not a 747 pilot in Air-India who does not swear by the structural integrity of the aircraft. Stories are legion in operations departments of airlines of how 747s have uneventfully completed flights even after large sections of the wing flaps or the landing gear doors fell off in flight. One pilot says he found out only after landing that a big flap had fallen off one wing. In flight the plane had only wobbled a bit before correcting itself and landing as if nothing were amiss.

PALASH BHAUMICK



"The possibility of an explosion being the cause of the crash is very much under investigation."

JUSTICE B.N. KIRPAL
head of the court of enquiry

RAMINDER SINGH

"We feel that the aircraft disintegrated in mid-air because it did not leave the pilots any reaction time."

Capt. K.M. BALASUBRAMANIAM,
general secretary
Indian Pilots Guild

All pilots and cabin crew of Air-India are now being provided with police escort following a threat phoned in by a hitherto unknown militant Hindu organisation, the Hindu Sammelan of Glasgow. A senior Air India pilot said this threat had to be taken seriously specially after what happened to the *Kanishka* and the numerous bomb threats on Air-India flights and at premises where Air-India crew were staying. Since the 747 crash, the Air India headquarters building at Bombay's Nariman Point has had to be vacated following a bomb threat. Fortunately this happened on a Saturday when there were not many people in the building. What's more, the Air-India simulator at Santa Cruz Airport also had to be evacuated following a similar bomb threat. Apart from slack internal security, Air-India is also worried about the safety of its planes at Bombay airport, whose outer wall remains breached in several places and people can be seen jumping over into the operational area. As a matter of abundant caution, every single Air-India plane is being checked for explosives before it takes off from the Bombay base. But what use are these checks when outsiders can gain easy entry into the airport and roam about at will? With the *Kanishka* crash still fresh in the travelling public's mind, there is a crackle of tension and fear inside the passenger cabin of almost every Indian plane that takes off these days. This spectre of fear is likely to haunt Indian aviation till the *Kanishka* mystery is finally solved.

—RAMINDAR SINGH in Bombay

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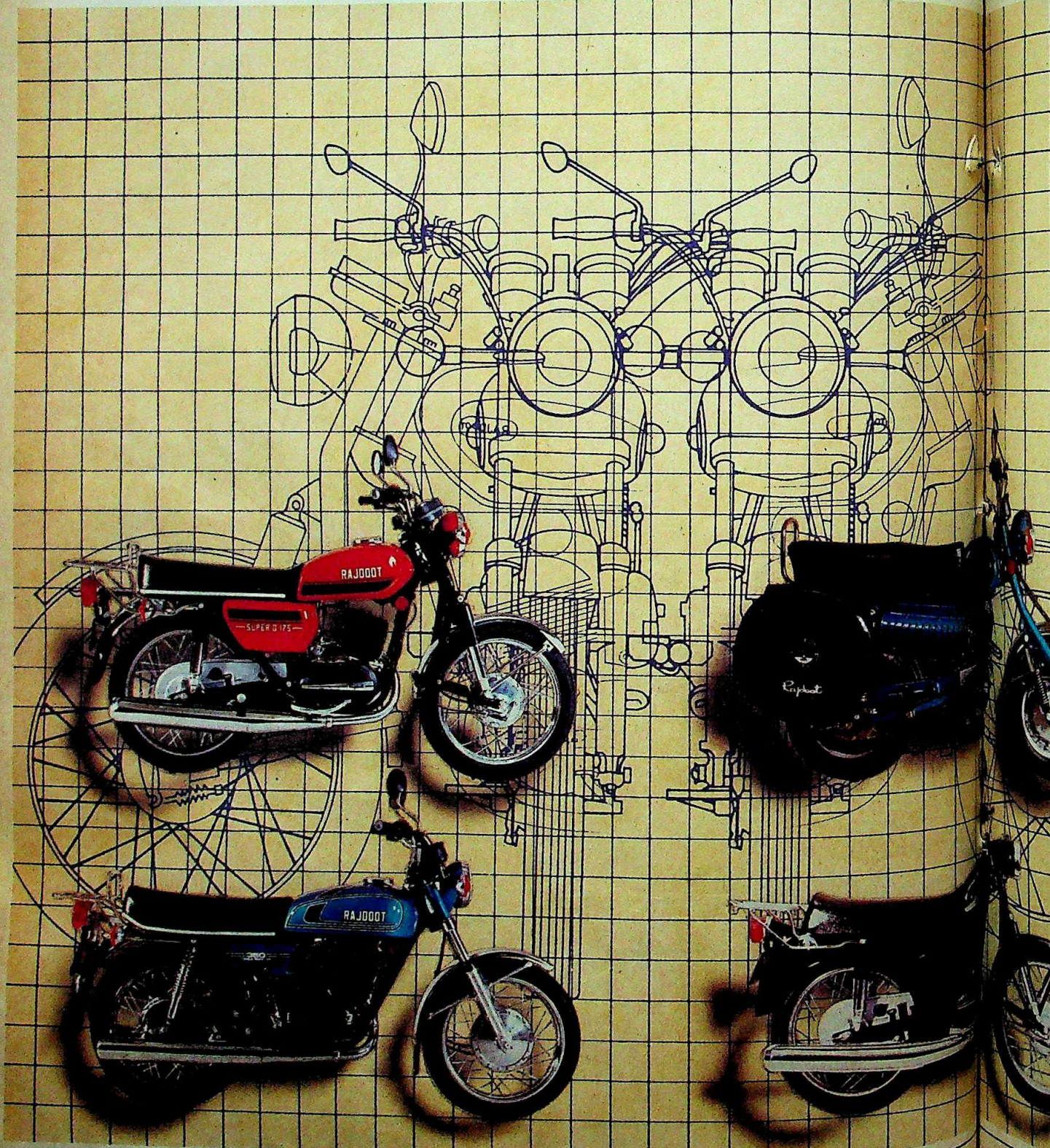

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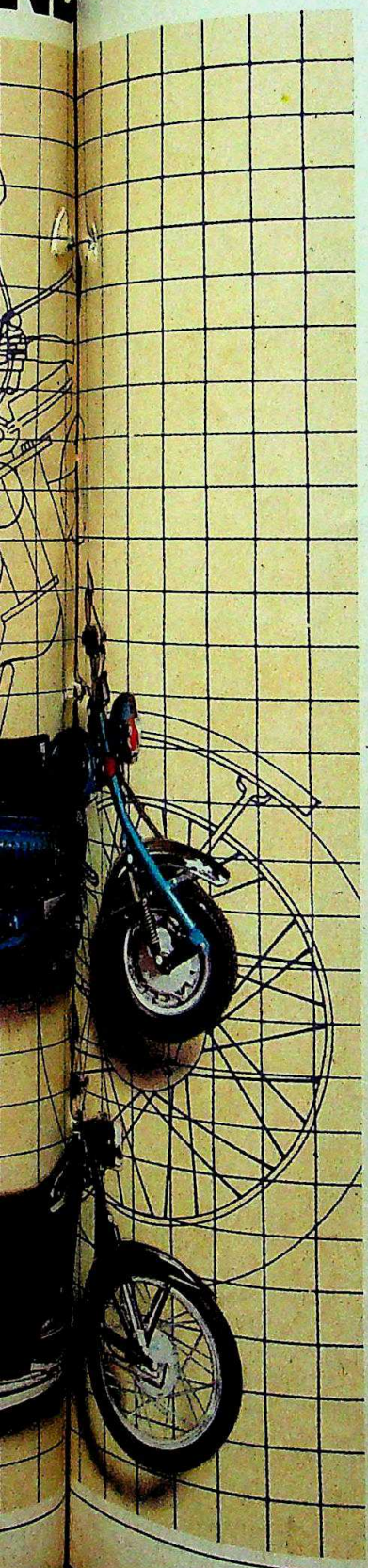

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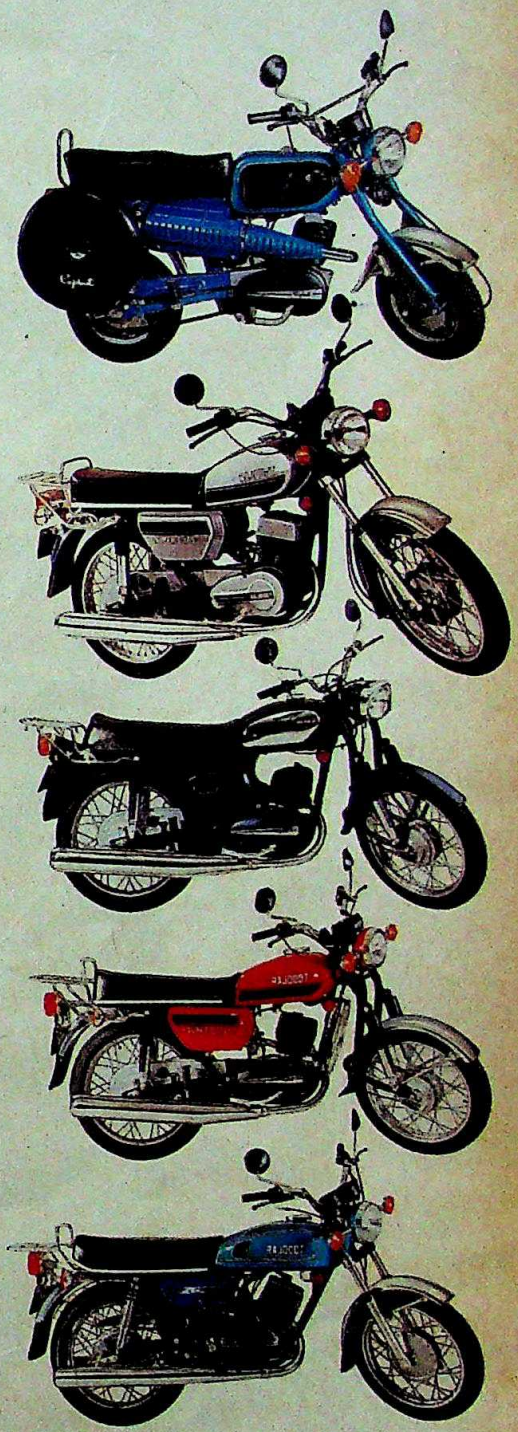

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WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A LEADER

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CHIEF JUSTICE P.N. BHAGWATI

Age of Activism

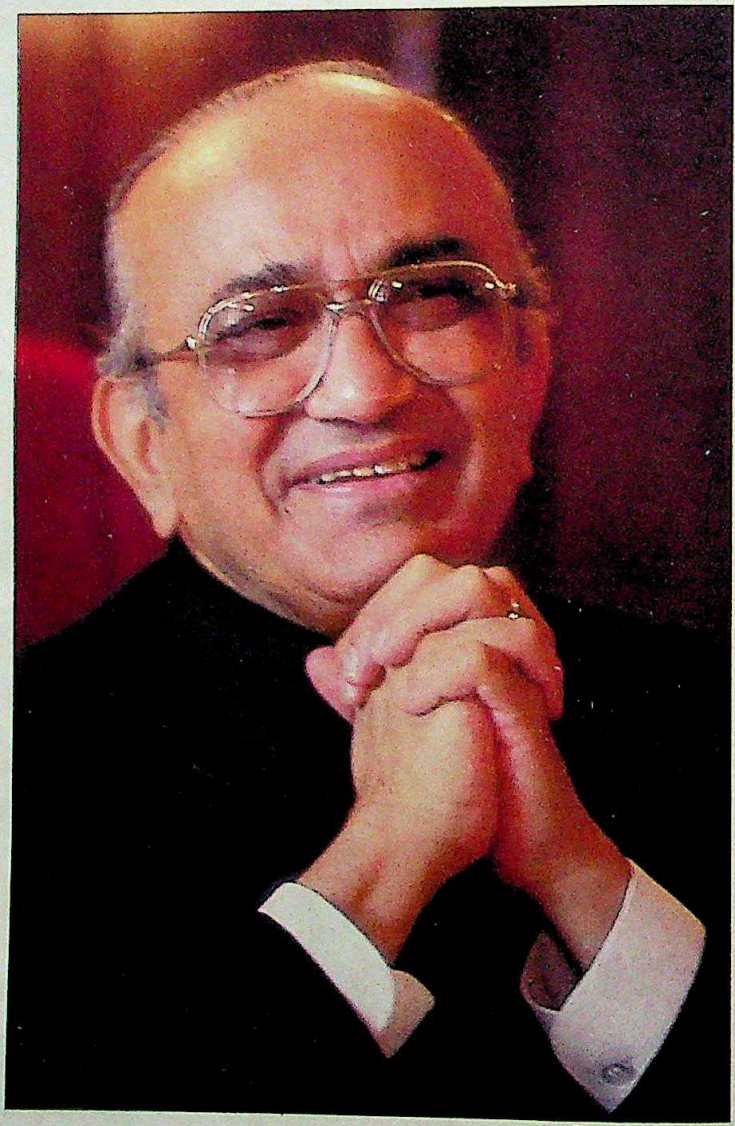
"Judges ought to remember that their office is...to interpret law and not to make law or give law." —*Sir Francis Bacon*

IN THE 35 years since the beginning of the Republic and the majestic dome-topped Supreme Court, the Indian judiciary never had a chief who disregarded this view of Bacon more than Prafullachand Natwarlal Bhagwati, the 17th chief justice who was sworn in on July 12. Nor did any other judge in the country's superior courts turn so dramatically upside down the popular notions about their lordships—staid, stuffy, loaded down with gout and wisdom. He is—almost by contrast—lithe, humane, witty, and above all, a relentless doer. Sitting behind the awe-inspiring desk of the court, he has read out in his slightly nasal and high-pitched voice some of the landmark judgements that have in recent times inexorably expanded the scope and limit of the fundamental rights—such as the right to equality and the right to life and liberty.

His assertive pronouncement in a case in 1974 (Royappa vs State) became a milestone in defining the citizen's right to equality before the state: Bhagwati had decreed in his judgement that arbitrariness was the very antithesis of equality. As a result, thousands of arbitrary government actions get struck down by the courts every year now on the ground of their violating the equality clause in the Constitution (Article 14). In 1978, when the Government had denied a passport to Menaka Gandhi, he not only wrote a judgement that forced the Government to reverse its decision but put complex layers of meaning on the single sentence of Article 21 reading: "No person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."

In what is almost unanimously regarded today as among the most minutely honed pieces of judicial argument, Bhagwati pronounced that life and liberty could not be taken away by "any law". The procedure established by law to take away life or liberty must also be "fair, just and reasonable and not arbitrary, fanciful or oppressive". He ensured, by this seemingly simple turn of argument, the future authority of the courts to review all such executive decisions. Says an embarrassed Shanti Bhushan, law minister under the Janata Party and a busy counsel: "Justice Bhagwati's judgement on the Menaka Gandhi Case has become a potent weapon in the hands of lawyers fighting for human rights. It has far...far transcended the history of its origin."

BHAWAN SINGH



Justice Bhagwati: landmark judgements

However, his most significant innovative contribution to Indian jurisprudence is public interest litigation, a veritable manna from the skies for social action groups whose plaint to intercede on behalf of poor and wronged citizens would customarily be thrown out by the courts on the ground that they lacked *locus standi*. Bhagwati blew to smithereens this epic fortress of the state, a binding legacy of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, in a single judgement. That was when he admitted the petition of a public interest lawyer, Kapila Hingorani, who had approached the court seeking redress for the illegal detention in the protective custody of the Bihar Government of a poor village woman, Hussainara Khatoon.

The Hussainara Khatoon Case was a watershed in its own way. It threw open the floodgates of public interest litigation subsequently, and Bhagwati became the mascot of a whole generation of social activists. Almost as a consequence, he amassed a personal popularity which no other judge in India ever had. Nearly a thousand bonded labourers in Madurai, released from bondage by public interest litigation and following his judgement, have named their village Justice Bhagwati Nagar. At Chakrata in Uttar Pradesh, public spirited citizens

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moved the court focussing on the plight of villagers cut off from the rest of the world because there was no bridge across the river. Bhagwati invoked the right under Article 19 to move freely throughout within the territory of India and ordered the state Government to build a bridge. As a result, a bridge is coming up there and has rightly been named after the judge.

There is always a category of thinkers who regard public interest or social action litigation as a legal duel, or a court-room showdown, with the government of the day. But it is none other than Bhagwati himself who set out his goal when he delivered his judgement on yet another public litigation, this time brought up by the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) complaining that the day labourers engaged by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for the Asiad projects were not being paid the minimum wages. Bhagwati, whose judgement in the case prevented such injustice to nearly half a million casual labourers hired by various government and semi-government agencies, put in the judgement his ideas about public interest litigation in the following words: "Public interest litigation is essentially a collaborative effort on the part of the petitioner, the state or public authority and the court to secure observance of the constitutional or legal rights, benefits and privileges conferred upon the vulnerable sections of the community and to reach social justice to them."

A typical example of his work in outstretching the frontiers of fundamental rights is in his judgement on the case between the International Airport Authority of India (IAAI) and R. Shetty, an aggrieved contractor who complained that he had been arbitrarily denied an opportunity to run an IAAI canteen. It was this minuscule seed of litigation that sprouted into a gigantic tree when Bhagwati gave his judgement. He ruled that Article 14, guaranteeing equality (therefore, non-arbitrariness to all citizens by state) did cover not only the Government but all institutions where the state played an instrumental role. With one stroke of the pen, this 'instrumentality principle' brought within its ken not only government departments but the thousands of government undertakings and government-aided institutions, including schools, colleges and trusts. Says Arun Jaitley, Delhi advocate: "Thanks to Justice Bhagwati, we can cite the same principle in cases against institutions that accept even a paisa as grant or aid from the Government." Says Union Minister of State for Law H.R. Bhardwaj: "For better or worse, Bhagwati is the most off-quoted judge in India."

His work in the field of legal aid has also acquired pioneering importance now. From the late '70s, he began directing the main thrust of his argument for providing free legal aid to the poor people. His argument was fuelled by just one clause in the Constitution, Article 39(1), which read: "The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing... that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood."

Providing free legal aid became a part of state policy almost entirely by Bhagwati's single-handed effort and he was made chairman of the Legal Aid Committee in 1980. But, in the absence of central legislation, the cause suffered at the state level. It is only now that the Union Law Ministry has agreed to enact a bill. Still, an impressive 2,84,573 people have been benefited by the committee in the three years between 1981 and 1984. Many of them are shelterless pavement dwellers, uncared-for children of broken marriages, evicted sharecroppers, injured or sick people thrown out of jobs by their masters, and decrepit old men.

Yet the admittedly short tenure of Bhagwati as the chief justice of India—slated to last only till December next year when he reaches the statutory retirement age of 65—is not without a sense of destiny. For the man, with his undoubtedly high reservoir of zeal and humanity and his unassailable stature in the judiciary, has always sparked off controversy. The legal profession seldom openly attacks judges, but the bar of the Supreme Court has an outspoken fringe which thinks that Bhagwati is the judiciary's enemy within, the typical smoothie who nevertheless sided with despotic forces during the Emergency. To his fans, though, he is a modern David, a champion of the little man, who is willing to take on the Goliath of state power.

The first ink-blot of suspicion on his career fell in 1976 when he, along with chief justice A.N. Ray and justices M.H.

"For better or worse, Bhagwati is the most oft-quoted judge in India."

H.R. BHARDWAJ
Union minister of state for law

"He (Bhagwati) will do something for the poor."

SHANTI BHUSHAN
former Union law minister

"He (Bhagwati) is a judge with a keen sense of justice...."

V.M. TARKUNDE
human rights counsel

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JUSTICE P.N. BHAGWATI

"Controversy has always chased me"

SITTING judges don't sit for interviews with the media. But Chief Justice Prafullachand Natwarlal Bhagwati and hide-bound conventions have seldom gone together. Last fortnight, he readily agreed to an interview with Principal Correspondent SUMIT MITRA *but the conversation had to be split into several sessions at first because of the rush of court work through a busy week. Bhagwati himself felt that it was becoming like a movie dubbing session. So he called Mitra over to his Jan Path bungalow for an uninterrupted chat during the week-end.*

While the interview progressed in his comfortable living-room, by the side of the replica of the blind goddess of justice which would double as a lamp, members of the family lined up on one side to listen to the illustrious patriarch.

Bhagwati, the 17th chief justice of India, was a mixture of caution and candour. Excerpts:

Q. *Now that you have become the chief justice of India, what are the issues that will receive the highest priority from you?*

A. There are many issues ahead. But the two most important problems are: the arrears of cases, and the problem of making justice easily available to the common man. Large numbers of cases are now pending at all levels. I know it is trite to say that justice delayed is justice denied. But this truism is assuming a fearful consequence in this country.

Q. *How are you going to cope with the problem?*

A. Well, a detailed plan is under way. But the basic thing is, today the bar is so highly remunerative that it is difficult to draw people from there. And the question of arrears is directly related to the level of competence of judges. Cases pile up in the courts because judges are not competent enough, or there are not enough of them.

Q. *So the law itself has nothing to do with delay in the disposal of cases.?*

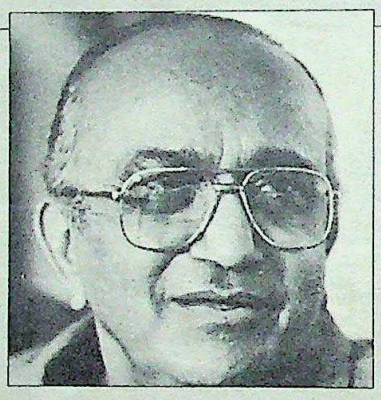
A. Yes, of course. The present judicial system, based on Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, is highly elaborate and unwieldy, something like the Rolls-Royce car. It should become like a smaller car, like Volkswagon, efficient.

Q. *Or Maruti?*

A. (Laughs) That's a controversial car.

Q. *You've always been besieged by controversy.*

A. Yes. Controversy has always chased me and I have always faced it squarely. There was a sentence in the speech of Gandhiji which he made on August 8, 1942. That sentence has always stuck in my mind. It ran like this: "Stare at the world though the world is bloodshot-eyes for you. Go ahead for fear of God within." I have always been of the view that if my conscience tells me what is correct then I should brave all opposition.



The present judicial system, based on Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, is highly elaborate and unwieldy, something like the Rolls-Royce car. It should become like a smaller car, like Volkswagon, efficient

Q. *Why have you been so very controversial?*

A. It has been so for my championing the public interest litigation. For my adopting unconventional strategies to circumvent barriers put up by the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.

Q. *Is it only this that has made you controversial?*

A. I have always been pro-underdog. I believe that justice is made not for a fortunate few but for the large masses of people of this country. I also believe that judges are accountable to the people. Their approach must be people-oriented.

Q. *When it comes to a collision of interests between the state and the underdog, as you say, which side will you take?*

A. The underdog, obviously. That's what I have done in every public interest litigation.

Q. *A persistent criticism against you has been that you have often been inconsistent in your judgements.*

A. That is entirely incorrect. People do not read all judgements, unfortunately, and then arrive at hasty conclusions. And then they do not analyse.

Q. *One criticism is that your stand on Article 21 (right to life and liberty) during the Emergency does not tally with either your earlier or your subsequent stand. Any comment?*

A. The case during the Emergency, that is the Habeas Corpus Case, dealt entirely with the suspension of the enforcement of Article 21. It never dealt with the meaning and content of Article 21. That came up for the first time in the Maneka Gandhi Passport Case. On the Habeas Corpus Case, the point was whether the enforcement of the fundamental right was suspended or not. That was the only limited question before us, on the assumption that the Emergency was validly imposed. The validity of the imposition (of the Emergency) was in fact never impeached. I said that enforcement of the right to life and liberty was suspended, but it does not mean that whatever is done by the Government contrary to Article 21 becomes valid. It is still invalid. But, for the time being, you can't enforce your right. As soon as the Emergency ends, you can still challenge that invalid act.

Q. *This is like saying: kill now, pay later.*

A. Why? Even today, suppose somebody kills another person what is the remedy? Criminal prosecution. Nothing else. I said so. I said in my judgement that even during the Emergency a criminal prosecution lay. But I said so. Anthony Lester, well-known jurist—he is Queen's counsel—told F.S. Nariman that my judgement (on the Habeas Corpus Case) was the most legally correct judgement. I have never been inconsistent in interpretation.

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Q. The controversy about you also rests on your stand regarding the Judges' Case where, it is alleged, you bartered away the right of the judiciary to the executive.

A. The question in that case was that the chief justice of India and the chief justice of the high court had differed in their opinions. And when the Constitution says that the President of India will appoint a judge in consultation with both of them then it is open to the President to accept the opinion of either. In that case (regarding non-confirmation of two additional judges of Delhi High Court), four of us had accepted what Justice Prakash Narain (chief justice of Delhi High Court) had said that he had orally conveyed to the chief justice of India (the objections against the affected additional judges). But, if he had not conveyed it, it would have been bad.

Q. The point is, whether it affected the position of the judiciary.

A. Totally wrong. It was always the President who had the right to make appointments in consultation with the chief justice of India, the chief justice of the high court, and the state Government. The meaning of "consultation" was given by us in the Judges' Case, namely that *consultation* does not mean *concurrence* though it should be a full and effective consultation.

Q. It is also said that by alleging that chief justice Chandrachud and other judges had not consulted you before delivering judgement on the Minerva Mills Case, you have washed dirty linen in public and undermined the judiciary. Any comment?

A. I do not wish to enter into any controversy as regards whether a conference of judges was held in this case. I wish to concentrate my attention wholly on what I have to achieve.

Q. If history were to repeat itself, would you still write to Mrs Gandhi the kind of adulatory letter you wrote to her in 1980?

A. Again, I cannot answer this question now. I can do that only after my retirement.

Q. But do you think that judges should have a channel of communication with heads of governments?

A. What do you mean by a channel of communication?

Q. Well, a letter.

A. Not unless there is some work.

Q. But you had no work with Mrs Gandhi then.

A. Of course I had. Legal aid and judicial reforms.

Q. There is a feeling that by looking at the composition of a particular bench it is possible to predict the outcome of a case at the Supreme Court. Why?

A. That's because of the social philosophy of the judge. The people in the US can now safely predict what Justice Douglas will decide today or what Justice Rehnquist will decide.

Q. Is the Supreme Court of India also divided into ideological camps?

A. It is far from true. Judges do have their individual social philosophies, but this does not mean that the Supreme Court is divided. Today the entire team is with me. But opinions of course can be divided. That's in fact a healthy sign.

Q. Do you think that judges should not be immune from supersession?

A. I do feel that ordinarily there should be no supersession unless there are cogent, relevant reasons and these reasons should have the approval of the chief justice of India in case of appointment of chief justice of high court. In a country like ours it is not desirable to supersede a judge if the power is to be left only in the hands of the executive. But if the power is to be with a broad-based authority—then nothing may be wrong if a person is appointed on merit. I would not trust any single person with power—whether he is the chief justice of India or the law minister. Power must be broad-based in this situation. However, in Australia, today, Justice Kirby has been appointed president of the court of appeal superseding ten judges.

Q. There is currently a debate on the emergency. Do you think an emergency can be constitutionally imposed again?

A. Well, there is an emergency provision.

Q. But can the citizen's right to life and liberty be denied in an arbitrary manner?

A. No. How is that possible? Article 21 has been made unsuspendable now. And I wish to add here that I am very happy about it.

Q. Do you like being described as an activist judge?

A. Yes. I believe that a judge should be goal-oriented, result-oriented. A judge has to mould the law, he has to create law and make something out of the written words. Law is a living organism. A judge is not a mimic. He is not an imitator. He is a creative artist.

Beg, H.R. Khanna and Y.V. Chandrachud, sat on judgement over a review petition moved by the state to prevent as many as nine high courts of the country from ordering the release of thousands of detenus under the hated Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), the chief weapon of despotism during the Emergency. Listed as the 'Habeas Corpus Case', it witnessed a momentous hearing: at stake was not only the immediate fate of the detenus but a much deeper issue—whether the right to life and liberty of citizens could be suspended at the free will of the executive even during an emergency.

But Bhagwati let down his admirers when he sided with three others (including Chandrachud, the outgoing chief justice) in the majority judgement holding that there was no remedy against such detention—or even executive killing—during an emergency. In a rare instance of judicial capitulation, Bhagwati quoted from the *Upanishads* to belabour the point that human rights in India were prevalent since the antiquities but went under when the crunch came. It was only Khanna, the second seniormost judge of the Supreme Court at that time, who delivered a ringing dissenting judgement upholding the right to life and liberty even when fundamental rights were suspended. Months later, Mrs Gandhi's enraged administration got Khanna superseded; he at once resigned. Even the news of his resignation was blacked out by the censor.

Why a judge of Bhagwati's stature and courage delivered such a regressive judgement will perhaps forever remain a mystery. Today he attempts to explain it away by saying that he could not have acted otherwise with Article 21 suspended, echoing, although unconsciously, the Nazi judges who often said: *Gesetz ist Gesetz* (law is law). "The majority judgement was inexcusable and irrational", Khanna asserts even now.

The critics think that the judgement was vitiated by executive pressure from the background. "Could it so happen," wonders Bhushan, "that it was the atmosphere of the Emergency that had clouded the vision of two very able judges—Chandrachud and Bhagwati?" But there are others, like eminent jurist Nani A. Palkhivala, who hold even stronger views. Says Palkhivala: "The Supreme Court judgement (in the Habeas Corpus Case).... is patently erroneous and is a blot upon the record of the court. It will be a long time before the Supreme Court is able to live down the infamy of that untenable judgement."

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The two other occasions on which Bhagwati's reputation of unflinching uprightness was damaged were:

▶ when he wrote a letter to Mrs Indira Gandhi on her return to power in 1980, comparing the coming back to "the reddish glow of a golden sunrise"; the text of the letter was leaked out to the press to the great embarrassment of both the judiciary and the Government; and,

▶ when, a few months later, in the Judges' Case, the Supreme Court was called upon to decide who should have supremacy in appointing or transferring high court judges—the President (on behalf of the executive) or the chief justice of India—it is Bhagwati who led the majority of the judges in deciding in favour of the executive.

Though two other sitting judges of the Supreme Court had written personal letters in a similar vein, using albeit less vivid imagery, it was Bhagwati's letter that again leaked out. Eventually it became grist for his critics' mill. But his order on the Judges' Case was found inexcusable even by some of his admirers. Says V.M. Tarkunde, famous human rights counsel who argued, and lost, the case: "He (Bhagwati) is a judge with a keen sense of justice; but in the Judges' Case he interpreted the relevant provision according to the letter and not the spirit of the Constitution. I am confident that it was not impossible for him to take the opposite decision. But he didn't do that."

It is now learnt that the late Jaiprakash Narayan was so upset by the majority judgement in the Habeas Corpus Case that when the matter for appointing a new chief justice of India came up before the Janata Government, he wanted neither Chandrachud nor Bhagwati to get the post. Even recently, there were muffled protests from the Bar in Bombay against the appointment of Bhagwati. So sensitive to the issue was the administration of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that it announced the appointment two months before Chandrachud was scheduled to relinquish charge. Says Asoke Sen, Union law minister: "It was necessary to spell out the Government's intention well in advance so that there could be no doubts about our resolve to do away with all forms of supersession in judicial appointments."

But lobbying for his supersession was distinctly in the air before his appointment. Palkhivala himself strongly expressed the philosophy behind the muted move. He told INDIA TODAY: "Between 1973 and 1984 judges were shamelessly superseded as a lesson in subservience. However, this is not to say that a judge can never be superseded—he can be, for justifiable reasons under an honourable government."

For the Indian judiciary, however, Bhagwati is too hot a property to be passed over. For, it is on him that rests virtually all hope of the present bottleneck at the courts being straightened out. The judicial system today is threatened with cracking up under mounting pressure of arrear cases and the inability of the poor masses to find access to justice. The total number of arrear cases before the courts has now skyrocketed to an unbelievable figure of one crore. The total number of hearing cases alone pending before the Supreme Court today is 45,000, not to speak of another 90,000 pending miscellaneous cases. Besides, there are nearly 9 lakh hearing cases pending before the high courts, about 60 per cent of which have been in pendency for over two years.

Side by side, the competence of Indian judges measured by the number of cases disposed by them every year has also taken a nose dive, declining from around 1,200 per judge in 1975 to 949.3 now. The level of the judges' performance too has been quite erratic. While each high court judge in Karnataka disposed of 2,073.5 cases in 1984-85, his counterpart in Delhi High Court could clear only 345.9, better only than the abysmally low record of the Guwahati High Court—295.5 per judge.

"Judges and law courts must be competent." This was Bhagwati's motto all along, and now he is determined to put it to practice. Some of the moves taken in the first fortnight of his being in office are:

▶ a task force has been constituted to advise on computerisation of the Supreme Court which will facilitate classification of case and history, compilation of case law and listing of cases;

▶ a decision has been taken to set up a centralised institute for the training of judicial officers;

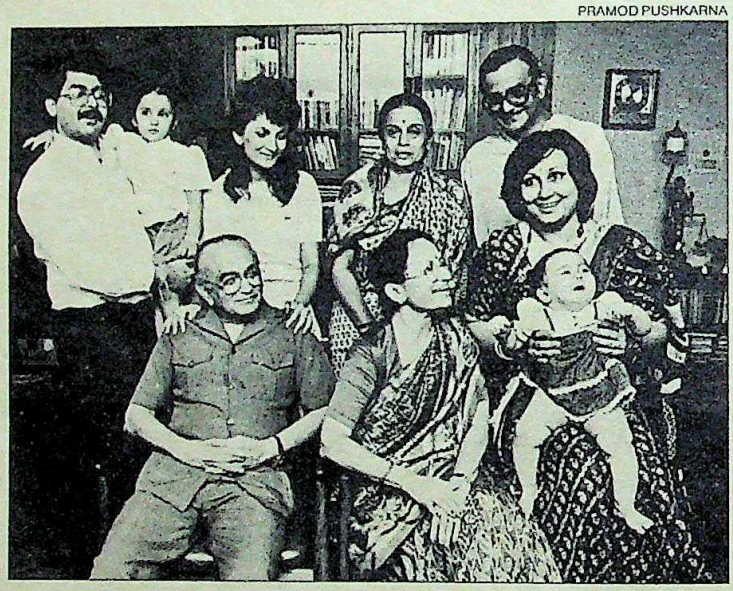
▶ a teleprinter network has been ordered connecting the Supreme Court with all high courts; and,

▶ a survey has been conducted which has shown that the high courts will need 185 judges in addition to the sanctioned strength in order to clear the entire backlog within two years (92, if the backlog is to be cleared in four years).

Bhagwati's drive, coupled with his activism, has created a new environment of trust and hope in the country's courts. "He will do something for the poor," says even Shanti Bhushan, who is the treasurer of the BJP. Hopes are kindled because Bhagwati, even at 63, is an endless powerhouse. "Nobody can slog like him," says a sitting judge of the Supreme Court who has dissented with him on several cases. Every year he writes at least 750 pages of judgement distilled out of careful reading of 30,000 pages of records. Says Tarkunde: "He has an uncanny way of remembering each bit of argument for years together."

"Ability to perform a lot of intellectual work is in my blood," says Bhagwati with a good deal of understandable pride. His father, Natwarlal Bhagwati, had been a judge of the Supreme Court and became vice-chancellor of Benaras Hindu University in 1959. It was truly an exceptional family whose journey to fame began from a chawl at Amritwadi in the Bombay of the early '30s. Bhagwati is the first of the seven brothers—nicknamed the "magnificent seven deadly scholars"

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The chief justice and family: benign patriarch

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by younger members of the family—all of whom got first class in all examinations they appeared for. While Bhagwati himself took his first class B.A. degree in mathematics ("maths and law are first cousins") from Elphinstone College and topped the list in law later on, fourth brother Sanat left a blazing trail in medicine and is now Bombay's leading neurosurgeon attached to J.J. Hospital. Jagdish Bhagwati, the sixth brother, is an authority on international trade and teaches at Columbia University: he was in the running for the Nobel Prize in economics a few years ago.

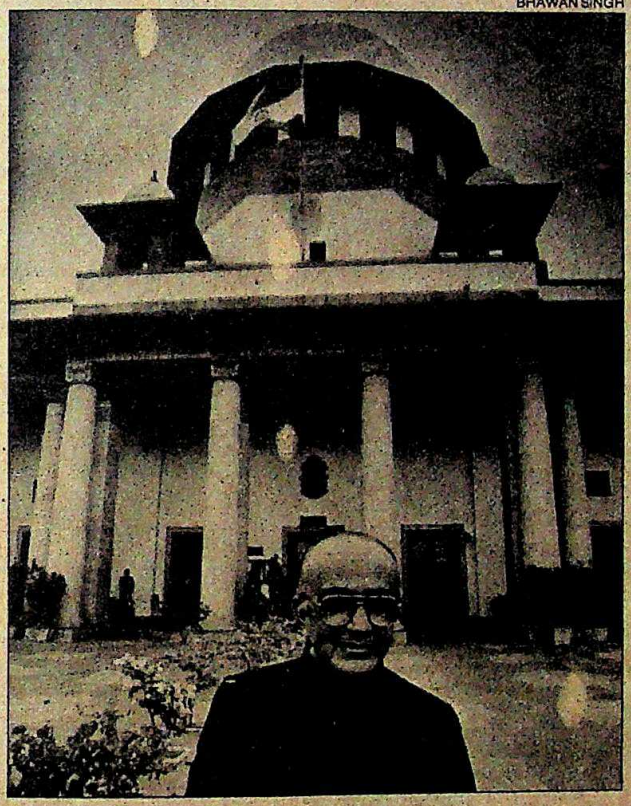
However, it was the eldest brother, already a Sanskrit scholar at 20, who was marked out for his political involvement: the rest of the family was quite apolitical. In 1942, he came in contact with the left fringe of the Congress led by Achyut Patwardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali and began distributing *Congress Patrika*, a banned journal, from door to door at midnight. He was caught and was sent to jail for a month. It delayed for two years his father's appointment to the bench of the Bombay High Court. Mahatma Gandhi's speech in Bombay on August 8, 1942, in which he gave to the nation the call for the Quit India Movement, left a profound impact on his mind. "I knew from that day that whatever I did in my life, I had to obey my conscience first," he says.

J.P. Thacker, Bhagwati's friend from early days and solicitor in Bombay, recalls that on joining the Bar in 1945, he had soon established himself as a "busy junior". Thacker says Bhagwati was even then a very accurate draughtsman and a "persuasive advocate", specialising in constitutional and company matters. In 1960, at the incredibly young age of 39, he joined as a judge of the newly-created Gujarat High Court (following bifurcation of the old Bombay state), leaving behind, in his own words, a practice worth Rs 1.20 lakh a year in those days. In the short span of seven years, flat, he became the chief justice of Gujarat High Court and joined the Supreme Court in 1973.

A conscious disciple of Felix Frankfurter, Learned Hand and the whole galaxy of activist judges who helped fight colour bar and segregation laws in the US during the '30s, Bhagwati is in a way a shade more radical than his mentors. Frankfurter himself had suggested to the late B.N. Rau, one of the framers of the Constitution, to go slow on bringing all executive decision under judicial review. But Bhagwati has applied the full punch of his legal wizardry to make more and more rights available to the citizen when pitted against the state. Even in the Hussainara Khatoon Case, he did not stop at reversing the *locus standi* principle. The additional gains for indigent detenus arose from points made in his order, such as:

► surety bonds are not necessary for poor detenus;

BHAWAN SINGH



Bhagwati: enlarging the frontiers

► if the period of detention exceeds the possible period of imprisonment when found guilty, then the detenu must be released forthwith;

► free legal aid for a detenu who cannot afford a lawyer is mandatory under Article 21.

In the period immediately after the Emergency, it was obvious who was setting the pace for the Supreme Court. Taking the cue from him, the Supreme Court made it obligatory for the state to compensate with money the victims of illegal detention. Bhagwati took care to see that the same principle applied to Ranjan Dwivedi, a man held for years on the charge of lobbing a grenade on the car of A.N. Ray, former chief justice of India who had been pitchforked to the chair by superseding three other judges. Mrs Gandhi took considerable political mileage from the attempted bombing, but her administration could never prove the charge.

"Like a mason building brick by brick", says a Supreme Court judge, "Bhagwati has enlarged the frontiers of individual cases to encompass broad state policies." In a case involving Francis Coralie Mullin, a French woman detained under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Act (COFEPOSA) who had been denied the right to interview with relatives and lawyers, Bhagwati not only gave her back the right but ordered: "The right to life enshrined in Article 21 cannot be restricted to mere animal existence.... the right to life includes the right to live with human dignity—clothing, nutrition, shelter, expression are all parts of that right."

Many judges today love to hate Bhagwati for his judicial swashbuckling, his propensity to "make" law rather than take it, and—as is often rumoured—his love for publicity. Some counsels share this view. As Palkhivala said: "The important point is that activism is a good horse, but it is a horse to ride somewhere. If it is ridden only in the direction of populism, it may irreparably damage the constitutional structure."

The horse will obviously run the way the rider directs it. But nobody will dispute the fact that the rights under the Constitution have remained far too long just words written on the text and not tangible weapons to fulfil the first three goals expressed in the preamble: justice— social, economic and political; liberty—of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality—of status and opportunity. "So far", says Bhagwati, "it (the Constitution) is like a gun that does not fire."

Only time can tell if Bhagwati can load the gun, take aim and fire in just 17 months. But there is widespread belief that he can unleash—even in a short tenure—a process of judicial regeneration. And with nine new judges to be appointed to the Supreme Court during his tenure (21, if the present strength of 18 is raised to 30 as proposed), Bhagwati may usher in an era of activism among the grey eminences of the bench.

—SUMIT MITRA

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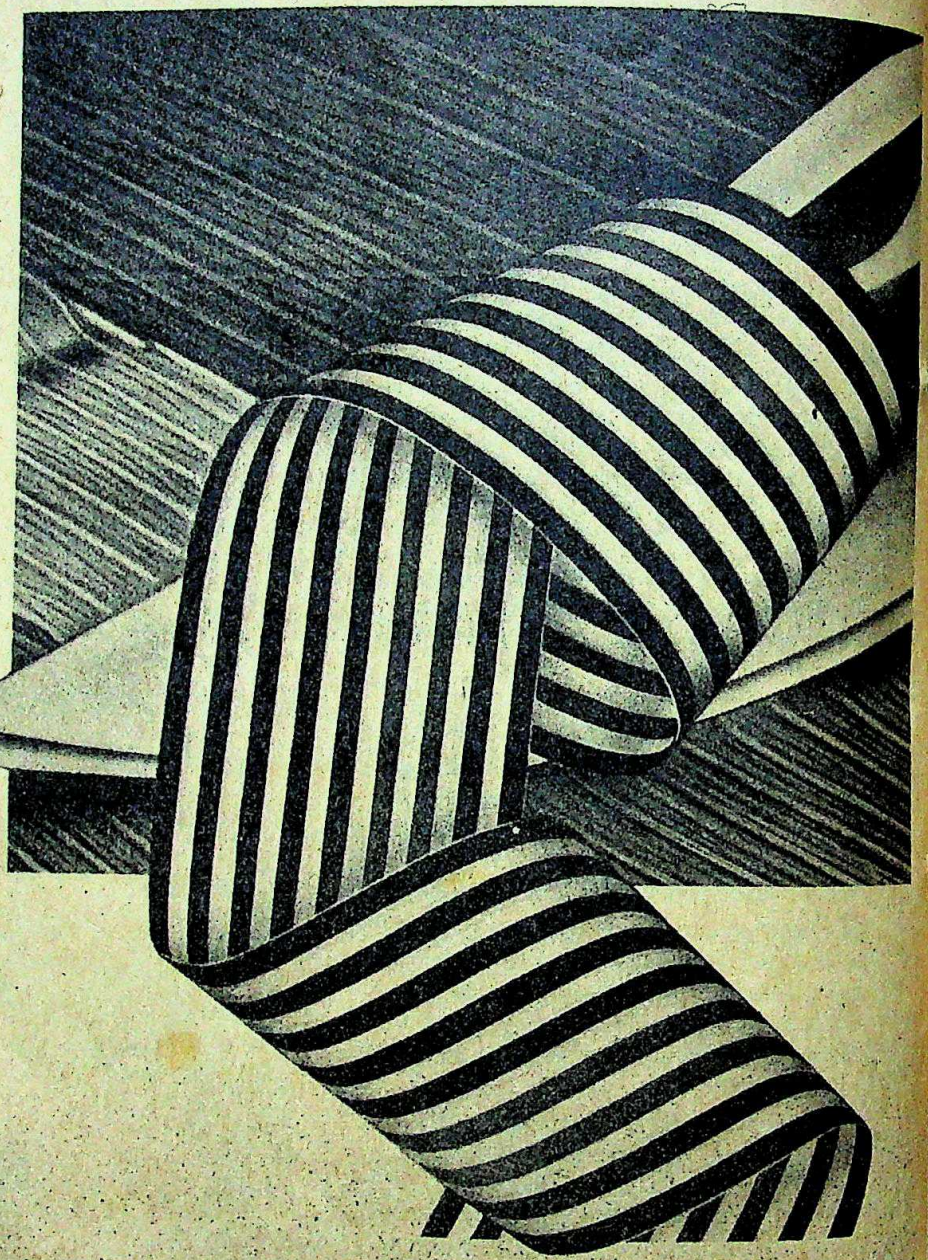

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PAPER PLANS

PAPER manufacturers are planning to go ahead with plantation programmes aimed at tackling their growing raw material problems. Companies which had hoped to get the green signal from the Government for setting up their own plantations are, in the absence of an official go-ahead, now working on an alternative strategy. This involves setting up plant nurseries and then farming the seedlings out to farmers near the concerned paper factory, at either subsidised prices or wholly free of charge. The calculation by groups like the Thapars and companies like Bhadrachalam Paperboards is that by making it sufficiently remunerative for farmers to grow trees for the paper companies, these companies will be able to tackle the shortage of wood to some extent. Wimco Seedlings, an offshoot of Wimco, is already in the nursery business and has in fact tied up financial arrangements in such a manner that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) finances the tree-planting programme undertaken by the farmers. At least some of the paper companies may now follow a similar strategy in their hinterland and thereby free themselves from the perennial worry of where to go for more wood.

LIMITED ACCESS

A LITTLE-NOTICED amendment to the Government's computer policy has put paid to the entry by the OGL door of global computer giants like Apple and IBM. In the export-import policy announced a few months ago, the terminology used to describe the memory capability of small computer systems costing less than Rs 10 lakh encouraged Raba-Contel of New Delhi to unveil a series of Apple products, including the racy Macintosh, at prices comparable to those of Indian-made or Indian-assembled configurations. The orders booked totalled Rs 45 crore. At the same time, Kelcom Labs of Pune offered IBM originals at competitive prices. Predictably, Indian manufacturers lobbied with the Government for a change of policy. The amendment of the policy, stipulating a higher memory capacity, has knocked both IBM and Apple out of the small computer range.

POSSIBLE CURE

THE GOVERNMENT seems to have begun considering the privatisation of sick public sector and joint sector units, the first company on the list being the Lucknow-based Scooters India. Two private two-wheeler manufacturers are in the running for the company: Bajaj Auto and Escorts. Bajaj Auto's interest stems from the fact that it has a commitment to assemble one lakh scooters in Uttar Pradesh, and Scooters India may give it a cheaper option than setting up a new unit. However, such a unit will require only 2,000 workers, whereas Scooters India has 3,500.

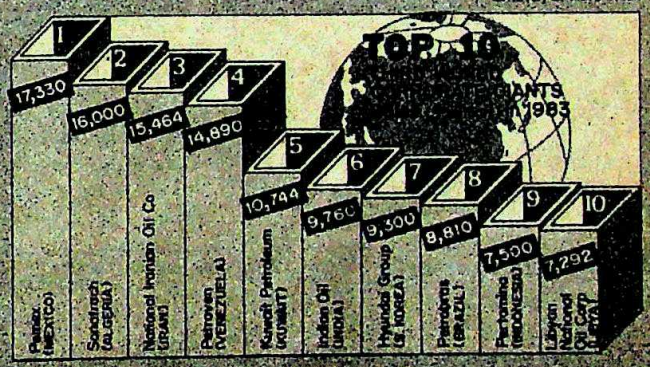
UNLOADING STOCKS

THE STOCK market is in for even more exciting times, with the Government deciding that financial institutions like the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and Industrial Finace Corporation of India (IFCI) should unload their shares in well-established companies. So far these institutions have followed a policy of not parting with their holdings. A change in this policy is certain to shake up the stock market because the decision to unload will result in the number of floating shares going up, with a corresponding drop in the prices of the shares involved.

POWERFUL THIRD

IS INDIA the Third World's third largest industrial power? So it would seem from the ranking of the top 600 corporate giants in the developing countries, done by the London-based *South* magazine. Brazil emerges on top of the list, with 128 of the 600 companies being Brazilian, while South Korea

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



has 80. India in comparison has 57 companies in the list, followed by Argentina (34), Mexico (34), Venezuela (29), Taiwan (21), Philippines (16), Hong Kong (16) and Colombia (15). In an accompanying ranking of the leading banks in the Third World, India claims seven of the top 100, including State Bank of India in fourth place.

SYNTHETIC DETERGENTS

THE RACE has hotted up for a licence to manufacture linear alkyl benzene (LAB), used as a raw material to make synthetic detergents. The companies in the running for the 50,000-tonne, Rs 100-crore project to be based at Vishakhapatnam are Hindustan Lever, DCM and Vijay Mallya's United Breweries. DCM had lost out in an earlier race for a LAB unit when Reliance Textile Industries walked away with the prize. That unit was initially meant to be based at Vishakhapatnam but Reliance has since got permission to shift its unit to Patalganga in Maharashtra. So that the unit initially proposed at Vishakhapatnam is up for grabs once again. Both Hindustan Lever and DCM are already in the market with synthetic detergents, but the LAB proposal marks a diversification bid for the United Breweries group.

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SHAW WALLACE

Company Cocktail

MR CHHABRIA likes his occasional drink, but for two months he has not touched liquor. His offices in India have been raided, his passport was briefly taken away from him until he complained to the Bombay High Court, he was questioned as soon as he landed at Bombay airport on July 12, and over the next few days he was quizzed for more than 10 hours by officials of the Enforcement Directorate. Enough provocation to reach for the bottle, but Chhabria has fought the temptation.

The 39-year-old Dubai-based-businessman laughs away the suggestion that this unusual abstinence has anything to do with his failure to acquire control of India's second largest liquor company, Shaw Wallace. And despite all his troubles, he retains his good humour, even affecting a confidence about the future: "I have not lost my faith, patience or confidence," he insists. And at the end of two days of gruelling questioning in Delhi, he still managed to laugh in the evening over how his statement about a trust that he had formed for donating funds to the Tirupati temple had been taken down by the government's stenographer as Tripathi temple."

For all the brave cheer, however, Chhabria could be in trouble. The Government is asking all manner of questions concerning his companies, his business deals, and the sources of finance for his takeover operations in India. His bid to acquire a 38.7 per cent stake in Shaw Wallace is stuck in the Company Law Board, with every likelihood of a protracted legal battle to follow. His voting rights in the company have been frozen, and $26.4 million (Rs 32 crore) invested in the company are right now worthless. Above everything else, his bona fides have been questioned, and a cloud of suspicion now hangs over his head.

The point at issue is simple, for the charge against Chhabria is that he got into a clandestine arrangement with Indian liquor king Vijay Mallya (who owns United Breweries, McDowells and a series of other liquor and beer companies) to acquire a joint stake in Shaw Wallace through an offshore deal involving the acquisition of the London-based R.G. Shaw and Company, which together with three of its subsidiaries holds 38.7 per cent of Shaw Wallace shares. Mallya is the brash young inheritor of the liquor empire built by his father Vittal, who died two years ago, and controls 30 per cent of the Rs 500 crore liquor market. If he is involved in the Shaw Wallace deal, his control of the liquor market will go up to a staggering 45 per cent; and clearly, such an acquisition will attract the provisions of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act. Equally obviously, his acquisition of a foreign company like R.G. Shaw without the Reserve Bank's permission will have been a violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA). Further, if the charge is proved that Mallya illegally took out his money from the country to finance the deal, he will attract the draconian provisions of the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Act (COFEPOSA).

That is quite a handful, and Chhabria insists that he is innocent: that Mallya is not involved in the acquisition of R.G. Shaw, that the money used for buying the London-based company is entirely his, and that he is being done out of his shareholding rights in Shaw Wallace because the chairman of Shaw Wallace, S.P. Acharya, wants to retain control.

While the truth of the matter remains to be established, Chhabria's case is not helped by the prolonged absence from India of Vijay Mallya, who was initially believed to be in Singapore and expected to return to Bombay in mid-July, but is now stated to be in Germany, and due to return only in August. Said a government official: "Any businessman will want to come back quickly and clear his name by answering the charges. But Mallya continues to stay abroad." The only response from him so far has been an advertisement in the newspapers, released by the United Breweries Group, warning that the reports about the group "appear to be motivated by vested interests", that the group is not saying anything just yet because the matter is subjudice, and that "we take a grave view of publication of these reports and statements".

Grave view or not, the charges that have been made before the Company Law Board and the Enforcement Directorate of the Finance Ministry are quite explicit. Specifically, it is stated that in late 1984 a foreign bank operating in India had floated a document seeking to raise $6 million to help finance the acquisition of Shaw Wallace's foreign shareholding by Mallya, who wanted financial partners for the transaction. While no one has actually stepped forward to say that he has seen such a document, government officials say that they twisted the arm of a foreign bank to get a copy of this vital piece of paper, and an official told INDIA TODAY last fortnight that "We have evidence to suggest that Vijay Mallya was involved in the Shaw Wallace deal." But the official declined to show the "evidence". And clearly, if the document does not have Mallya's signature on it, he cannot be legally implicated in any way because he can quite easily plead innocence.

A second charge made before the Company Law Board is that senior executives of United Breweries had approached Michael Cliff, executive vice-president of Seagrams (the Canadian whisky giant), with a proposal to join hands in taking control of Shaw Wallace. Even though the deal fell through, this is interpreted as showing Mallya's interest in a deal in which Chhabria says Mallya is not involved. But once again, this can easily be dismissed as hearsay, so that Mallya may not find it difficult to dissociate himself from this as well.

THERE is a third charge: that an unknown party deposited an unspecified amount of cash with Express of London, in return for which American Express gave Chhabria a $15 million loan to help him pay for the acquisition of R.G.Shaw and Company. The implied suggestion is that the man who deposited the cash is Mallya. In support of this charge, a document has been submitted to the Company Law Board concerning the mortgage for the American Express loan. The mortgage is stated to be "cash deposit being all sums deposited or to be deposited with American Express International Banking Corporation...in an account number to be designated by American Express".

Finally, there is the involvement of a mysterious Hong Kong-based company, Amarante, in the whole transaction. Photo-copies of documents obtained in Hong Kong and seen by INDIA TODAY clearly establish that Amarante has been involved with Chhabria's main company in the American Express loan, yet Chhabria has told the Company Law Board that he does not know anything about the company. Three questions have followed from this: how could Chhabria be ignorant of Amarante's details, who really owns Amarante, and what is the

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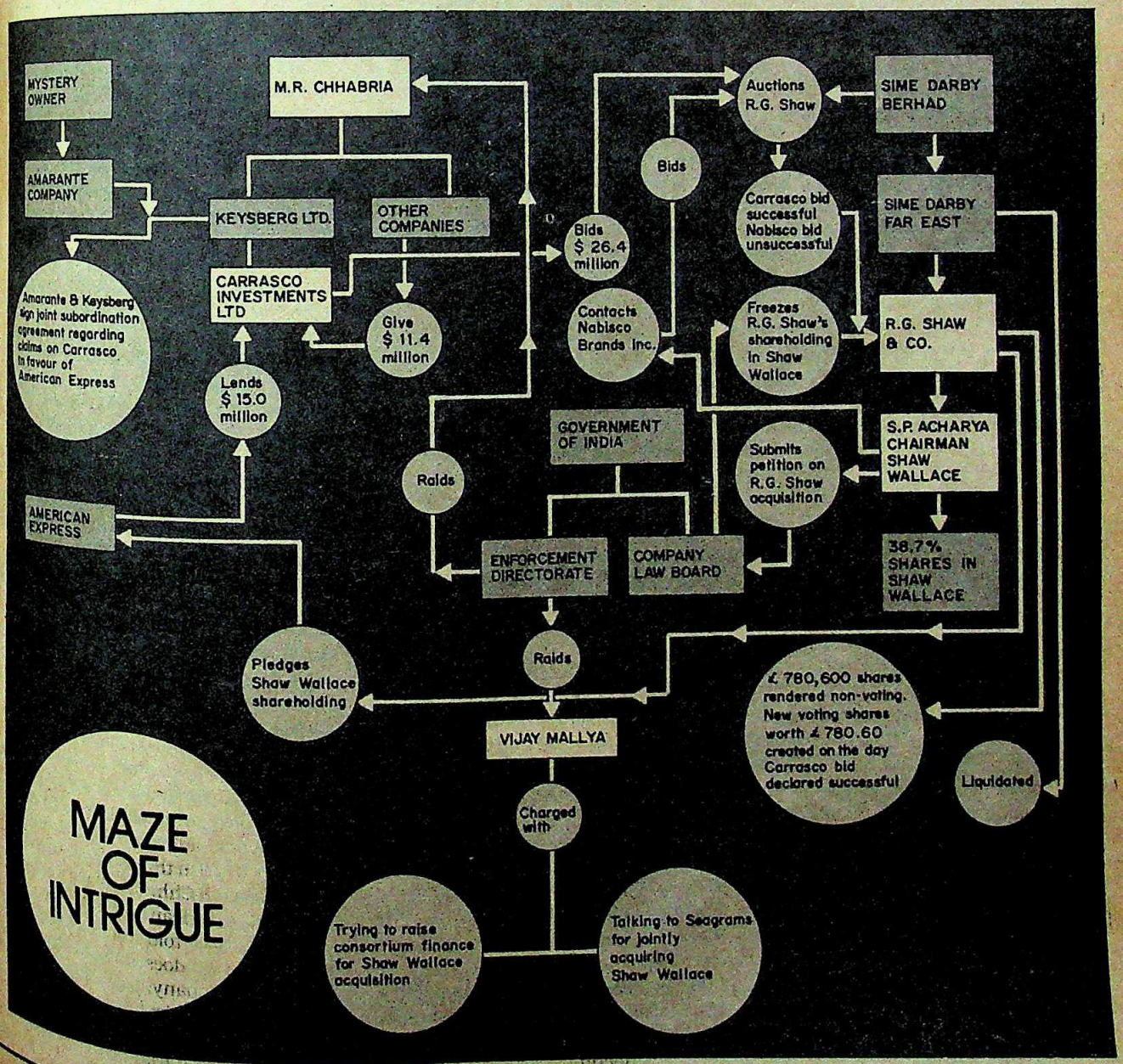
real significance of Amarante's involvement in the transaction?

Taken together, all these bits and pieces of 'evidence' are used to implicate Mallya in the acquisition of R.G.Shaw. Mallya himself could not be contacted for his response to these charges. And Chhabria's explanations were sometimes convincing and sometimes not. His disclaimer concerning Amarante, for instance, stretched credibility, but he was on stronger ground on some of the other issues that have been raised

For instance, his lawyer argued before the Company Law Board that the cash deposit supposed to have been made to American Express was non-existent, and that the deposits mentioned related only to the income that might accrue from the investments by R.G.Shaw, whose shares were pledged with the bank. Chhabria had also submitted to the Company Law Board a letter from American Express stating explicitly that there was no cash deposit made against the loan of $15 million. The letter, issued on June 4 by a vice-president of the bank, said that the loan "was arranged based on the personal guarantee of Mr M.R. Chhabria," and that the loan "was not cash-collateralised". A second letter, issued simultaneously by the vice-president of the bank, declared that "Mr M.R. Chhabria is considered by American Express Bank to be a high net worth individual and valued client of the bank." While these two unqualified statements should help Chhabria on the loan issue, the only question that arose was how the loan could have been given against a "personal guarantee" when R.G.Shaw's shareholding in Shaw Wallace is known to have been pledged to the bank as a security for the loan.

Chhabria has also disclaimed any knowledge of discussions between executives of United Breweries and Seagrams, and of the bank document linking Mallya with the intended purchase of Shaw Wallace's overseas shareholding. Since neither of these involves him personally, he is on safe ground here. And when asked by officials of the Enforcement Directorate whether he knew Mallya and had discussed the Shaw Wallace acquisition with him, Chhabria had replied that he did know Mallya, that he had asked Mallya about the wisdom of acquiring a stake in



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Shaw Wallace, and Mallya told him it was a good idea.

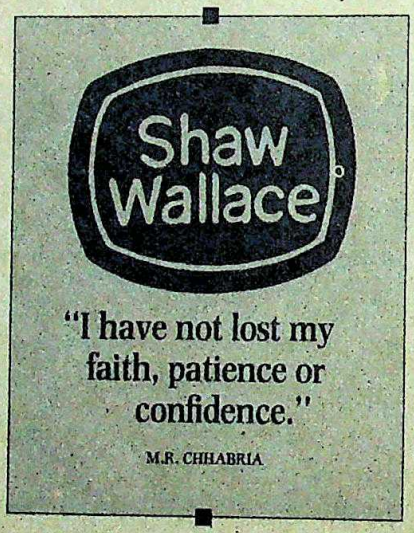
While the fur is flying on all these counts, Chhabria's defence before the Company Law Board has been quite simple: that the money used to pay for R.G.Shaw is his, that irrespective of the various parties that may at various stages have sought to buy R.G.Shaw, he is now its sole owner, and that he paid for his purchases with his own money. Finally, he has asked the Company Law Board to end the freeze on his rights as a shareholder in Shaw Wallace. The freeze was imposed in February to facilitate an enquiry into the true ownership of R.G. Shaw. Chhabria's lawyer has argued that since the investigator appointed by the Company Law Board has no more questions to ask Chhabria, his rights should be restored, while the other issues remained to be sorted out.

WITH the press barred from attending the sittings of the Company Law Board, it is difficult to assess the nature of the hearings. The members of the board themselves have by and large been studiously non-committal, but a couple of members appear to have indicated through their pattern of questioning that they felt the Shaw Wallace management had nothing concrete to pin on Chhabria. Indeed, Chhabria's lawyers have repeatedly argued that the purpose of the Shaw Wallace management is to delay the proceedings as much as possible, and they seem to feel that if the Company Law Board hands down any decision that the management does not like, it will promptly go to court on the issue.

While it would be foolhardy to try and forecast the Company Law Board's final decision, the Enforcement Directorate talks of being on a hot trail concerning related issues. The director of enforcement, Bhure Lal, said his department decided to enquire into Chhabria's and Mallya's affairs following press reports on the Shaw Wallace share acquisition and Chhabria's spate of corporate acquisitions in India, and that they were trying to establish Chhabria's sources of funds. So on July 9, 62 tax sleuths had raided the establishments in India of both Chhabria and Mallya. Later Chhabria was questioned, first in Bombay and then in Delhi for a further two days.

Chhabria gives every impression of not being worried by the experience, and says he has promised to give the officials the documents and information they have sought. But some officials said they were not satisfied with Chhabria's answers. Whether they have got anything to really go on is not, however, clear just yet. But one bit of interesting information that officials reveal relates to Chhabria's personal net worth: $30 million (Rs 36 crore).

Meanwhile, there is one curious aspect of the entire R.G.Shaw transaction that has been brought to the attention of the Company Law Board. Sime Darby Berhad of Malaysia sold R.G.Shaw through an auction. Carrasco Investments, a Hong Kong-based company owned by Chhabria's company Keysberg, was told in London on January 21 that its auction bid was successful. Subsequent to this, an enormous amount of activity seems to have taken place on the same day. In London itself, Carrasco signed its loan agreement with American Express. On the same day in Hong Kong, Keysberg and Amarante were jointly signing agreements with American Express that subordinated their claims on Carrasco to that of American Express. And again on the same day in Hong Kong, R.G.Shaw's shareholders were meeting to take a decision on restructuring the shareholding pattern of the company. The odd part of this whole operation is that Hong Kong is eight to nine hours ahead of London-time, and business hours in the colony would have ended before the announcement of the successful bidder being named in London. The Shaw Wallace management has used this curious timing to argue before the Company Law Board that the auction in London was in fact a sham, though what exactly this proves is not clear.



The still more curious part of the transaction concerns the restructuring of R.G.Shaw's shareholding on the very date when the auction result was to be announced. Before the auction, the company had a share capital of 760,800 pounds sterling in individual shares of one pound each. But on January 21, the shareholders of R.G.Shaw (owned exclusively by Sime Darby Berhad) decided to convert these shares into non-voting shares with deferred rights. Simultaneously, 760.80 pounds of reserves were converted into new voting shares of one penny each. Thus the new voting shareholding was one-tenth of one per cent of the old shareholding, whose voting rights had been taken away.

Once again, the precise significance of this complicated transaction was not clear. But an interested observer commented: "If R.G.Shaw was being sold in a simple transaction to one buyer, one would not expect such complicated manoeuvres. The fact that these complications exist suggests that there is more to the transaction than meets the eye."

There is one final puzzle. In the original corporate structure, Sime Darby Berhad (a Malaysian company) owned Sime Darby Far East (a company based in Hong Kong), which in turn owned R.G.Shaw. Yet when R.G.Shaw was sold to Carrasco, Sime Darby Far East appears to have been liquidated. Like the earlier puzzles, the significance of this decision too is not known. And the question that waited for an answer was whether these puzzles had any real bearing on the issues being debated in Delhi, or whether they were nothing more than corporate jugglery indulged in for obscure reasons.

The Shaw Wallace management's plea before the Company Law Board has been that all these issues should be looked at in order to ascertain what exactly has happened to R.G.Shaw's ownership, and that the documents in the hands of the Enforcement Directorate should also be looked at. Chhabria has countered that none of these issues is relevant, that he is prepared to submit the relevant documents and explanations to the investigator appointed by the Company Law Board (but not to Shaw Wallace), and that an injustice has been done to him in freezing his rights as the biggest Shaw Wallace shareholder.

At the time of writing, the hearings were still continuing, and whether Chhabria would finally be able to get his hands on Shaw Wallace remained a tantalising question-mark.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

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STC

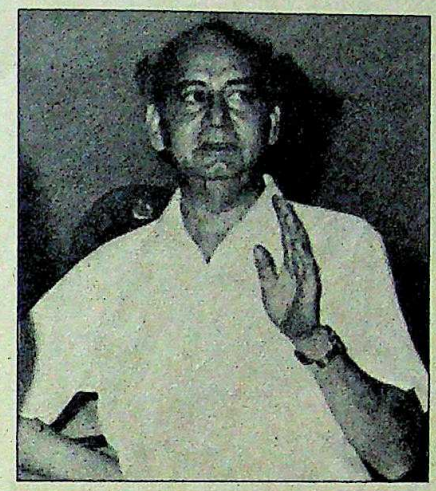
Rice and Fall

LEWIS Carroll's Queen of Hearts had the unsettling habit of periodically ordering "Off with his head". Vishwanath Pratap Singh now seems to be doing likewise. First donning his hat as finance minister, he sent a number of senior tax officials packing. Then, last fortnight, Singh took on the mantle of the commerce minister to effectively decapitate Prem Chand Luthar, chairman of the State Trading Corporation (STC).

Singh may of course have more provocation for his action than the irrational monarch in *Alice in Wonderland*. Under Luthar, STC contracted to export 10,000 tonnes of grade 'B' basmati rice (a mixture of 80 per cent basmati and 20 per cent coarse rice) to Abu Dhabi, but booked the order at a price far lower than the going rate for this mixture. STC then proceeded to ask suppliers to ship a far inferior mixture that had been expressly prohibited by the Commerce Ministry. The Abu Dhabi Municipality, which had contracted the supply with STC, and its inspector, Geo Chem Laboratories, rejected the samples that were about to be supplied, and Luthar's neck was quickly on the chopping block.

The controversial deal raised numerous questions that still do not have clear answers. The sequence of events began in November last year, when STC received an offer for the supply of basmati rice. No immediate action was taken because of various factors, including likely changes in STC's trading policy. In January, Luthar decentralised export dealings so that contracts could be signed without the formal approval of the board of directors. Following this, officials of STC's Delhi branch visited Abu Dhabi to discuss the details with the prospective buyers. The pace quickened at this stage when India's ambassador to Abu Dhabi personally requested Luthar to sign the agreement. Luthar, who was then in Kuwait, visited Abu Dhabi on March 6 and signed the sale contract.

The contract was signed on the basis of a sealed sample of rice, which however, STC did not show to any of the suppliers in India. Instead, STC entered into contracts with these suppliers on the basis of a separate set of samples that clearly did not match that given to the Abu Dhabi Municipality. Indeed, as recently as February, the Commerce Ministry had expressly forbidden Luthar and the STC from exporting inferior mixtures of rice to Abu Dhabi. Luthar had therefore entered into the contract knowing fully well that he would have to supply grade 'B' basmati! Yet he had contracted to supply this at the grossly uneconomic price of $600 (Rs 7,200). When the ruling market price was $800 (Rs 9,600). So, did he plan to export inferior rice under the guise of grade 'B' basmati, or was he under the impression —as he explained to the Commerce Ministry— that the contract which he signed was in accordance with government policy on rice export? Even if the latter is true, why did Luthar not check on the low price in the contract.



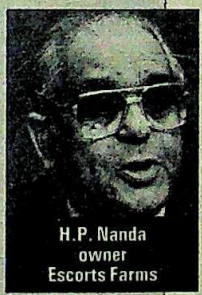
STC chief Luthar: axed

What lends mystery to the transaction is the involvement of an influential Congress(I) leader. Initially, STC had signed contracts with six rice dealers but all of them backed out because of the low price. Then, a desperate STC official, accompanied by the Congress(I) leader, contracted for fresh supplies from three companies: Escorts Farms, Jainsons Clothing Corporation and S.H.K.P. Babu Traders of Andhra Pradesh. The samples submitted by Escorts Farms and Jainsons were approved by STC (in violation of the Commerce Ministry directive on export-quality rice). But when the supplies were made according to these samples, and the Abu Dhabi Municipality rejected them in a preshipment inspection, STC promptly turned on its suppliers, cancelled the contracts and confiscated their bank guarantees. While Escorts Farms' banker released the money, Jainsons managed to get a court stay order. As Escorts Farms owner H.P. Nanda said last fortnight: "My boys gave them exactly the same rice which was earlier approved by them and the inspecting agency. If STC had signed with Abu Dhabi for supplying gold and asked us to supply silver, we can't be blamed for it." Added Arun Jain, managing partner of Jainsons: "We have been cheated. They never even showed us the samples that were given to the Abu Dhabi Municipality."

STC chief Luthar was not the only one to face the music in the retributive action that followed. The corporation's Delhi branch manager, S.K. Caroli, had been suspended and A.S. Bhatia, one of the corporation's directors who was dealing with exports, has been shunted to another portfolio. Nevertheless, the impression remains that there is more to the deal than has surfaced. And whether Luthar could be arraigned for culpability or merely cupidity remains a nagging question.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

"If STC had signed with Abu Dhabi for supplying gold and asked us to supply silver, we can't be blamed for it."



H.P. Nanda
owner
Escorts Farms

Arun Jain
managing partner
Jainsons

"We have been cheated. They (STC) never even showed us the samples that were given to the Abu Dhabi Municipality."

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A group is known by its companies.

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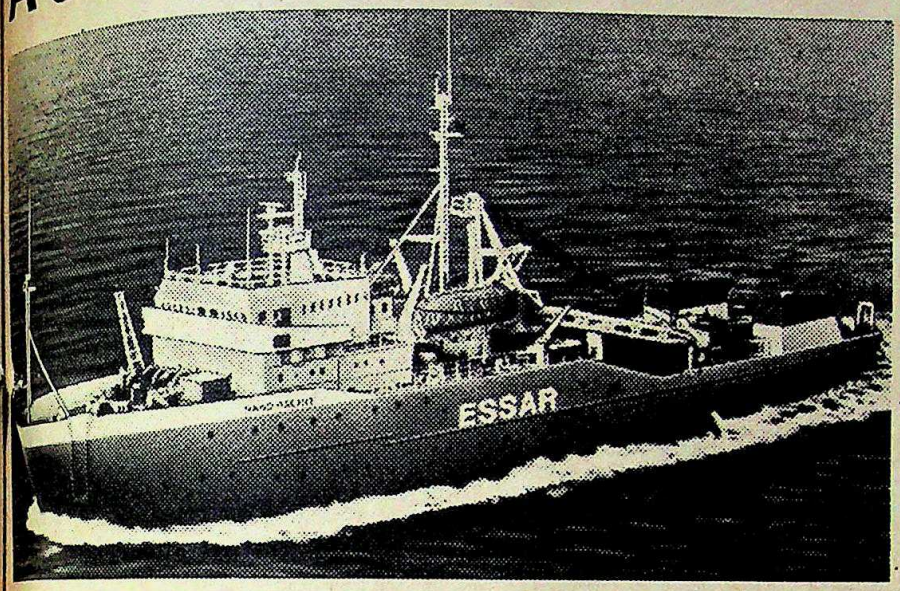
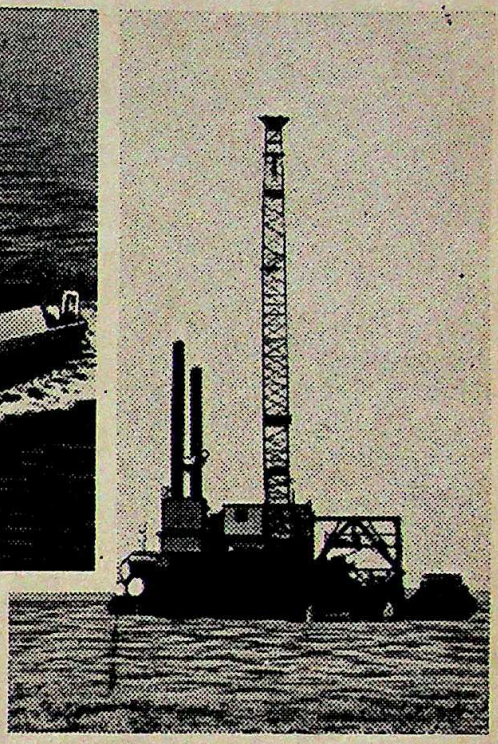
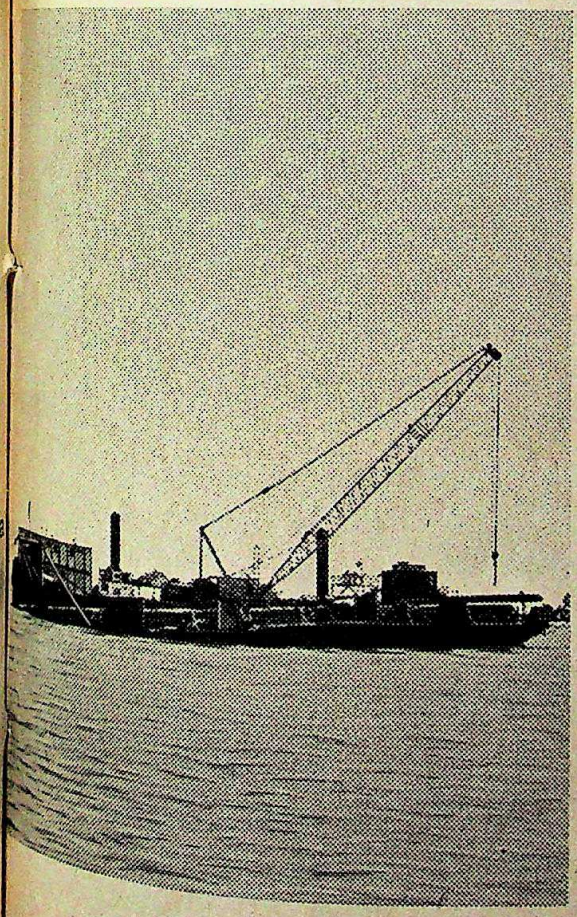
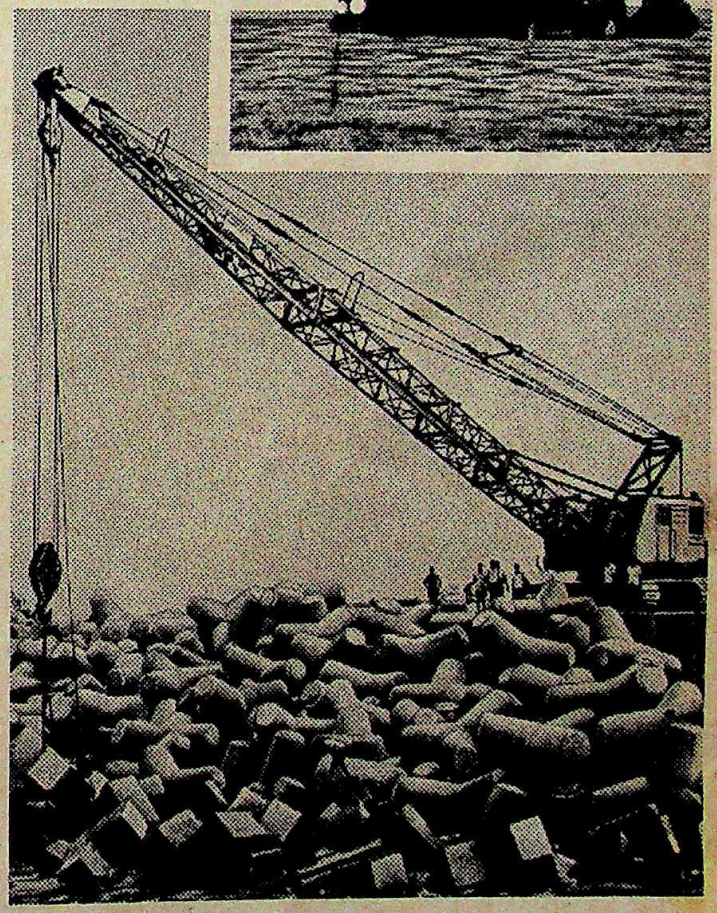
A company by its activities.









ESSAR

13th Floor, Maker Chambers IV,
Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021.

The horizon is wide open.

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ELXSI

Taking on the Titans

WHO MIGHT develop the computer system that can finally take on IBM on its home turf? The answer: a company promoted by the prestigious Tatas and run partly by non-resident Indians.

The company's name is Elxsi, and it has its base in California's San Jose valley. It is now six years old, and its financial performance last year can hardly be considered promising: on sales of $ 18 million, it lost $ 7 million. Nevertheless, Elxsi has a computer system that is claimed to be a breakthrough in computer architecture, and it is now tying up with another company promoted by none other than the man once known as king of computer design: Gene Amdahl.

The marriage is taking place in the form of a merger between Elxsi and Amdahl's Trilogy Systems Corporation, and it might well work out as an ideal partnership: Elxsi has its system 6400, Trilogy has $ 80 million in spare cash plus advanced semiconductor technology, and Amdahl has the brains and the will to provide a computer that can rival IBM's. For, after he helped design IBM's ultra-successful 360 series of computers, Amdahl had started his own Amdahl Corporation, lost it to Fujitsu of Japan, and then started Trilogy, determined as ever to beat his old nemesis, IBM, at producing a unique supercomputer with his superchip design.

Trilogy was founded with the largest amount ever collected in venture funding for a start-up project ($ 270 million), but the company nearly self-destructed in trying, unsuccessfully, to develop a spectacular superchip that would make mainframe computers smaller, faster, cheaper and more reliable. The project was given up, and Amdahl now intends to develop Elxsi's system into an improved version. He says: "I believe that IBM needs to be challenged because I don't think it's in the best interests of any user of computers to have one company be so dominant...I looked at the architecture of Elxsi's systems and software and was very positively impressed."

The David-Goliath battle may, of course, fail to materialise if David fails to get his bag of sling-stones together. Nevertheless, the Elxsi experiment is already proving to be one of the most innovative ventures ever launched by Indians, one designed to ensure an Indian presence in the heart of computer technology near the centre of the action in Silicon Valley. And now that the tie-up with Trilogy and Amdahl is taking place, Elxsi is also proving to be a venture with considerable promise.

The company was founded in 1979 by a group of nine professionals, including Thampy Thomas, 39, an alumnus of the Birla Institute of Technology and Science at Pilani who has a doctorate in computer design from Stanford University, and B. Kumar, 35, who studied at the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras before getting a doctorate from the University of Illinois. Thomas' original plan was to set up a computer research and development centre in India, but government policies and US restrictions on high-tech exports came in the way. Enter the Tatas.

Says Thomas: "I had known Ratan Tata (chairman of Tata Industries) for a long time, and so when we started Elxsi I wrote to him about our plans since the Tatas had an interest in doing something with us." The response was quick. Thomas and Elxsi's chairman and president Joseph Rizzi were invited to make a

THE ELXSI CONFIGURATION

Gene Amdahl
computer design maestro

Provides technical know-how and up to $80 million through Trilogy Systems Inc.

Thampy Thomas
vice-president
Elxsi

B. Kumar
vice-president, engineering
Elxsi

"The Elxsi experiment is already proving to be one of the most innovative ventures ever launched by Indians, one designed to ensure an Indian presence in the heart of computer technology near the centre of the action in Silicon Valley."

Ratan Tata
chairman, Tata Industries

Invested 35 per cent of Elxsi's seed capital of $10 million.

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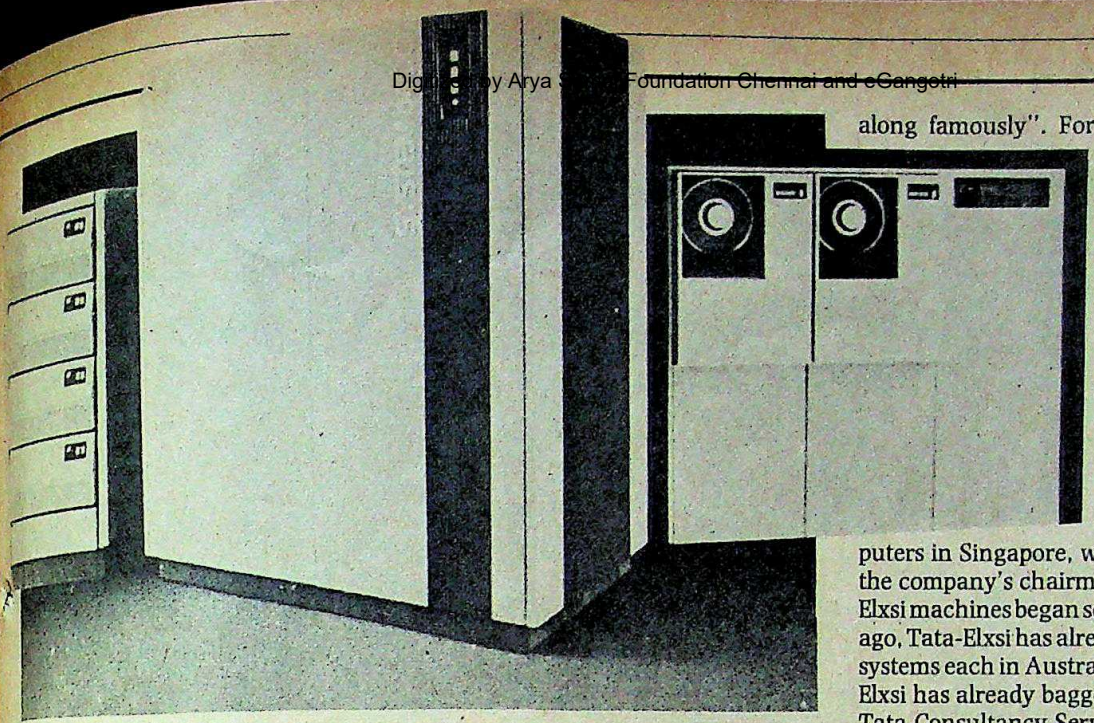

Elxsi system: the realm of the impossible

presentation to the board of Tata Sons, the Tata group's apex company. Recalls Thomas: "What made it all possible was that both J.R.D. Tata and S. Moolgaokar (chairmen of TELCO), were intrigued with the possibility of being associated with a start-up company."

From then on it was Ratan Tata who spearheaded the promotional drive. The group chipped in with $ 3.5 million through their European associates and other sources, making up the biggest chunk of the $ 10 million that Elxsi initially raised. Says B. Kumar, who is vice-president (engineering): "The Tatas were the first big investors. In fact, once they had invested the local venture capitalists also started flocking in. That's how that crowd always works."

As one of the major financial supporters, Ratan Tata was given a position on Elxsi's governing board, and over the last five years he has wielded a great deal of influence in terms of the company's product positioning and strategy. He attends each quarterly meeting, and as Kumar puts it, "is very much a respected voice and plays a close role."

Today, Elxsi has in its System 6400 a product that is an acknowledged success, with a unique architecture and modular design. Amdahl himself terms it "practical as well as elegant", and it allows Elxsi to compete with Digital and IBM computers in a wide range of markets. But Elxsi was strapped for cash, Trilogy had it, and the corporate marriage a few weeks ago has been among the attention-grabbing mergers in an industry and a period that has seen countless corporate link-ups in California's glamorous Bay area. For although Elxsi lost $ 7 million last year, it broke even in the second half of the year, and now it gets access to Trilogy's semiconductor technology and can also dig deep into Trilogy's pockets. Says Thomas: "Their $ 80 million reserves will be spent just on Elxsi—on marketing and manufacturing our machine."

Although the details of the merger between Elxsi and Trilogy are yet to be worked out and the governmental formalities not yet completed, the merger promises a great deal: Trilogy's wafer-scale integration technology will be used to further enhance the capability of the Elxsi machine. This, as computer buffs would guess, is where Amdahl's famed skills will come into play. For after the problems with Trilogy's own ambitious venture, Amdahl once again has a computer to work on which competes with IBM in at least some portions of the market. "What Gene is very good at," acknowledges Thomas, "is building an architecturally very high performance machine, and I think he is looking forward to being involved with a new architecture."

There is the obvious question: will the dilution of the Tata shareholding consequent to the merger with Trilogy and the presence of Amdahl's towering personality serve to reduce the Indian presence in the new company? "No," says Amdahl, "I don't see why the Indian connection should fade. There are people with extremely fine qualifications in India and I think we would like to acquire quality input from wherever it is good."

If anything, the Indian connection should strengthen. For one thing, Amdahl and Ratan Tata are said to "get along famously". For another, Elxsi is getting ready to move its Asian software operations into India from Singapore. An independent company, Tata-Elxsi, had been spun off in 1982 to provide a regional marketing and manufacturing base for Elxsi computers in Singapore, with Ratan Tata as the company's chairman. And although Elxsi machines began selling barely a year ago, Tata-Elxsi has already installed three systems each in Australia and Singapore. Elxsi has already bagged orders from the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission in India.

Now that TCS is acquiring an Elxsi computer, Thomas is interested in setting up a joint venture for software development with TCS, while Indian engineers at NELCO, another Tata company, are working on the electro-magnetical design for a lower cost system that Elxsi wishes to develop. Currently, an Elxsi machine would begin at around $ 500,000. If NELCO engineers can help develop a computer that sells for $ 350,000, it would certainly open up many new and very lucrative markets in Asia and Australia. So a path-breaking venture could flower in several new ways.

Thomas is clear about the gains that accrue to India in a venture of this sort: "With Elxsi, the Tatas saw a unique opportunity to participate in a small company and get full access to its technology in the real sense of the term, and to use its financial and administrative voice in Elxsi to transfer know-how to India." Adds Kumar: "India can get technology up front by investing capital in the development of new companies, because with that kind of leverage you can do much more than by going to an established company and trying to get them to set something up."

That may not always be the best course of action. As Professor William A. Stoever, a visiting fellow at Princeton University, says: "I would be leery of such an approach for a country in India's situation because it is a high-risk strategy." But at the moment, it certainly looks as if the Tata experiment in getting into Silicon Valley on the ground floor is about to pay dividends.

—ROHINI NILEKANI

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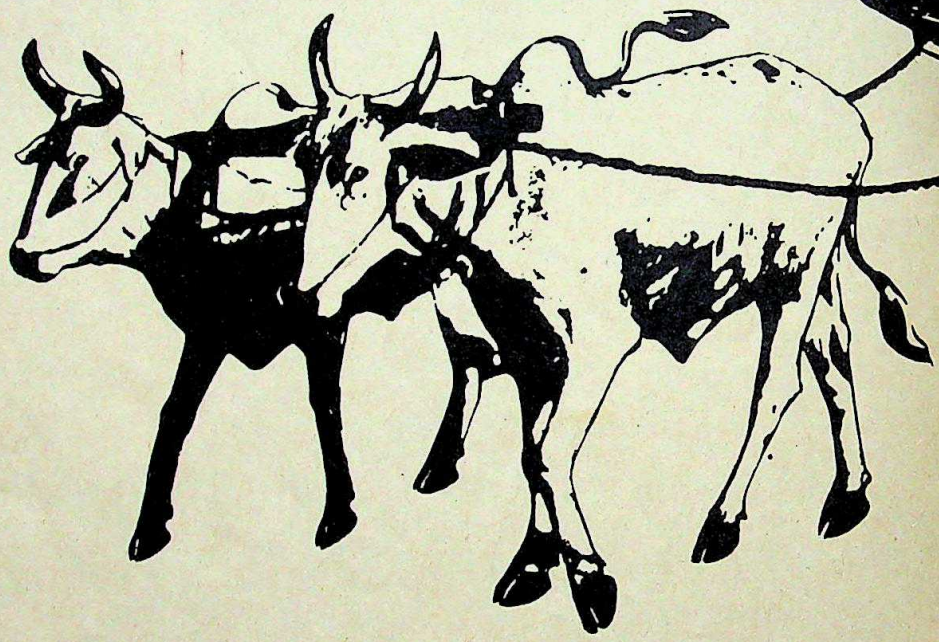

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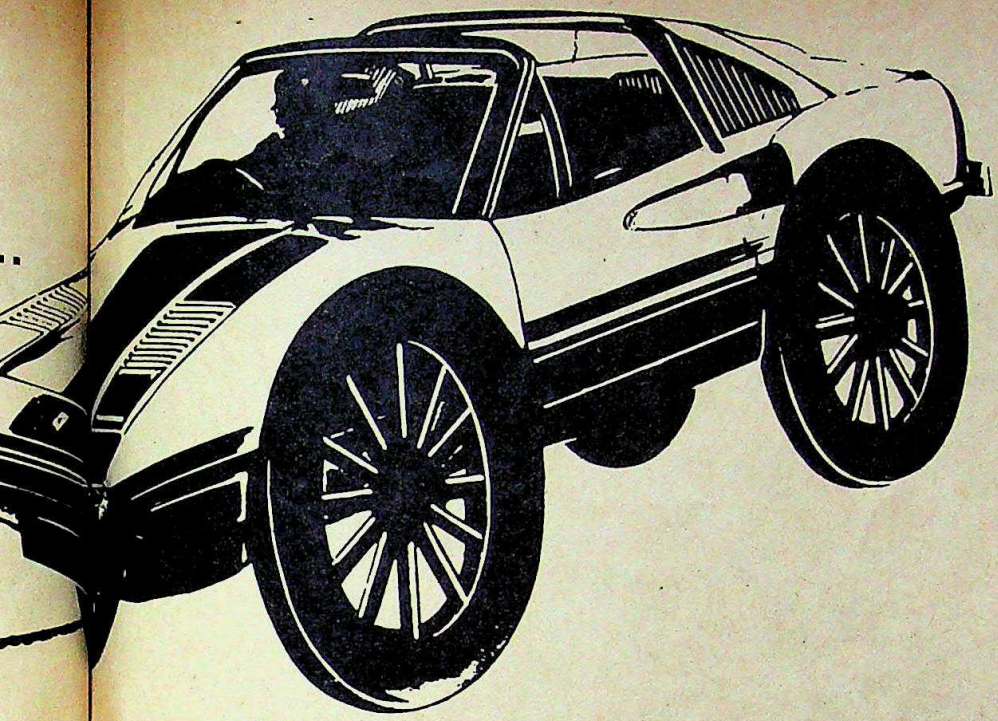

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"People like me have sweated to make this company what it is. I give the company 80 per cent of its business, yet I am not allowed to hold a single share."

ASHOK B. CHOUDHURY
chief agent

"Ashok Choudhury has been paid handsome commissions and been honoured for his work. Before he joined us, he was a lowly official. Today, he makes lakhs."

SUNIL K. ROY
managing director

PEERLESS

Power Tussle

FATE might achieve what the country's financial policemen failed to do. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the West Bengal Government and the General Insurance Corporation (GIC), have tried in vain to bring Peerless General Finance and Investment Company to a grinding halt, by charging that the company has been breaking the country's laws and cheating its depositors (INDIA TODAY, April 30, 1983). But the Peerless juggernaut kept rolling. With its last managing director, the canny Bhudeb Kanti Roy at the helm, the company succeeded in side-stepping every pitfall.

But Roy died two months ago, and in his wake the company that seemed unstoppable is now riven by a bitter struggle for the succession that could succeed in doing what the RBI, the state Government and the GIC have failed to do. Ranged against each other are Sunil K. Roy, brother of the late managing director, and Ashok B. Choudhury, chief agent who leads thousands of the company's rebellious field officers, owner of the Ityadi group of publications and an aspirant to the Peerless boardroom. Just as much as Choudhury would like to get in through the door, Roy is determined to keep him out. For at stake is the control of a company that has assets of about Rs 600 crore.

Choudhury stakes his claim in no uncertain terms: "When I joined this company in 1969, the face value of its total business was only about Rs 7 crore. Today, it has grown to Rs 3,000 crore. People like me have sweated to make this company what it is. I give the company 80 per cent of its business, yet I am not allowed to hold a single share."

Sunil Roy, now acting managing director, clearly feels that Choudhury and others like him are overstepping themselves. Roy and other members of his family control most of the company's shares, and the family obviously intends to retain complete control. So without commenting directly on Choudhury's ambitions, Roy tries to put him in his place: "The company has been more than fair to him. He has been paid handsome commissions and been honoured for his work. Before he joined us, he was a lowly official. Today, he makes lakhs."

On the face of it, nothing can force Roy to give Choudhury a place on the board against his will. But Choudhury controls the agents who bring in the little golden eggs for Peerless.

Choudhury has begun to turn on the heat, first by demanding that the company be made a public limited entity with its shares quoted on the stock-market, and then by asking the Government to nominate two directors on the Peerless board—a move that can only enrage Roy since the Government has for some years been trying to find a chink in the Peerless armour. Choudhury has also sought to gain wider support for his own claims to office by demanding that Peerless raise the rate of interest on its deposits, and that it put an end to the controversial practice of confiscating deposits when a depositor defaults in the initial year of a deposit scheme.

Taking the battle further into the Roy camp, Choudhury assumed the leadership of the Peerless Field Officers Association last month and turned it into an agitational organisation. The police were called in to deal with the agitators, Roy's attitude hardened, and Choudhury fumed: "For the first time in the history of the organisation, the police were called in to deal with field officers and I too was taken to court, where the management described me as a *goonda*."

Finally, at a public meeting last month, Choudhury issued the threat of starting a new company and walking off with the Peerless agents. Roy offered to start negotiations on Choudhury's demands, an offer which received an instant response when Choudhury said he was postponing the agitation.

If that signals a truce, the key question remains whether Choudhury will eventually get his coveted place on the Peerless board. The indications are that Roy may stop short of offering this, knowing as he does that the field agents will be reluctant about giving up their fat commissions (going up to 82 per cent of the initial deposits of a subscriber) in order to join an unproven venture floated by Choudhury. But Choudhury himself will have his hands strengthened by even partial concessions wrested from Roy. So while the eventual outcome remains a question mark, the only lesson that can be drawn at this stage is contained in the old adage about people in glasshouses not throwing stones.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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UNION CARBIDE

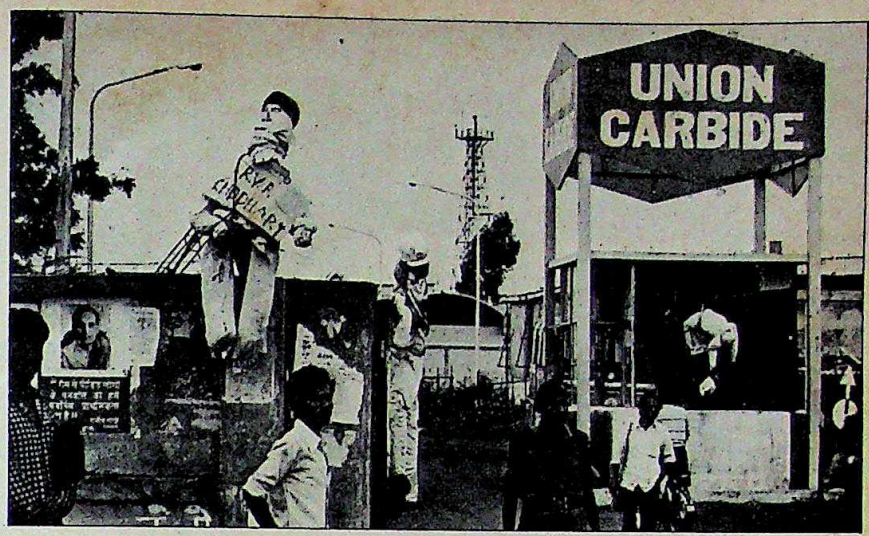
Job Problems

IT WAS one eventuality that should have caught nobody unawares. The day after the gas leak from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, then chief minister Arjun Singh had declared that there was no question of the factory opening again. On December 14, the state Government refused to renew its licence. On April 11, the Carbide management applied for permission to close the factory and gave three months' notice. And yet when the closure became a reality last fortnight, the knotty problem of finding jobs for the factory's 628 workers was no nearer a solution.

Apart from a handful of skilled operators who have taken up jobs in C.J. Gelatine, the rest of the workers are jobless. In India, that is not often a fate deserving of special sympathy. But for the Carbide workers, contented inhabitants of a high-wage island, the gas leak and its aftermath has been a continuing trauma. Hatim Zariwalla, president of the Union Carbide Workmen's Union, said with a rueful smile: "Right now all we have to look forward to is the day (August 22) when our bonus will be paid." Adds Kishan Prasad, secretary of the union: "Those 45 minutes (when the gas leaked) have changed our lives totally. We have lost our mental peace."

The workers think they are caught between a heartless management and an indifferent government. The Carbide management has offered them compensation as per the letter of the law (15 days' salary for every year of service) but they have all refused to accept it. Prasad, who pointed out that the workers had been inhaling for the last five years the deadly methyl iso-cyanate which killed thousands, explained: "We think the company is not doing its moral duty."

Their complaints against the Government are more varied. To start with, they contest the validity of Section 25 (0) of the Industrial Disputes Act under which the Government has allowed Carbide to close the unit. They have even filed a writ in the high court at Jabalpur on this but they realise that the closure of the unit is a fait accompli; no government would, for the sake of their jobs, earn the people's wrath by reopening the factory. They are more upset with the Government for not doing enough to get them jobs. Arjun Singh, they say, did nothing in the three months that he was in power other than get them registered in the employment exchange.



Carbide effigies: knotty problem

Even current Chief Minister Motilal Vora took up the problem seriously only after the closure. Now a bureau has been formed, comprising four secretaries to the state Government, which is entrusted with finding jobs for the workers. The setting up of the bureau has certainly expedited matters. By last fortnight, the bureau had offered jobs to over 200 workers, according to Hrishikesh Mishra, special secretary (labour).

The problem is the workers think the jobs are not good enough. Carbide used to pay them exceptionally well. After overtime some sweepers were known to gross over Rs 2,000. In comparison, the Madhya Pradesh Housing Board had offered to take 22 people as *khalasis* and peons on a basic pay starting at Rs 450. In Carbide they were designated helpers and paid Rs 1,200.

Mishra felt, with some justification, that the workers had yet to reconcile themselves to the realities of the situation. The workers, he said, were more busy trying to prevent the Government from agreeing to the closure. All the same, he maintained, every single one of the 612 workers who had registered with the Government had been offered at least one job each. But the workers were too fussy: the J.K. Raymond cement factory, for instance, offered jobs in the range of Rs 1,400-1,600 for 32 people but the workers refused to accept them because it meant going to Bilaspur. "I can only take the horse to the water, I can't force it to drink it," said Mishra.

"The Carbide workers should realise that there will be some problems in their invading any other organisation," he added. In the Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board, which had offered jobs to 31 people, for instance, the management was reluctant to take them because there was an agitation brewing among daily workers against taking outsiders for vacancies which they would otherwise have filled.

On its part, the Carbide management is being typically hard-headed. Sheo Mitra, the personnel manager at the plant, told INDIA TODAY: "We could not have offered compensation beyond the law. In any case, we were not approached for a negotiated settlement by the workers on this issue." Asked if Carbide did not feel that it was morally bound to go beyond the letter of law, Mitra pointed out that Carbide had suggested several alternatives for providing jobs, like offering to run the closed battery unit of the J.K. group, but the state Government, for reasons unknown, had not shown any keenness to associate itself with Carbide.

At fortnight's end, there was little to relieve the workers' gloom. Government officials said that compensation was not a closed issue but there were no positive signals from the Carbide management. Representatives of the employees met with the management in Bombay on July 25 but the demand for better compensation fell on barren grounds because of "diverse pressures on resources", said management sources. Union office bearers said they now hope "to get justice from New Delhi". The workers cannot afford to lose hope; what they do realise, however, is that their days of relative affluence in Carbide are over for good.

—AJAY KUMAR in Bhopal

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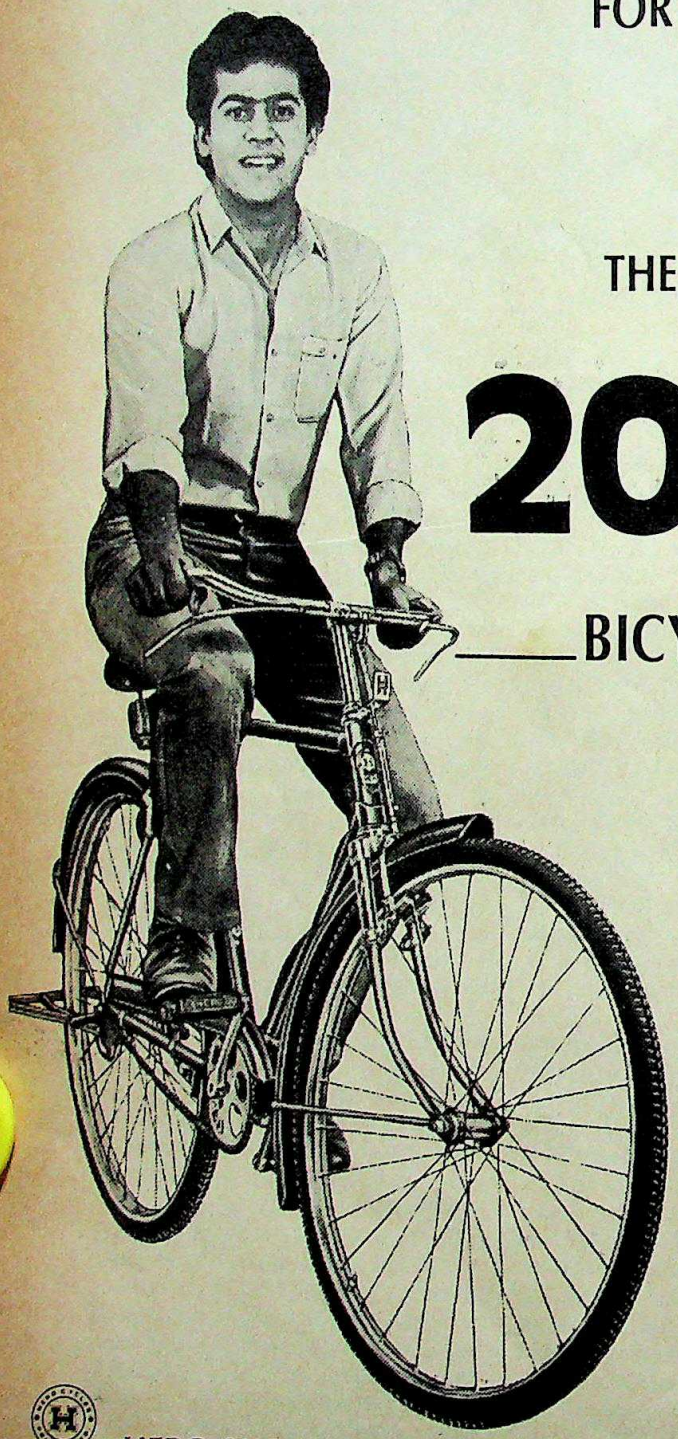

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GUJARAT

Ruling on Aid

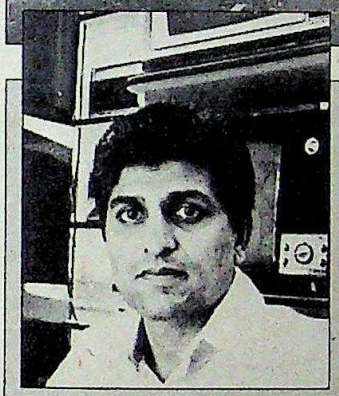
WIDOWS, flood victims and other distressed citizenry now have a rival in Gujarat: the Gujarat Government. For, unthinkable as it sounds, the state Government has taken Rs 10 crore from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The reason is the same that flood victims would use to qualify for disbursements: a desperate need for money.

That unlikely development typifies the economic havoc that has been wrought in the country's once most ambitiously aspiring state by five months of seemingly endless caste and communal strife. The state Government has been reduced to near penury by large losses of tax revenue following from an economic standstill: sales tax losses alone total Rs 75 crore. The state road transport corporation has had more than 120 of its buses burnt and 2,000 damaged. In Ahmedabad alone, the withdrawal of buses from many routes has brought the daily income down from Rs 4 lakh to Rs 25,000. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has lost Rs 4 crore by way of octroi revenue because truckers refused to bring their vehicles into the strife-torn city and off-loaded outside the city limits, and did not have money recently to pay its employees' salaries.

That is only the beginning of the toll. Losses to trade and industry have piled up to a staggering Rs 2,200 crore, and by mid-July as many as 1,579 shops and industrial units had been burnt or destroyed. And of the 12,000 powerlooms in Ahmedabad and Dholka, only 20 per cent have been working, while areas with large concentrations of powerlooms—like Rakhial, Bapunagar and Saraspur—have undergone curfew every second day.

The stories of individual losses are heart-rending. Chhotubhai Patel, an electronics goods dealer who set up shop a second time after his establishment was burnt by rampaging mobs in mid-March, says: "My sales have plummeted from Rs 75,000 a day to Rs 5,000.

Closed shops in Ahmedabad: heavy losses



"My sales have plummeted from Rs 75,000 a day to Rs 5,000. People are too scared to stir out."

CHHOTUBHAI PATEL
electronics goods dealer

"We used to sell goods worth Rs 1,200 daily. Now we are lucky if we do Rs 200."

HASMUKH KAMDAR
manager, handicrafts and leather goods shop

People are too scared to stir out." Adds Hasmukh Kamdar, manager of Charmshilp and Polyvastra Kendra which sells handicrafts and leather goods on Ahmedabad's Relief Road: "We used to sell goods worth about Rs 1,200 daily. Now we are lucky if we do Rs 200." Relief Road in fact underwent curfew for 59 days between March and June.

Madan Pandurang Lokhande, a tailor in Bapunagar, has found that his work orders have been reduced by 90 per cent, while Madhubhai Panchal, a lathe operator in Khodiarnagar on the eastern periphery of Ahmedabad, has not been able to buy raw material because payments for work already done are held up. And M.I. Mohammed Umar of Bapunagar, who took a loan to buy an autorickshaw after the textile mill in which he worked closed down in 1984, now finds that tragedy has struck him again: in May his house was burnt down, and since more than half the city is under intermittent curfew his earnings have dropped steeply: there simply aren't enough people on the roads wanting to take autorickshaws.

But even these stories of individual hardship pale in comparison with the crisis caused by the stoppage of work by banks in the state. The cheque clearing houses kept closing down for long intervals, and by the end of June the outstanding cheques that had piled up totalled a staggering Rs 1,800 crore. Worse, two weeks before that the banks began refusing to accept cheques altogether as they did not want to take the responsibility of looking after a mounting pile of cheques waiting for clearance.

Quite apart from the loss of revenue and income, there has been enormous and unprecedented damage to economic assets like houses, shops, industrial units and public buses. The state Government estimates that these losses alone amount to Rs 1,227 crore.

And the state economy is likely to get leaner. For as noted economist D.T. Lakdawala, director of the Sardar Patel Institute of Social and Economic Research, said: "The industry will recover from its losses in two or three years. But if the agitation leaves a legacy of caste and class war behind, investors will stop flocking to the state." For industrially-aspiring Gujarat, that is a fate which could be worse than having to live with the roster system.

—RAMESH MENON

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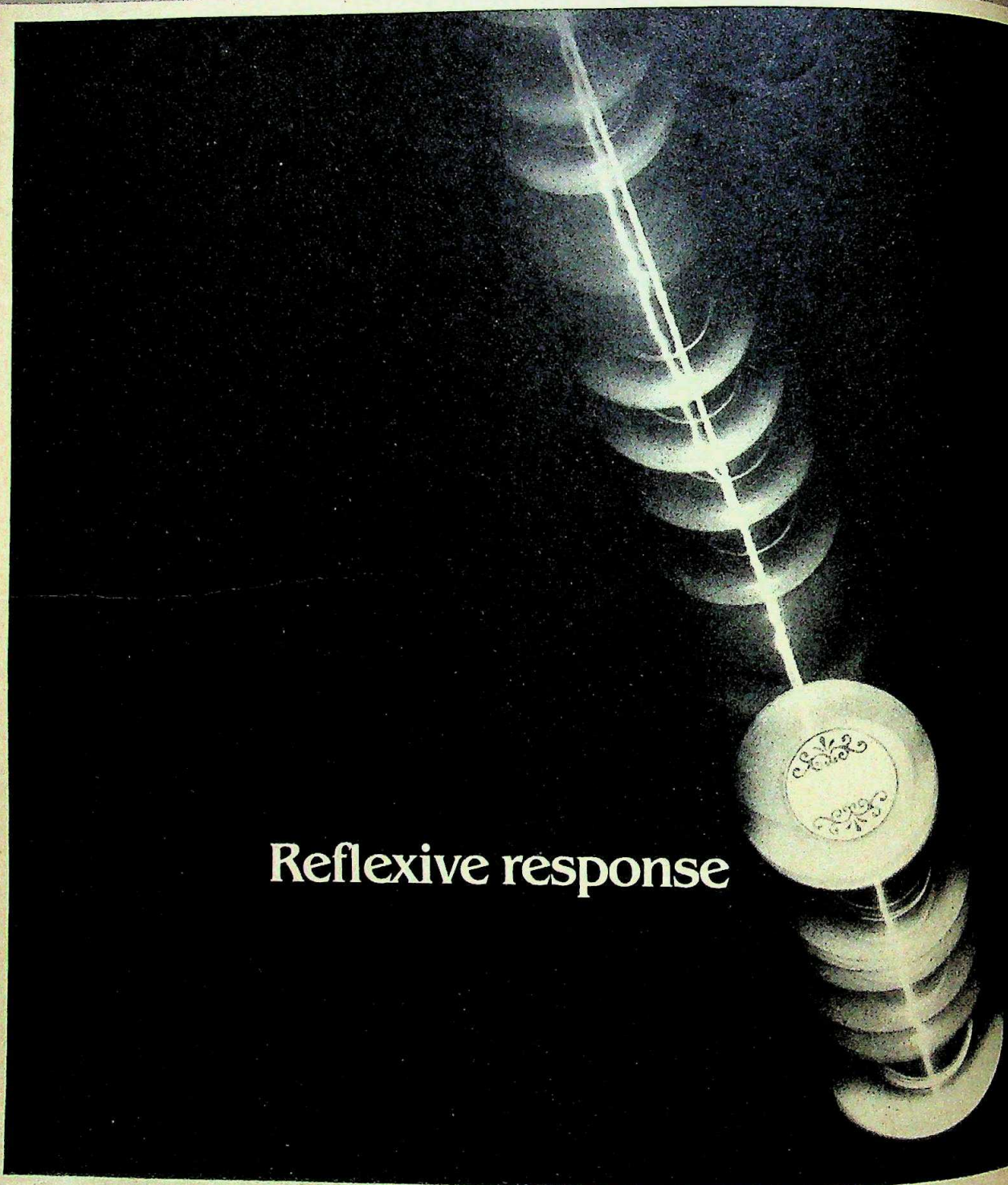

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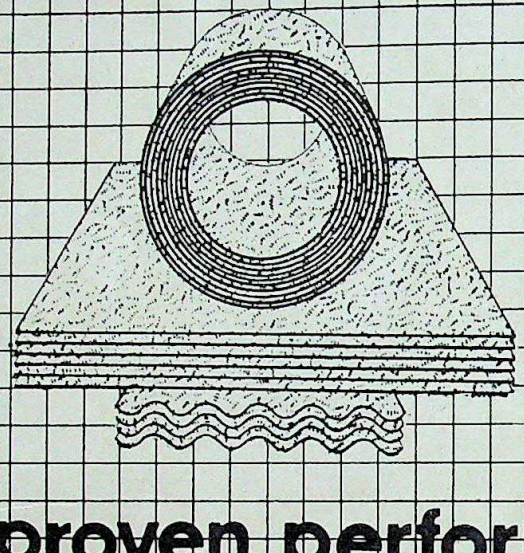
A Rs. 14.5 crore project implemented in just 11 months



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NALCO

In the Red

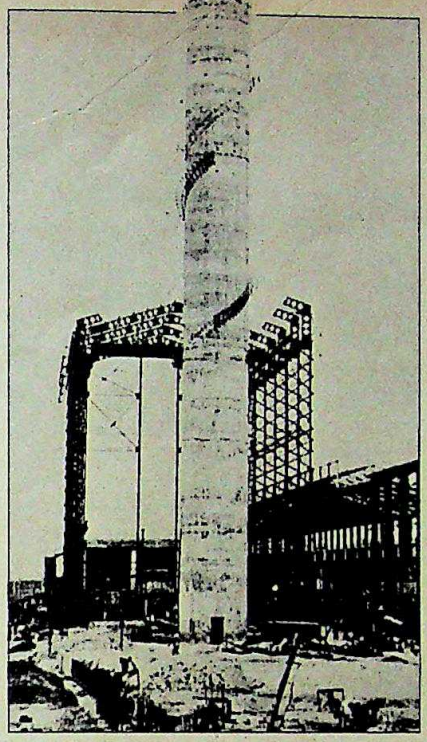
WHEN large industrial projects get constructed, chimneys are supposed to go up and—if you are lucky—project costs come down. In the case of the National Aluminium Company (NALCO), quite the reverse has turned out to be true: chimneys come down and project costs go up. And how!

In Orissa's Angul area, 160 km from Bhubaneswar, Engineers India and Flakt India had been supervising and building a chimney for NALCO as part of a massive pollution control unit attached to the aluminium smelter complex. But one windy night last month the massive 10-storey concrete chimney came crashing down.

Meanwhile, if any reverberations were felt in Delhi, they concerned the soaring cost of the project, from the initial figure of Rs 1,242 crore to nearly Rs2,500 crore. Slightly over half this increase is because of cost escalations. The scandalous part of the story is that a good chunk of the cost increase follows from design changes, project modifications and plain slipshod work. For instance, the aluminium smelter pot shells had defects in their original design, and the contractors had to break several of the shells, each weighing 27 tonnes, after the design defects were spotted. To add to the headaches, one of the companies fabricating the pot shells went bankrupt (for reasons unconnected with NALCO). NALCO is now looking for new shell fabricators.

Judging from its experience with the collapsed chimney, NALCO might well want to look for new consultants as well, because—as NALCO has now discovered—the chimney's design was "too limiting", it did not have any allowance for extra stress, and the few vents near its base proved too weak to take the load of the entire structure. Investigations are still under way as to how much loss was incurred, and what exactly happened, but NALCO engineers have little doubt that the fault lies with Flakt India and Engineers India. But no penal action has been contemplated so far.

There are other problems too. The 720 mw power unit attached to the project, and being handled by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL), has had to be scaled down to 600 mw, its cost has almost doubled, and the power plant itself has had to be modified to take care of load fluctuations and the possibility of sudden shutdowns of the smelter—factors that should have been taken into account at the start.



The chimney that fell while costs soared

The end result is that NALCO is almost certain to end up as a loss-incurring unit, when it is commissioned—well behind schedule. Even if the company achieves full capacity utilisation of 2.18 lakh tonnes, the capital cost alone of the company's aluminium will be over Rs 10,000 per tonne, against the current selling price of Rs 18,405. And since half the alumina that NALCO produces is supposed to be exported (to pay for the foreign exchange loans of Rs 1,200 crore), it is now almost certain that the exports too will have to be at a loss.

"A good part of the cost increase is because of modifications and changes in the scope of the project."

K.V.B. PANTULU
NALCO managing director

While the Planning Commission now chews over the prospect of having to sink more money into the project to make good on the investments already made, NALCO officials in Orissa offer a variety of excuses for what has happened, and liberally distribute the blame on all the other companies associated with the project. Thus, S.D. Choudharia, a smelter expert who joined NALCO after a 10-year stint in aluminium plant construction in West Asia, said Engineers India had made some major mistakes while doing the detailed designs. Also, the detailed engineering work showed that the original cost estimates, made on a rough basis by Engineers India and the French firm Aluminium Pechiney, had been excessively conservative. And NALCO Managing Director K.V.B. Pantulu said: "A good part of the cost increase is because of modifications and changes in the scope of the project." Finally, Deputy General Manager S.S. Agarwal said in relation to the chimney collapse: "If our consultants and contractors are going to let us down like this, there is very little that we can do."

The smelter unit was originally expected to cost Rs 410 crore, a figure that has now been hiked to Rs 720 crore. With barely half the work on the smelter completed, further cost increases are certain. Meanwhile, the alumina unit at Dhamanjodi was initially slated to cost Rs 336.6 crore. The latest cost estimate is Rs 675.8 crore—an incredible escalation of more than 100 per cent. Finally, the power plant cost has also nearly doubled to Rs 763.3 crore despite a scaling down in size from 720 mw to 600 mw. The irony of this is that BHEL had bagged the contract in the first place because it quoted the lowest price in response to a global tender.

The choice before the Planning Commission now is not a very happy one. NALCO, promoted five years ago as an export-oriented project that would be the largest aluminium producer in the country, is now almost certain to end up in the red, like its sister unit in the public sector, Bharat Aluminium. Yet, the fresh capital requirements will have to be provided for the project. Either way, the money is more than likely to go up in smoke through a reconstructed chimney spout.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Bhubaneswar

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EXCHANGE RACKET

The Money Changers

THE BUSY Ansari Road near the Agripada municipal market in Bombay, with its rows of dingy business premises, gives the unsuspecting passer-by little indication that it is a key address for several large and medium-sized companies in the country. And certainly, no one would have guessed that this unprepossessing area was the nerve-centre of a major foreign exchange racket involving illegal transactions that government tax sleuths estimate at a staggering Rs 1,200 crore.

Over a dozen officials from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) finally unearthed the scandal last month following a raid on some business premises on Ansari Road. In a carefully prepared operation that involved sealing possible escape routes and mapping the layouts of the buildings involved before effecting the crackdown, the sleuths arrested a handful of operators and seized coded documents. These are likely to hold up for public view the illegal transactions of over 50 companies.

Officials in Delhi are chary of revealing the identity of the companies until investigations are completed, but those involved include six or seven shipping companies, three prominent producers of consumer electronics goods, some important diamond merchants, one jute company, a couple of engineering goods manufacturers and export houses, some non-resident Indians and local agents of multinational corporations, including representatives of companies dealing in aviation and defence equipment.

If and when the full facts finally surface, many reputations are certain to tarnish badly. And early reports indicate this quite clearly. For instance, the arrest of Akbar alias Shankar Bhai led to the seizure of documents showing that the company concerned had regular foreign exchange dealings, pointing to an annual turnover of Rs 34.60 crore. Another arrest, of one Jamaluddin, led to confession of an annual turnover of Rs 70 crore. And in a third case, involving Razak Haji Mohammed Buya, one transaction alone involved Rs 6 crore.

Altogether, 13 people were arrested, of whom five were subsequently detained under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Act (COFEPOSA). Ten of them, according to the DRI charge-sheet, were generating surplus foreign exchange by under-invoicing exports and over-invoicing imports.

This breakthrough, the biggest ever into the foreign exchange racketeering network, also yielded valuable information on the unique modus operandi employed to funnel foreign exchange into and out of the country. Documentary evidence revealed that the business involved using no fewer than 10,000 codes comprising names of birds, animals and even buildings in Bombay, Singapore, London and New York. A small piece of paper discovered in a pocket notebook contained details of deals worth over Rs 15 crore.

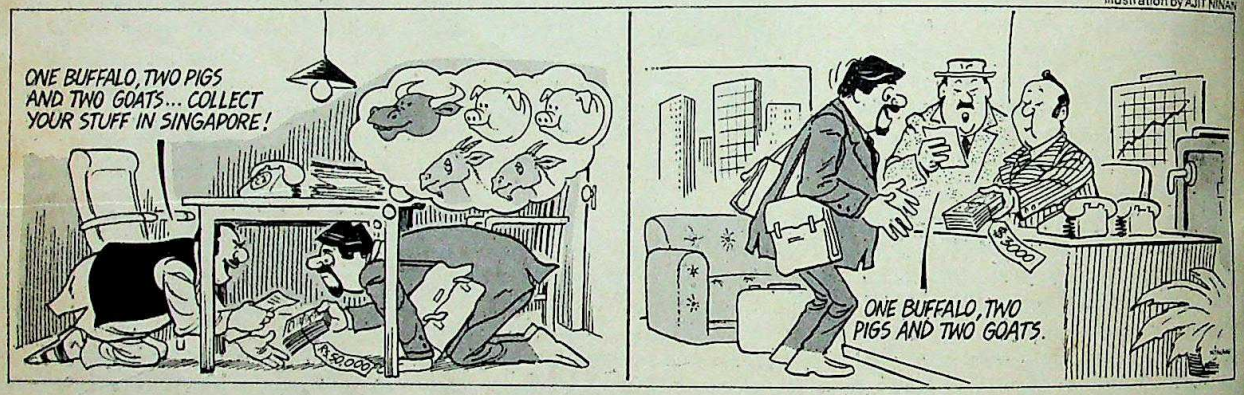
One operator confessed that after receiving cash in rupees in Bombay, he would allot a specific code and serial number to his client. These details would then be conveyed to the foreign exchange supplier abroad, who would, in turn, hand over the foreign exchange. Another option was to hand over a business letter with a handwritten code number marked in a corner of the letter-head. Investigation indicated that the premium charged for converting rupees into foreign exchange abroad varied from 10 to 15 per cent, sometimes more. Some companies, for example, had bought US dollars at Rs 16.50 per dollar, against the official rate of barely Rs 12. Most of the money was then remitted to Singapore, Hong Kong and London.

Officials have also discovered that much of the foreign exchange racketeering was conducted using remittances from Indians in the Gulf to relatives back home. The companies involved would buy foreign exchange from Indian workers in the Gulf, and provide rupees to their relatives in India. Indeed, the last few months have seen a downtrend in foreign exchange remittances through normal banking channels. The Finance Ministry is convinced that this is partly because of the flourishing racket in foreign exchange. But the most interesting aspect is the discovery that the principal clients of the racketeers are leading companies with offices abroad.

Following these disclosures, the Finance Ministry has stepped up its campaign against illegal movement of foreign exchange. The Government has also established a new agency called the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau to coordinate the activities of all the investigating agencies. The bureau will provide back-up information to the tax authorities and to begin with, will concentrate on illegal foreign exchange transactions. Meanwhile, similar cases of foreign exchange racketeering unearthed in the last three years are being scrutinised once again for possible leads and punitive action. As it stands, no penalties seem to have been imposed. Whether the story is going to be different this time around will only be known when the Government finally takes action against the large companies that patronised those arrested last month.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



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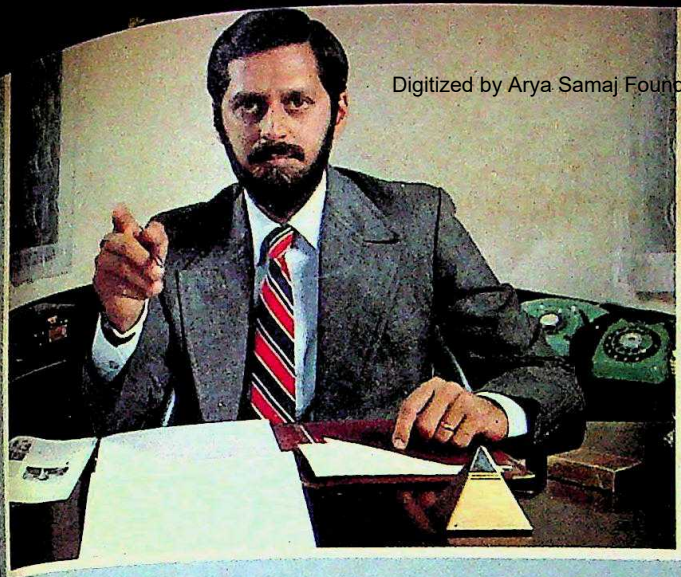

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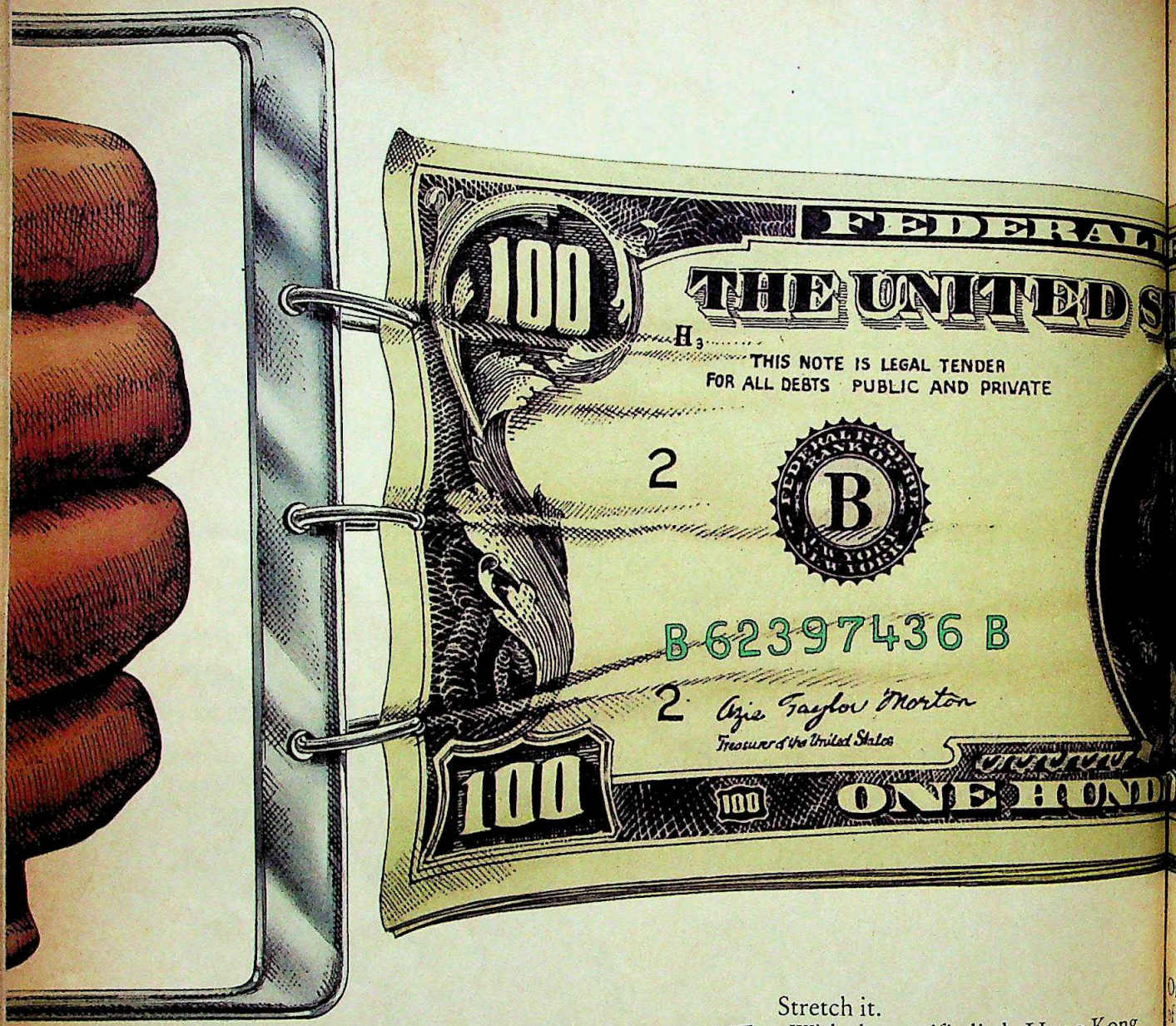

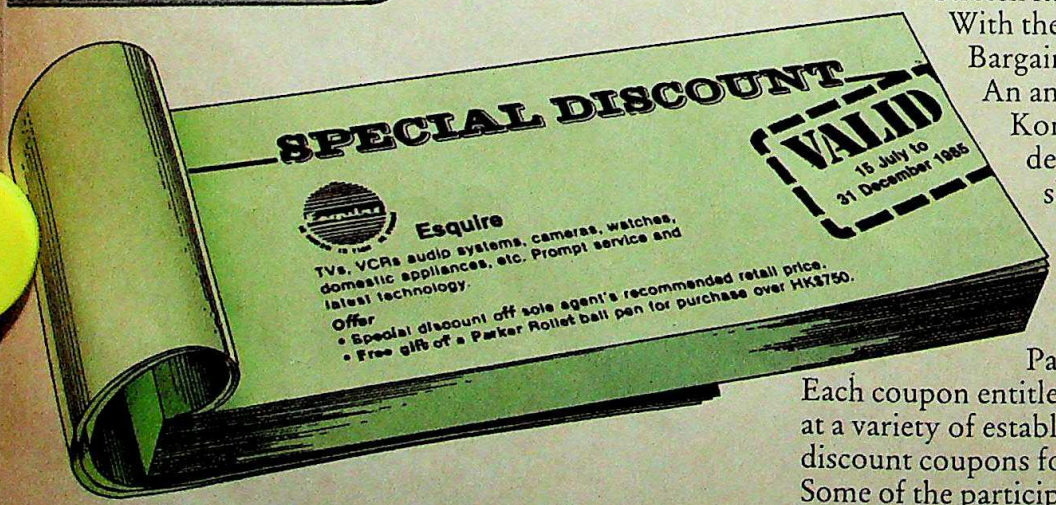

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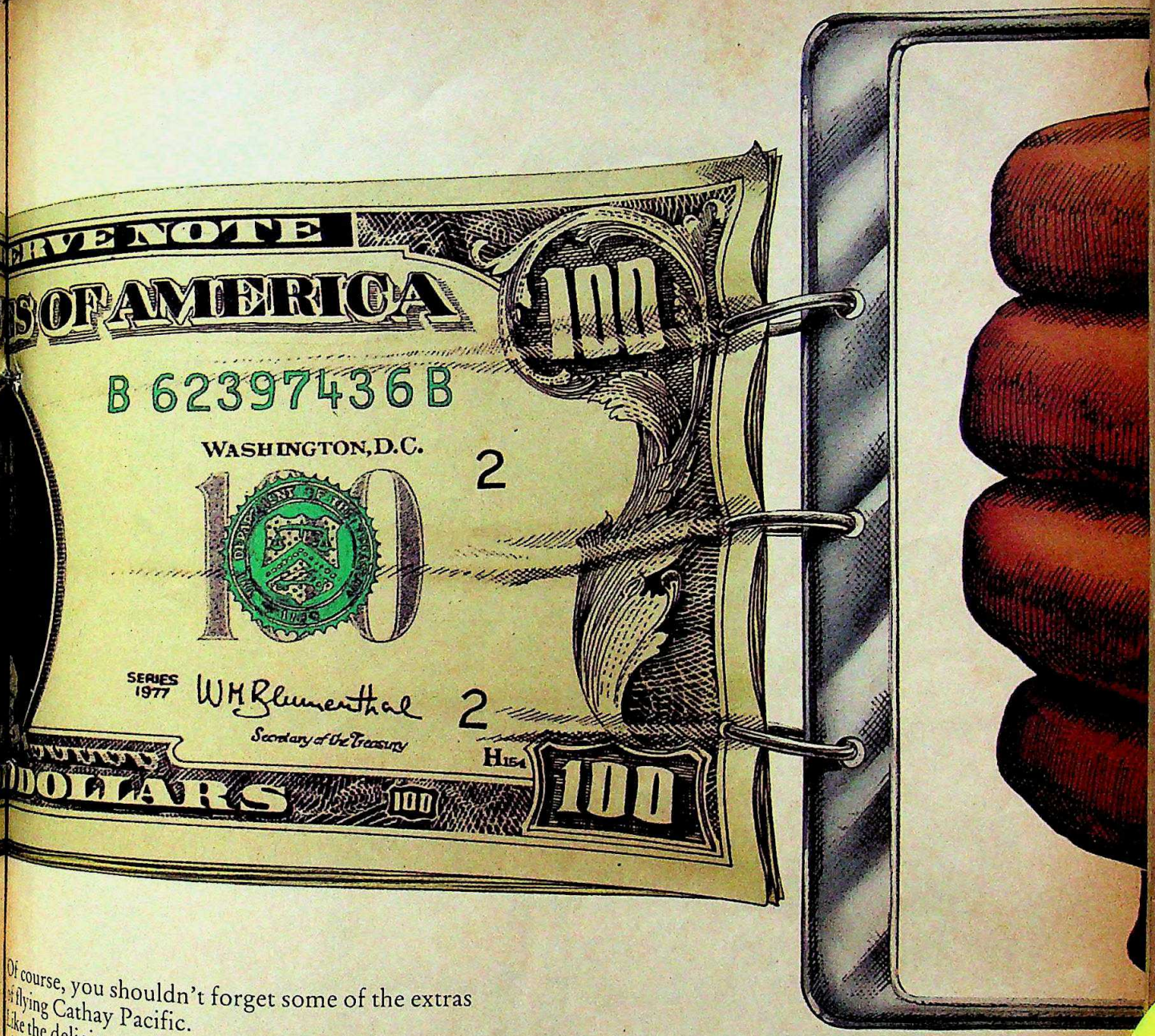

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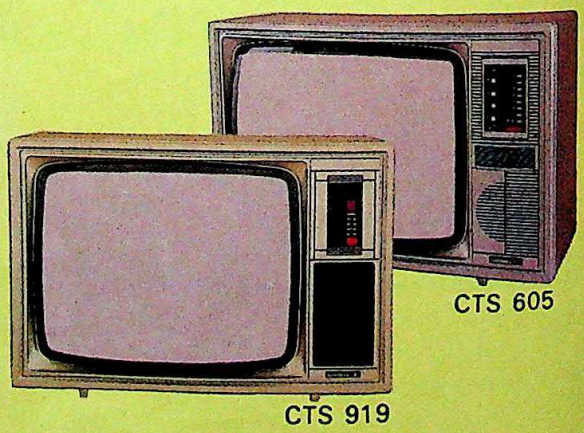

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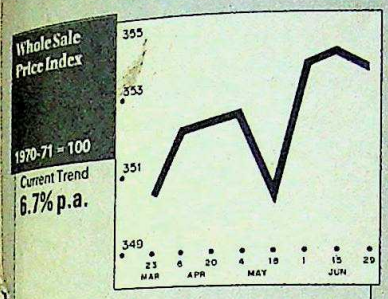
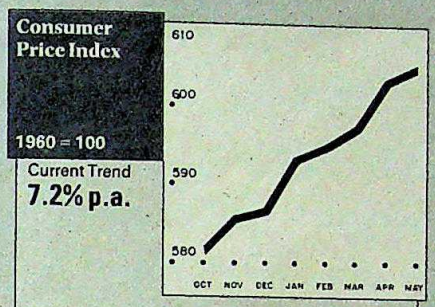
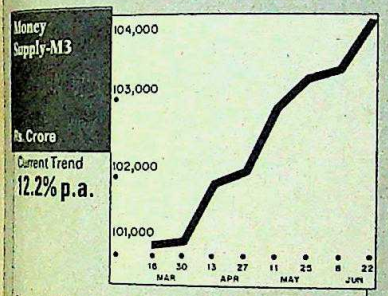
COMMERCIAL credit conditions continued to increase last fortnight, money supply growth remained well under control. The sluggish growth in the foreign trade sector is a cause for concern, since exports declined last month. The boom in share prices continued, and gold prices also began to show some signs of increasing. *All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of the last six months data to which a regression is fitted.*



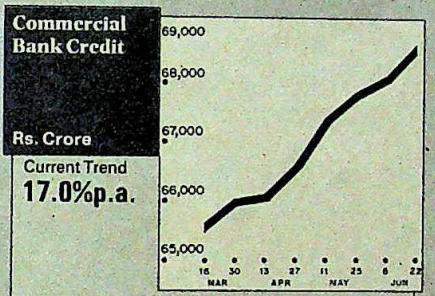
Wholesale prices dropped by 0.1 per cent last fortnight, reinforcing the recent stability in prices. Inflation seems most unlikely this year.



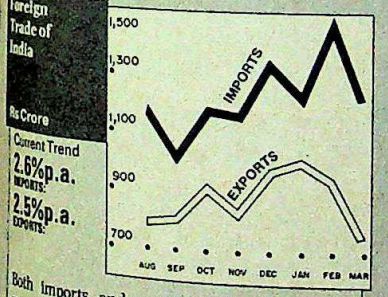
After a sharp increase immediately following the budget, consumer prices went up by only 0.3 per cent last month.



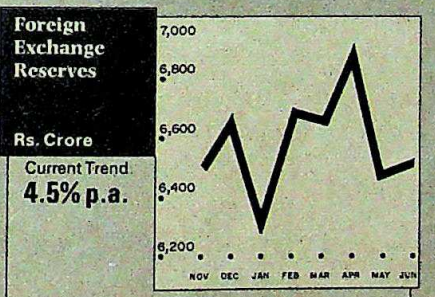
In spite of a large increase in Reserve Bank credit to the Government—money supply remains under control.



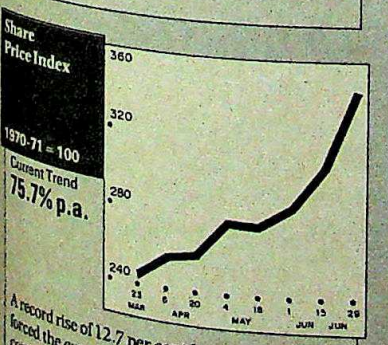
Further indications of a loosening credit policy were evident last fortnight as commercial credit rose by 0.8 per cent.



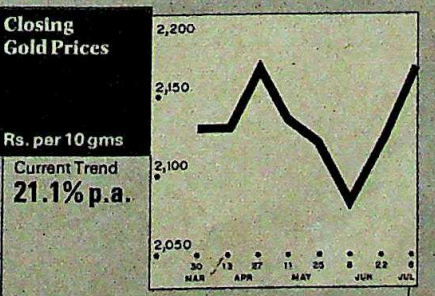
Both imports and exports fell sharply last month. With imports dropping by a greater amount.



An increase of 0.5 per cent last month continued the uncertain trend in foreign exchange reserves, which have been fluctuating considerably.



A record rise of 12.7 per cent last fortnight reinforced the current stock-market boom—major contributors were shipping stocks.



After a short period of incertainty, gold prices shoot up again last fortnight by 2.1 per cent—well above the current long-term trend.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Items with maximum growth in June 1985

	% Growth
Bananas	30.32
Raw Hides	24.96
Aviation spirit	15.91
Tapioca	14.65
Turmeric	14.27
Khandsari	6.30
Fish	5.85
Maize	5.83
Eggs	5.27
Ceramic Tiles	5.21
Sugar	4.10
Cashew Nuts	3.83
Bajra	3.90
Soda Ash	3.64
Cement	2.76
Power-Driven Pumps	2.73
Meat	2.65
Trucks	2.63
Electricity	1.98
Coir Yarn	1.88
Handloom & Powerloom Textiles	1.74
Crude & Natural Gas	1.27
Radio T.V.	1.25
Coir Fibre	1.24
Paper	1.24
Wheat	1.16
Electrical Motors	1.15
Gram	1.13
Mining Machinery	1.05
Rails	1.02
Bolts & Nuts	1.02
Coffee	0.88
Machine Tools	0.88
Transformers	0.86
Gur	0.86
Limestone	0.85
Cotton Yarn	0.83
Pig Iron	0.82
Kerosene	0.81
Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.80
Industrial Instruments	0.79
Mill Cotton Cloth	0.57
Hides	0.55
Tobacco	0.53
Rice	0.53
sugarcane	0.51
Cars	0.51

Of the 139 important series considered, 58 with a weight of 39.2 accelerated while 81 with a weight of 47.4 decelerated.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Coal Thousand Tonnes, June	532.8	483.0
Cement Thousand Tonnes, June	255.0	244.3
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, June	2262	2252
Fertiliser Thousand Tonnes, June	429	367
Thermal Plant Load Factor, June	52.7	47.5

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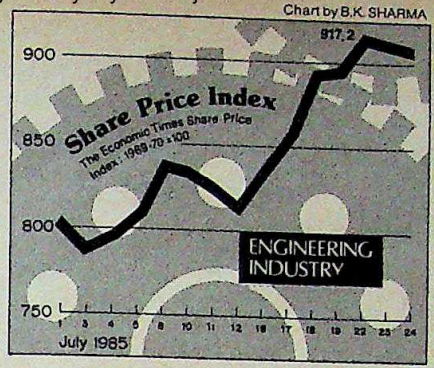
THE MARKETS

Fresh Gains

EQUITY shares are back into a bullish phase, with the downward trend in prices in early July proving as brief as had been expected (INDIA TODAY, July 31). Shares notched up fresh gains from the middle of last month, moving up every day of the following week, and such leaders as Tata Ordinary, Tata Locomotive, Century and Hindustan Motors rose to yet new peaks. Clearly, the stock-market's optimism will not be dimmed, and prices fell briefly last fortnight only as a reaction to fresh curbs imposed by the authorities in terms of exceptionally heavy trading margins.

If the players on the market respond to the Government that 'works faster' by sending scrip prices rising faster too, the reasons are understandable. The Government has announced several concessions for industry in the last few months, and more are expected. For instance, a new industrial policy statement has been promised during the monsoon session of Parliament, and a tax policy statement is expected next month. Both are clearly expected to help industry since the Government is likely to use the statements to outline steps that will increase the pace of industrial development. Also, the rain gods continue to be kind, and the monsoon has revived after a brief lull. Finally, the announcement of a settlement of the Punjab problem can only send the shares of Punjab-based companies heavenward.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Over and above all this, the corporate news has been good. The captains of industry are full of hope, as typified by the statements of the chairmen of both TISCO and TELCO in recent weeks. Companies continue to announce plans for modernisation and diversification, underpinning the general mood of optimism and enthusiasm. TELCO in fact could not restrain itself from making the announcement of an agreement with Honda for producing cars, for it had been stated earlier that an announcement would only be made at the annual shareholders' meeting in mid-August. Even some sick textile companies have announced improved working results. Century Spinning, meanwhile, has now disclosed its intention to diversify into the production of acrylic fibre, thus strengthening its position in textiles.

Inevitably, then, there is a never-before effervescence on the stock-market, and an infectious ebullience of spirit. But the question must be raised as to when share prices will dip again, as they did in early July. The bullish run of the past fortnight was partly a result of the fact that the bears had been virtually banished from the market by bulls who manoeuvred favourable contango charges for carrying contracts over from one settlement period to the next. But the indications now are that the bears will not stay in hiding for long.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	1985 LOW	CLOSE 18.7.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	53.00	29.00	52.00	4.50 +
Associated Cement	592.00	385.00	574.00	1.00 +
Atlas Copco	70.00	37.50	61.00	2.00 –
Associated Bearings	645.00	425.00	640.00	20.00 +
Bajaj Auto	1820.00	855.00	1750.00	75.00 +
Ballarpur	51.00	45.00	51.00	3.00 +
Baroda Rayon	420.00	281.00	394.00	16.00 +
Bata India	88.10	48.00	78.00	2.00 –
Bayer	470.00	305.00	455.00	30.00 +
Best & Crompton	115.00	61.00	107.00	3.00 –
Bharat Forge	95.00	35.50	82.00	2.00 +
Blow Plast	71.00	36.50	58.00	1.00 +
Blue Star	75.00	33.00	70.00	nil
Bombay Dyeing	147.00	66.00	125.00	2.00 +
Brooke Bond	82.00	47.50	80.25	9.25 +
Ceat Tyres	270.00	180.00	270.00	10.00 +
Century Spinning	1095.00	810.00	1085.00	105.00 +
Chloride India	91.00	56.90	88.50	2.50 +
Cinrgia	70.00	32.25	70.00	16.50 +
Colgate	318.00	147.00	185.00	3.00 –
Cyanamid	90.00	33.00	65.00	2.00 –
DCM	62.00	18.00	49.50	2.50 –
Dunlop	38.60	22.30	35.25	2.25 +
Elecon	103.00	54.00	92.00	2.00 +
Escorts	95.00	49.87	91.00	3.00 +
Finolex Cables	41.00	23.00	34.00	1.00 +
Food Specialities	215.00	86.00	197.50	7.50 +
Garware Nylon	62.00	24.50	47.00	5.00 +
Glaxo	68.00	24.00	60.00	4.00 +
Gujarat St Fertilisers	770.00	537.00	720.00	25.00 +
Gwalior Rayon	66.00	53.75	62.00	nil
Hindustan Lever	122.00	51.25	109.00	4.00 +
Hindustan Motors	72.00	37.50	70.00	7.50 +
Indian Dyestuff	375.00	267.50	355.00	15.00 –
Indian Explosives	69.50	33.00	66.00	6.00 +
Indian Hotels	130.00	76.00	125.00	2.50 +
Indian Organic	109.00	50.50	109.00	10.00 +
Indian Rayon	98.00	66.00	89.00	3.00 –
Indrol	210.00	90.50	207.50	27.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	315.00	162.00	302.50	2.50 +
ITC	49.50	29.00	46.30	2.80 +
J K Synthetics	90.00	52.75	90.00	9.00 +
Kinetic Engineering	355.00	128.00	330.00	25.00 +
Kirloskar Oil	38.00	23.00	29.00	1.00 –
Lakme	172.50	74.00	165.00	40.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	165.00	72.00	165.00	20.00 +
Lipton	58.00	26.50	58.00	3.00 +
Lohia Machines	75.00	42.00	70.00	10.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	84.00	48.00	78.00	6.00 +
Motor Industries	660.00	321.25	660.00	60.00 +
National Organic	550.00	240.00	470.00	5.00 –
Nirlon	59.00	37.75	59.00	4.00 +
Peico Electronics	94.50	38.40	94.50	14.50 +
Premier Auto	560.00	322.00	552.00	37.00 +
Ranbaxy	127.50	49.00	110.00	5.00 –
Raymond	116.50	59.00	110.00	9.00 +
Reckitt & Colman	95.00	57.00	85.00	5.00 –
Reliance Industries	231.00	120.00	228.00	18.00 +
Sandoz	82.00	31.00	75.00	2.00 +
Shriram Fibres	77.50	34.00	62.50	4.50 –
SPIC	120.00	43.50	117.00	10.00 +
Tata Steel	995.00	381.00	988.00	98.00 +
Telco	930.00	409.00	925.00	85.00 +
Vulcan Laval	125.00	64.00	115.00	2.50 +
Zuari Agro	91.00	46.00	79.10	1.10 +
20th Century Leasing	84.00	31.50	62.00	3.00 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.6650	8.5451
Austria	Schilling	100	59.8547	58.6896
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.3552	33.3001
Bangladesh	Taka	100	45.6601	45.5903
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1870	8.8438
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1652	1.1511
Egypt	Pound	1	15.1122	15.0922
France	Franc	1	1.3698	1.3449
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.5528	1.5357
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.1307	1.1223
Iran	Rial	100	13.8293	13.7113
Italy	Lira	100	0.6330	0.6281
Japan	Yen	100	5.0597	4.9991
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7793	0.7780
Kuwait	Dinar	1	41.3713	41.1217
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8788	4.8236
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.8013	0.7917
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6517	0.6410
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.7194	3.6712
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7881	0.7819
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.4607	5.4001
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0713	0.0708
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4519	0.4490
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4376	1.4198
Switzerland	Franc	1	5.0903	5.0292
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7113	0.7092
Thailand	Baht	100	45.9928	45.6320
UK	Pound	1	16.8491	16.6972
USA	Dollar	1	12.1650	12.0550
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4013	3.2713
USSR	Rouble	1	15.0129	14.9328
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.1778	4.1299

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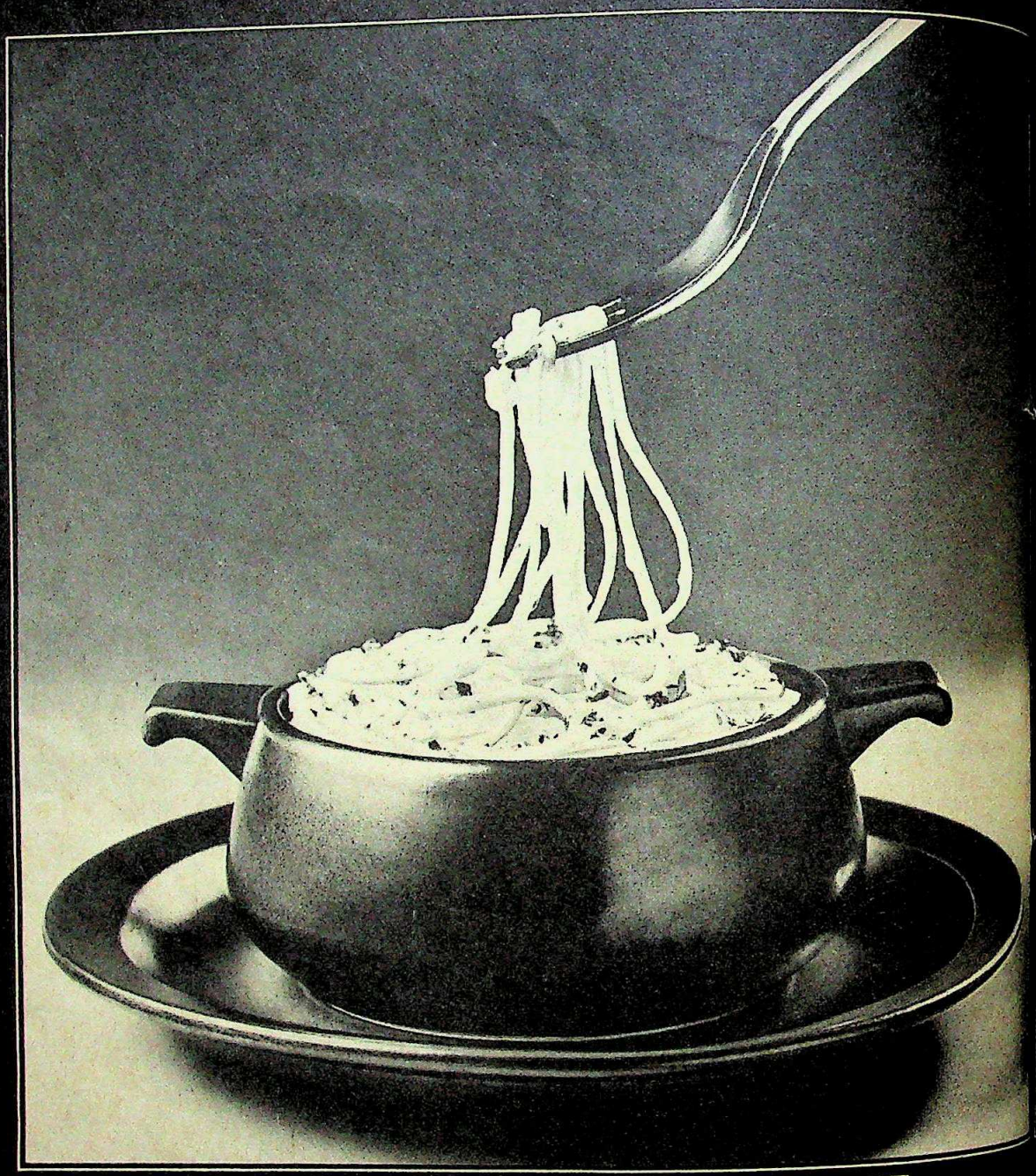

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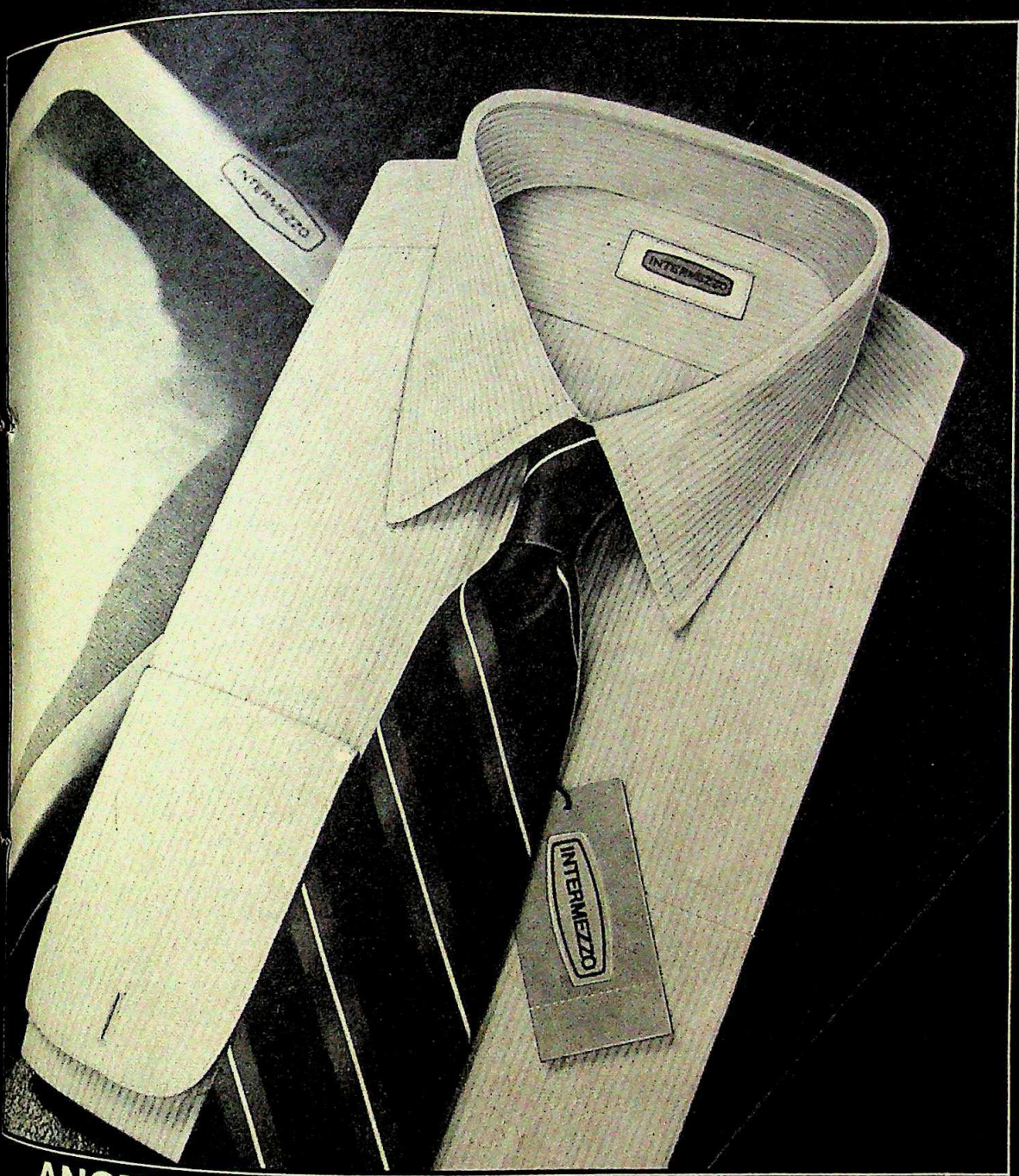

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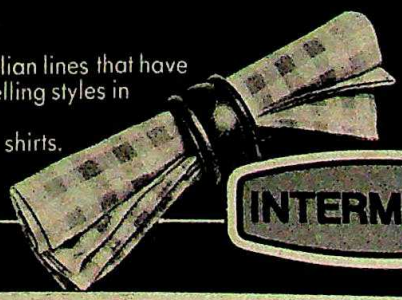

INTERMEZZO

Enterprise/IS/22

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MAINI SHIPPING CO.

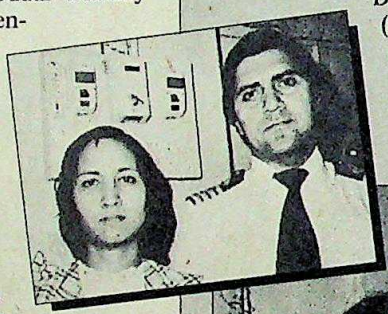
Voyage into Oblivion

Over a month after Nitya Nanak and Nitya Ram, two sister cargo ships belonging to the same shipping company, disappeared simultaneously in the Bay of Bengal without trace, the element of mystery and intrigue surrounding the case has only increased. Till last fortnight, there were still no definite clues as to the disappearance of the ships with their entire crew but maritime experts are convinced of foul play as are the families of the missing seamen. Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA *investigated the facts in Madras and Bombay. His report:*

IN A FIRST floor flat of an old mansion in the Parsi Colony in Dadar a family congregates every evening. Most of the time E.A. Karkaria, his wife and many relations sit in glum silence in eternal wait for a phone call. Over a month after Nitya Nanak, a merchant vessel on which their son was a second engineer, disappeared off Trincomalee in the Bay of Bengal all that binds them to hope is three vague telephone calls, each saying in hushed tones that the ship has been hijacked.

The Karkarias have recorded the third call and play the tape repeatedly on their stereo system. By far the only intelligible whispers appear towards the end of ten-minute noise, static and sounds akin to machine-gun bursts. "The ship has been hijacked." says the mysterious caller and refuses to respond to all queries from the Karkarias. "Could it be a hoax?" ask the Karkarias expectantly. And they obviously do not want no for an answer.

"I am confident my husband is alive. He will come back. There is no evidence of the ship sinking. All I have is this hope."



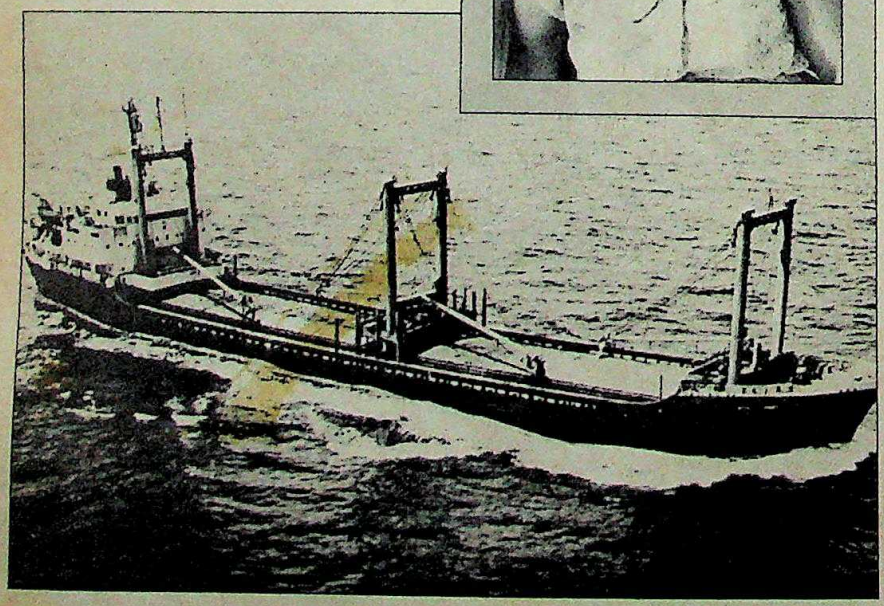
Diana Komal and (inset) a photograph of her with her husband before his disappearance

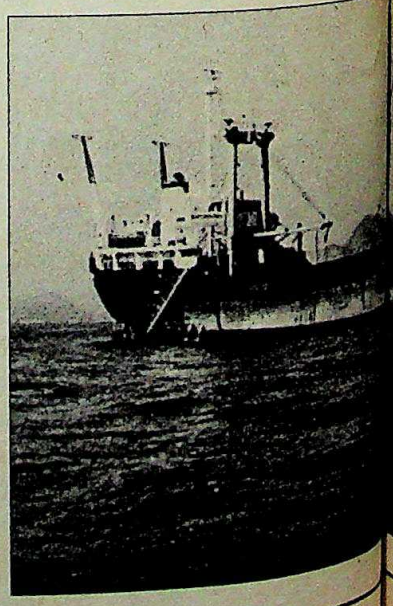
A few kilometres away in a much smaller apartment buried in a far corner of Parel, young Diana Komal also wants nothing but good news. The wife of the second engineer on Nitya Ram, the second merchant vessel of the Maini Shipping Company reported missing since June 21, is expecting her second child in September. "I am confident my husband is alive. He will come back. There is no evidence of the ship sinking. All I have is this hope. How can anyone take it away?" she asks, her gaze repeatedly shifting to the framed picture of her husband on the drawing-room table.

In Juhu Veena Puri, the wife of Captain Krishna Dev Puri, the master of MV Nitya Nanak, is the most optimistic of the lot. "I saw my husband on a disaster-hit ship in Greece. He was so cool. I am confident he is alive," she says and reassuringly mentions how every astrologer she consults says the crewmen are alive and held prisoner somewhere. But there are clouds of despair in the eyes of Prabha Sharma, the wife of L.K. Sharma, the master of Nitya Ram. "They even fished out the Jumbo black box. Can't they conduct proper investigations here and tell us convincingly what happened. This uncertainty is so terrible."

The uncertainty, in fact, is murderous. Five weeks after Nitya Nanak, carrying 5,000 tonnes of salt from Kandla to Calcutta and her sister ship Nitya Ram bringing coal from Calcutta to Tuticorin disappeared in the Bay of Bengal on June 21, the families of their 44 crew members are not sure what happened. No bodies, wreckage or oil slick has been found.

The ships disappeared without a dis-





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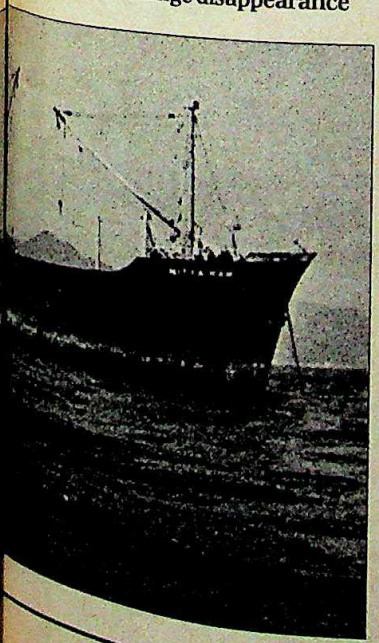
tress signal. As a matter of fact the last message from Nitya Nanak, which mentioned leakage in one of the aft holds, landed at the owners' desk through another ship which picked it up along the way. Nitya Ram lost contact shortly after sending a message saying all was fine and that it was reaching Tuticorin on the morning of June 25.

The government agencies now say they presume the ships are lost. But they cannot say how and where. "Two ships of the same company, disappearing at the same time in the same area, it all leaves a little doubt," says Union Shipping and Transport Secretary P.P. Nayyar. He has already asked the shipping attache in the Indian High Commission in London to get in touch with the International Maritime Investigation Bureau, the reputed shipping fraud investigating agency.

Veteran sailors in the navy, coastguard and merchant marine point out that ships have tremendous resilience and do not disappear like snowflakes in fair weather. They talk in terms of piracy, fraud and mystery and point out, as evidence, the obviously callous manner in which the shipowners, Maini Shipping Company Private Limited (*see box*) reacted to the disappearance of the ships. The owners contacted the Government six days after the ships lost contact and did it through cursory letters that did not even give the speed and the last known position of the ships. On the other hand, they did not even care to inform the families of the crew members who suddenly woke up to the disaster on the morning of

MV Nitya Nanak (far left); and MV Nitya Ram (below): strange disappearance



H.S. MAINI

Rock Bottom

IN A WAY, the Maini Shipping Company can claim to have given Indian shipping its five most eventful weeks beginning with June 21 when contact was lost with Nitya Nanak and Nitya Ram, its vessels in the Bay of Bengal.

While the search had barely begun for the missing ships, the third vessel, MV Nitya Angad which had just been released from arrest in Dubai for carrying rotten onions, ran into rough weather and suffered damage. It is now looking for repair facilities in Bahrain. Of the remaining two ships, Nitya Arjun was rammed by MV Nitya Nidhi, a large Shipping Corporation of India vessel, in Tuticorin, and is undergoing major salvage and repairs. And the last, Nitya Amar last week sent a radio message to Maini saying

HEMANT PITHIWA

Maini: bad luck?

"shipping green seas". A day later it was reported to be sinking off Cochin.

That is a strange record for Maini, who is one of the few Indian sailors with an Extra Master certificate. It is known that Nitya Anand, the first ship he purchased after breaking out on his own, also sank in high seas. "Do you believe in luck?" Maini now asks cryptically trying to explain away his disastrous record.

He is also at pains to point out that in the recession-ridden shipping industry his is one of the three companies to be making profits. His balance sheet shows reserves of Rs 1.09 crore against an equity of Rs 5 lakh "which too accrued mainly because of bonus shares."

The key to his survival obviously lay in insurance reducing. But the reduction was only to the tune of Rs 10 lakh each in the case of Nitya Ram, insured for Rs 1.4 crore, and Nitya Nanak insured for Rs 95 lakh. Incidentally, Nanak is valued at Re 1 in his balance sheet due to depreciation.

Maini denies all suggestions of over-insurance and bad maintenance of his ships. "We are professionals," he says and argues that a ship does not have to be goodlooking to be seaworthy. "We have done nothing wrong. Let the International Maritime Investigation Bureau prove it," he asserts. Here his defence is obviously the certificates of seaworthiness given by Bureau Veritas, the international classifying society of merchant shipping and the Indian Shipping Ministry.

But last fortnight there were indications that Bureau Veritas was panicking. On July 21, a telex message landed at the desk of P.M. Warriar, officer in charge at the Bureau's Bombay office. It said that under instructions from its Paris office the Bureau had withdrawn class on MV Nitya Angad, Maini's vessel that sailed from Dubai to Kuwait via Damam without carrying out adequate repairs.

Normally the Bureau would have had no great reason to hide such a message. But now its officials are most bashful about it. "Please do not ask me which ship it pertains to. Under our rules all dealings between us and shipowners are confidential," pleaded Warriar. The Bureau had also certified Nanak and Ram and there are widespread allegations that the ships were not seaworthy.

Maini could argue that he is not responsible for the competence of the classifying agency and as long as he had the certificates he could not be questioned. But, read with his company's recent record, it may not suffice in itself and the investigators are likely to ask him searching questions.

A decade back, when he launched his firm, he decided to name all his vessels after Swami Nityanand and one of the Sikh Gurus. Today, with his fleet on the rocks and business in doldrums, he will need all their accumulated blessings to keep his head above the water.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Bombay

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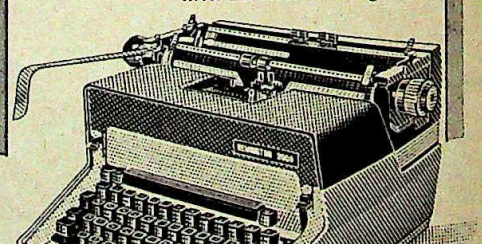

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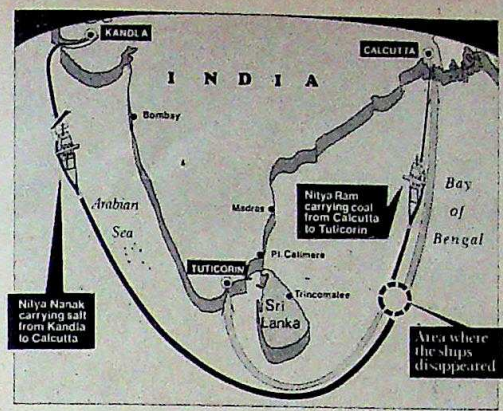
July 4 when *Indian Express* reported the disappearance of the ships.

The search could thus begin only on June 27, almost a week after the ships lost contact and predictably proved futile. On the 27th, as the Coast Guard was first asked to look for Nitya Ram and Nanak, it alerted all its vessels in the seas south of Madras. Recalls Lieutenant Commander R.E. Balasubrahmanyan, the Coast Guard district commander at Madras: "On that day the home minister was at Rameswaram and there were many ships in the area. We alerted them all." This continued for three days as three vessels each from the Coast Guard and the Navy scoured the seas at random in the absence of any firm indication of the search area.

During the next four days, the vessels were joined by an Islander aircraft of the navy carrying out seven-hour search sorties every day, looking at the general area between Madras and Point Calimere (*see map*). Coast Guard and navy spokesmen say they were all along handicapped by the lack of correct coordinates since the shipowners had given them no idea of the last known positions of their vessels.

It was only at 7 p.m. on July 2 that the Bombay-based nautical advisor to the Government of India gave an indication of the search area. Immediately the Navy extended the scope of the search flying in two of its Ilyushin IL-38 aircraft from its base in Goa. This is one of the world's most effective maritime reconnaissance and search aircraft, in the same league as the British Nimrod, and has a radar scan that easily envelopes over 60 square kilometres of the sea at one time. For three days the Ilyushins, joined by the Islanders and a Coast Guard Fokker Friendship scanned the entire region where the ships could possibly have reached. On the sixth, in fact, an Ilyushin also flew right down to the Sri Lanka coast with no sign of the ships, a piece of wreckage, or even an oil slick. "The search parties did not even find a chappal. I do not know how two ships of the same company in the same waters could disappear like that. It is most incredible, unprecedented and we are perplexed," says Director-General of Shipping Niti Bhushan Chakravarti and adds in the same incredulous vein: "A ship does not fall out of the sky like an aircraft. It takes at least half-an-hour sinking. It has an instrument called the autokey which should, on its own, transmit the distress signal."



"I saw my husband on a disaster-hit ship in Greece, he was so cool. I am confident he is alive."

VEENA PURI,
wife of K.D. Puri, master of Nitya Nanak

Chakravarti and his aides are, however, not able to guess with any degree of confidence what could indeed have happened to the ships. Chakravarti points out that ships have disappeared without trace in the past. There is the example of MV Kairali, a Kerala Government vessel which disappeared between Djibouti and Goa in the Arabian Sea. But Chakravarti himself explains that, saying Kairali was lost in extremely bad weather and was carrying a load of iron ore, an extremely hazardous cargo in the sense that it makes vessels list and capsize in rough seas. Similar is the case of the Shipping Corporation of India's much bigger MV Chandragupta which sank without trace in the North Pacific. The ship sent distress signals while battling with 70-foot waves. Its fate was finally sealed as the foodgrain it was carrying absorbed water, germinated and expanded, tearing open the hatches.

Both Nitya Nanak and Ram faced no such conditions. According to Coast Guard and naval officials, the waves in the waters where the ships were likely to be sailing were no more than six to 12 feet high "which such ships should be able to negotiate easily." Moreover, Nitya Ram was carrying coal which, according to Chakravarti, is good cargo since it leaves plenty of air spaces and thus adds to stability and buoyancy. Even the Nitya Nanak cargo of salt is not considered particularly hazardous.

Officials as well as informed sources in shipping circles, however, ask many inconvenient questions. They say, for example, that while it is plausible for a small ship to disappear in mid-ocean without trace, it is unlikely to happen just 90 miles from the coast. "That too when the ships happen to be traversing a coastal route which happens to be a veritable shipping highway," wonders a navy officer. Also, sources point out that all these merchant vessels have hydrostatic lifeboats which break out on their own the moment the ship begins to sink. These are virtually unsinkable. Also, even more than the fact of disappearance without trace, they question how the two ships disappeared without a distress signal. Asks Pheroze Ardeshar Zaveri, a veteran marine engineer from Mazagaon Dock whose son Yezdi was the third engineer on Nitya Nanak: "Tell me how can it happen that six radios should at once lose contact with the world?"

Yet, all this is still conjecture and the point on which the shipowner is being faulted and questioned is the apparently cavalier approach with which he treated the disappearance. "Normally when a ship loses contact for even 24 hours owners constantly keep ringing us up. We are not even able to sleep. But in this case there was no such urgency," says Commander Rama Rao, in charge of the Coast Guard establishment for the whole Madras region. Similarly S.D. Batra, principal officer of the Mercantile Marine Department at Madras, points out that he was informed of the loss of contact with Nitya Nanak on June 26 through a letter left outside his office by a peon of a Madras-based company that happens to represent Maini Shipping Company. No one contacted him or

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even rang him up and it was only after getting the letter that he sent for Captain Samad, the Maini Shipping operations manager, who happened to be in Madras then. Says he: "When your ships get lost you do not write letters." The owners followed it up with another routine letter on June 27 in which they mentioned the loss of contact with Nitya Ram as well.

Worse, officials in Batra's department and in Bombay point out that the company did not give any information regarding the likely position or speed of the ships, making it impossible for them to organise effective search so many days after a likely disaster. Said an official: "After we pestered them repeatedly, all they said was about six knots. Now how casual can you get where the lives of 44 men are involved." It is this kind of evidence which has now prompted the Ministry of Shipping to examine the possibility of registering a case of causing death by negligence against the owners.

However, H.S. Maini, the owner, offers an explanation for everything with aplomb. He says he has the copy of a satellite picture of the area showing cloud formation and offers a hypothesis. Says he: "Maybe, after Nanak began to take water, its master called the master of Ram for help and while they were heading towards each other a cloudburst took place." Dwelling on the same theory further he argues: "And it is possible that while they were heading for each other in such rough weather they collided with each other and sank." More than anything else this argument gets the families of the sailors wild. "My husband was an able master. So was Captain Puri," says Prabha Sharma and asserts angrily, "it is an insult to our poor husbands that they, like kindergarten children accosted each other, had a collision and sank."

The other wives and parents are just as angry. "Our children were working with Maini and he did not even care to inform us of the ships' disappearance. He should have at least come to us to say what happened," complains R.P. Sharma, a TELCO executive whose son Rajesh Sharma was the second engineer on Nitya Nanak, and adds in visible fury: "Now if he comes to this house I will throw him out of the window." Now even Maini admits that "we slipped up in informing the families" but he has no great remorse on that. "The prime minister of India owns Air-India. Tell me how many victims' families has he visited after the Air-India crash?" he brazenly asks. This kind of attitude has obviously left the families extremely bitter. Said Diana Komal: "I met him and asked him why he had not informed me of the disappearance for over two weeks and he said, 'it would not have helped. You are crying now, you would have cried then'."

"Can't they conduct investigations and tell us what happened. This uncertainty is terrible."

PRABHA SHARMA
wife of L.K. Sharma, master of Nitya Ram

"Tell me how can it happen that six radios should at once lose contact with the world?"

PHEROZE ZAVERI
father of Yezdi third engineer Nitya Nanak

It is a combination of this anger and eternal human optimism that has now got the families to organise themselves into a kind of a group for approaching the prime minister and the Shipping Ministry. Last fortnight, they even took a deputation to the chairman of the New India Assurance Company, Maini's insurers, asking them to go slow on the insurance claim. "I told them they do not know where their ships are. How can they talk of compensation and claims," says Pheroze Zaveri who leads the group.

In this web of arguments, hopes and despair, there is still no conclusive clue as to the fate of the ships and crew. The Mercantile Marine Department has already given Maini a certificate that the ships are presumed lost with all the crew-members. But few people in shipping believe that could be.

While all the relatives believe that the ships have been hijacked to some place along Jaffna they have no more to show for it than astrologers' promises and the tape-recording of a vague phone call which could even be a cruel hoax. Veteran sailors, however, do not discount other possibilities. They point to the example of Greece where old ships are often scuttled to make insurance claims. They point out that the general area where the ships disappeared is close to the routes leading to Singapore which has a market for old ships and, farther away, to Taiwan which has the world's biggest ship-breaking industry. But all these theories fail to explain what could have happened to the crew. "The world is too small a place for 44 people to hide. And what is the incentive for them to do so? It looks as if by some freak coincidence both the ships sank at the same time," says Director-General of Shipping Chakravarti.

But people higher up, even in the shipping industry do not seem to agree. They would wait for the opinion of the International Maritime Investigation Bureau. Said a Shipping Ministry spokesman: "Even if we do not ultimately discover a fraud there the case will lead to far-reaching changes in the Maritime Shipping Act, for it is legal loopholes that allow unseaworthy ships to collect class certificates and go round risking lives." The ministry has already set up a group to suggest changes and if it leads to far-reaching improvements the 44 sailors' families would not have suffered in vain.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Madras and Bombay

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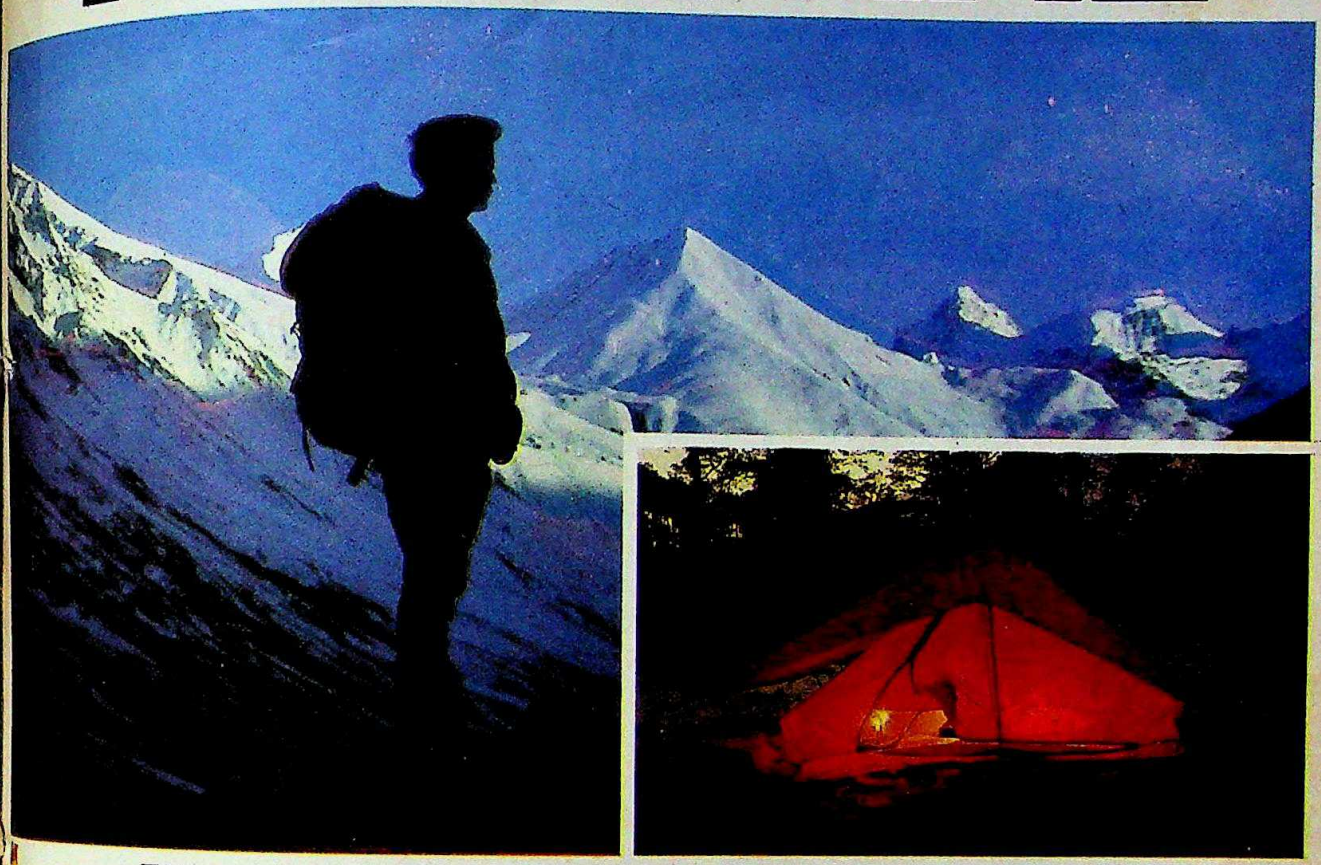
HIMACHAL



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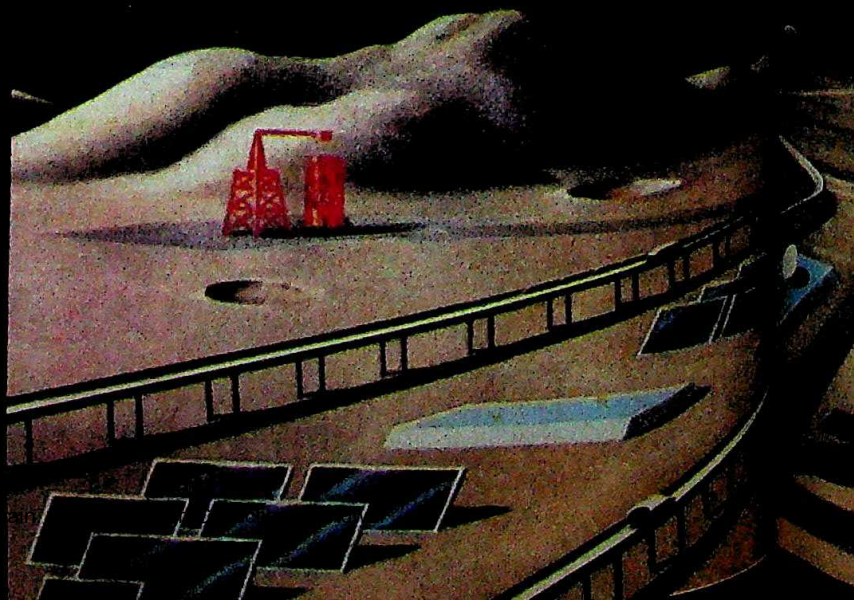

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CABARETS

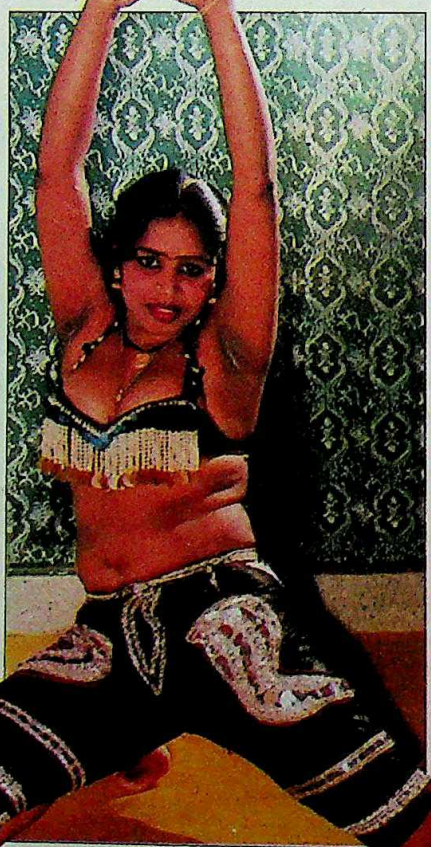
Flooring the Show

SCANTILY-CLAD women gyrating suggestively before predominantly male and largely drunk audiences to the tune of an enthusiastic if off-key band are quite the rage in Kerala. But sex, like politics, attracts its fair share of controversy in this southern state and the rapid spread of nude and semi-nude floor shows in liquor bars and five-star hotels has prompted a motley assemblage of feminists, Christian crusaders and Islamic fundamentalists to demand an end to what is seen as an insult to Indian womanhood. However, for every action there is an opposite reaction, and agitated cabaret dancers are pulling up their G-strings and readying for a battle to defend their flourishing but now threatened livelihood.

> "We will fight to the finish and agitate before the state secretariat if we are put out of work."
>
> LAILA
> cabaret dancer

The issue snowballed in the wake of a ban on the staging of cabaret shows in three hotels in the temple town of Trichur following pressure exerted by the powerful Catholic bishop of Trichur and disruptions caused to similar shows in Calicut. It led cabaret bar owners to hold a hurriedly-convened conference in Cochin last fortnight to debate ways and means to counter the mounting challenge to their trade. However, there appeared little reason to panic. A judgement by a Kalpetta court last year, on a petition against the opening of a bar-cum-cabaret in the district headquarters, allowed shows "provided they did not inv nudity". And in Cochin, a high c judgement debarred a police officer f moving against floor shows being st in hotels and bars. In fact, so long as t was no nudity, artistes and customer not come into close contact and no li was served during shows, the bar own had a cast-iron case.

Says an exasperated Home Mini Vayalar Ravi: "Policemen are hel because as per court rulings, they conduct raids only when the shows obscene." But the law is not the bikini that owners of cabaret bars hid hind. They have also acquired enorm political clout since the business tock 12 years ago with the inauguration of first such shows in Queens Hotel in C cut. Said K.S. Sreekumar, owner



Cabaret dancers (from left) Mum Leena and Laila: up in arms

Photographs by C. RATHEES

Queens: "Ov were conve competition of the hotels rolving eve crowds went prompting s ring in eve trip-tease ac prominent crowd loves dances and nobody will depend on re

The econ pretty reveal dancer work Vegetable and liquor. Add to t Rs 3,000 per or "dadas" to some custom capacity of 7 sion is Rs 30 g the festival liquor and b normally high costs Rs 30. I Rs 15,000 a stands to ma to fill lakh d crowd. Said the best far called the "T cents the caba a gold-mine. tainment tax enormous an only reason are in Kerala

While M discontinue raids and p complain of h per month a and politicia help nobody

This is p counts a lot partner in a c another offic private firm the unholy women pro feminist Sug "Cabaret in against our cost," she sa by picketing drum which shows. Th action by h acts being st

However

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Queens: "Overnight thatched tea-shops were converted into cabaret joints and competition became so intense that some of the hotels were staging live sex shows involving even lesbian acts." Predictably, crowds went wild over the performances prompting some floor show managers to bring in even minor girls to engage in strip-tease acts with male dancers. Said a prominent cabaret bar owner: "The crowd loves only crude and titillating dances and if we cannot provide them nobody will come for the show. We depend on repeat audiences."

The economics of the cabaret are also pretty revealing. The monthly salary of a dancer works out to about Rs 2,000 plus free food and boarding for her and a guardian. Add to that a band which would cost Rs 3,000 per month and a few bouncers or "dadas" to handle excitable or troublesome customers. Each hall has a seating capacity of 70-80 and the rate of admission is Rs 30 going as high as Rs 60 during the festival season. Then there is the liquor and beer revenue which is uniformly high since just one bottle of beer costs Rs 30. In short, on an investment of Rs 15,000 a month, a cabaret owner stands to make a phenomenal Rs 75,000 to Rs 1 lakh depending on the area and the crowd. Said Mohan, who was running the best family restaurant in Cochin called the "Tandoor" before he also got into the cabaret bandwagon: "Cabaret is a gold-mine. There is no sales tax or entertainment tax and the income from it is enormous and mind-boggling. That is the only reason why it is spreading like wildfire in Kerala."

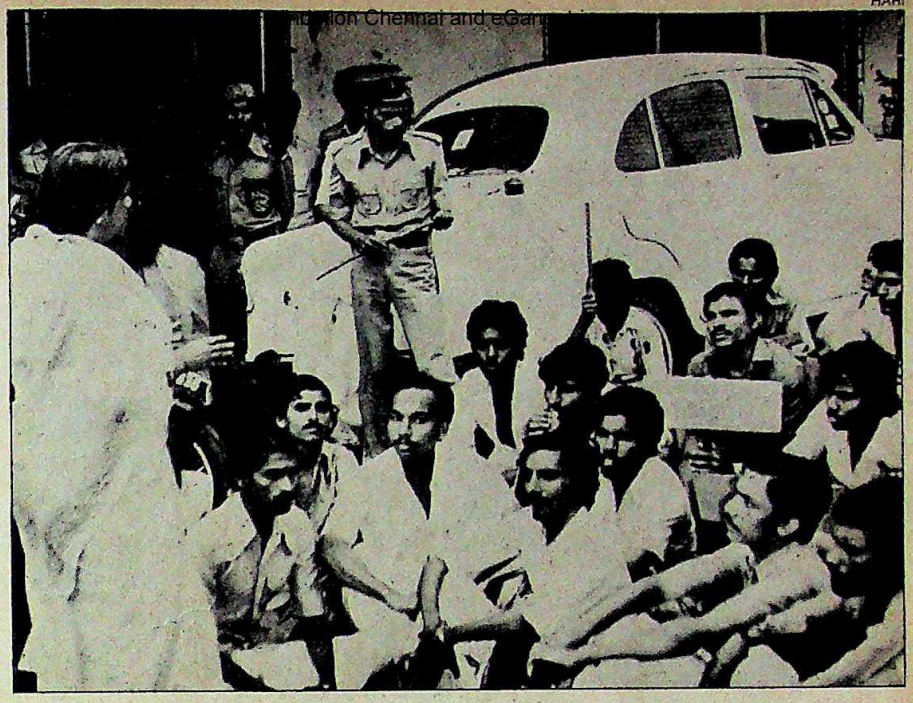
While Mohan had to subsequently discontinue the shows following police raids and public outcry, other owners complain of having to shell out Rs 25,000 per month as hush money to the police and politicians because without police help nobody can run a cabaret in Kerala.

This is precisely where political clout counts a lot. A state minister's son is a partner in a cabaret joint in Cochin while another officer left his lucrative job with a private firm to start his own cabaret joint. The unholy mix of politics, business and women prompted social worker and feminist Sugatha Kumari to cry full stop. "Cabaret insults womanhood and it is against our culture. We will stop it at any cost," she said and suited action to words by picketing the Dwarak Hotel in Trivandrum which had just started staging floor shows. This followed more physical action by her followers against cabaret acts being staged in Calicut and Cochin.

However, cabaret dancers reacted with alarm. Said Laila, a cabaret dancer in the Dwarak Hotel who is planning to form an association to lead the fight against Sugatha: "We will fight to the finish. We will agitate before the state secretariat if we are put out of work." Her militant reaction was understandable. Most of the dancers are unlettered and this is perhaps the only kind of job where their lack of literacy does not count. Said another dancer Leena: "Please ask Sugatha Kumari to get me a decent job that will get me Rs 2,000 a month with my qualifications—I have never even attended kindergarten."

> **"Cabaret insults womanhood and it is against our culture. We will stop it at any cost."**
>
> SUGATHA KUMARI
> *Feminist*

The 1,600-odd girls who perform all over Kerala are based in Kodambakkam in Madras and get work through agents. Says Laila: "The difference between us: and Silk Smitha is that millions see her dancing with a G-string on the screen while we do it in front of about 50 people." Even the bandboys are apprehensive. Says Ravichandran, a crooner: "Most of us bandboys are graduates and since we could not get any other job we had no choice but to take this up." Sugatha Kumari has promised to give them "big jobs" but has not gone beyond that vague assurance.



HARI

Sugatha Kumari and picketers at Hotel Dwarak: making it hot

Fear over the gathering storm has largely prompted the formation of an All-India Cabaret Defence Committee headed by an advocate K. Sasidharan and K. Premchandran, the general secretary. The committee represents about 500 cabaret dancers in Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra and intends to fight their case legally and in public forums. In fact, Sasidharan has gone on record to state that if the dancers had violated any laws governing public decency, it was up to government agencies to take proper action. Individuals and voluntary institutions could not take the law into their own hands. "It would not be correct to character assassinate this art on the assumption that in some hotels some artistes are performing in a vulgar way."

Meanwhile, the pressure on Chief Minister K. Karunakaran and Home Minister Ravi is increasing with church and social workers demanding a decision on the spreading menance. Sugatha Kumari has already more demonstrations planned out leading Ravi to chuckle: "I hope the cabaret girls do not gherao me in front of the secretariat." Whether that expresses a fear or a secret wish, it looks like Laila and her G-string-clad sisters are finally going to make their debut fairly soon in the hallowed state secretariat.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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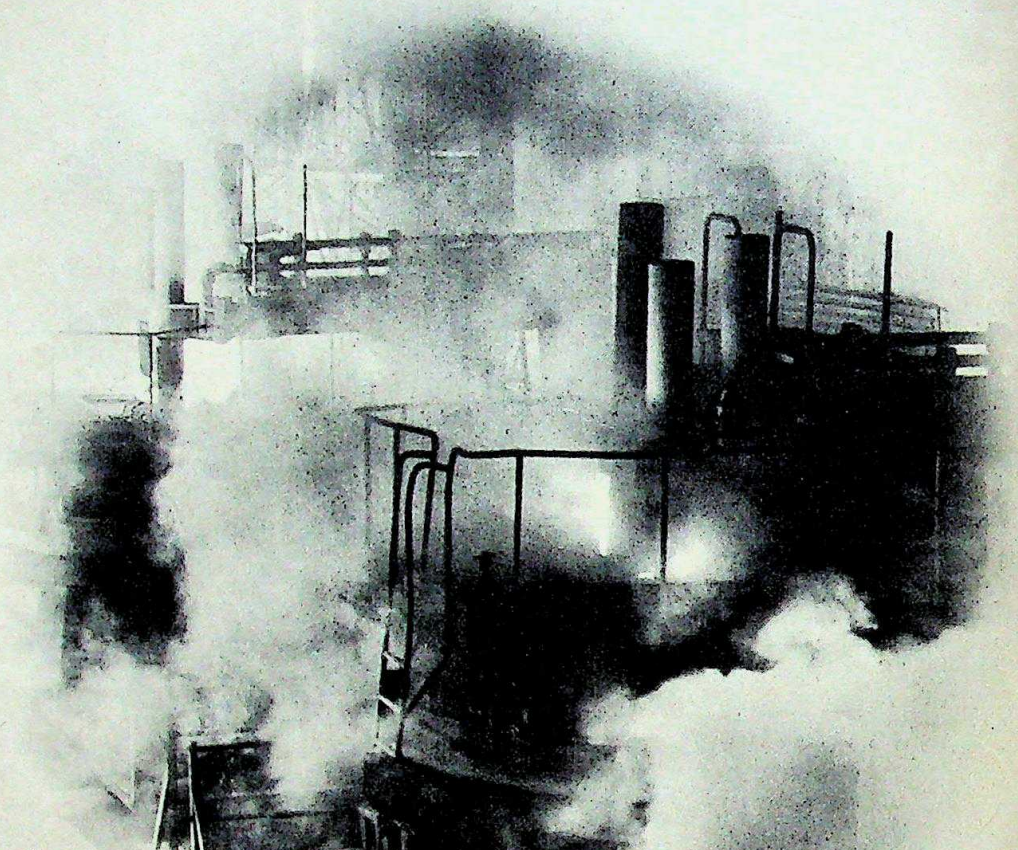
Get away from a grey world



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LAKSHMI KANT JHA

Pushing for Reform

FOR A man who might be expected to wield the big broom, he couldn't on the face of it be a more unlikely candidate. In a government led by a man barely in his forties, he is already into his seventies. In an environment in which the keyword is action, he has held no executive post in several years. Where new blood is sought to rejuvenate tired old systems of government, he's a man who has been at the top of precisely that government on and off for more than two decades.

Yet the appointment last fortnight of L. K. Jha, 71, as advisor to the prime minister for administrative reform had an inevitability to it. Jha spent three years as head of the Economic Administrative Reforms Commission (EARC) which produced a large number of reports on diverse subjects. He has been principal secretary to Lal Bahadur Shastri when he was prime minister, governor of the Reserve Bank of India, ambassador to the United States, governor of Jammu and Kashmir, and has served in several international positions including the Willy Brandt Commission which in the '70s looked afresh at the problems of global development.

Such a range of administrative experience has given him insights into the working of bureaucracies which few can match. More important, his ideas seem to be very much in line with the outlook that has come to prevail in North Block and South Block. "There's now a new wind, the buzzword is liberalisation," he says approvingly.

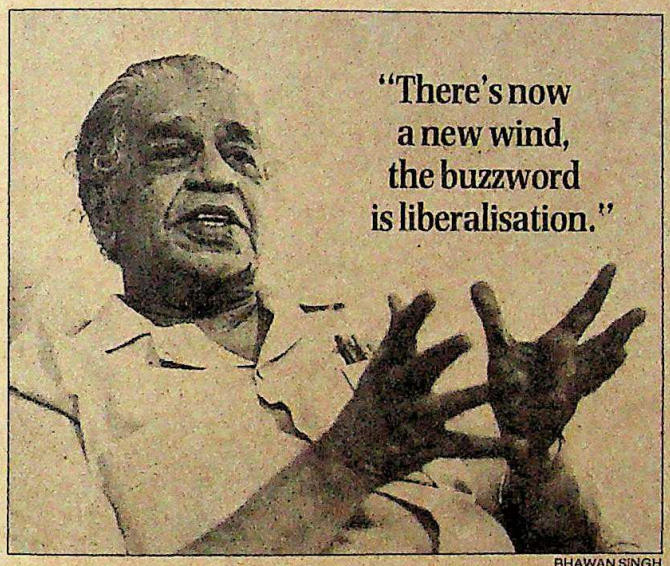
A few days after his appointment last fortnight, he spoke to INDIA TODAY. *Excerpts from the interview:*

On his appointment:

Administrative reforms either hurt someone, dislocate work or call for more effort and administrators don't necessarily like this. There is a streak of conservatism in them and the compulsions for change are voiced much more outside the administration than inside it. Between things as they are and things as reformers like to see them, there is an obvious point of conflict and often this takes a political decision to overcome. My appointment indicates that the prime minister wants reforms. He is interested enough in administration to want to make those critical decisions to push reform.

On the working of government:

In internal working, the Government needs reforms of a different kind. For example, how a case or file is handled. If you have a clear-cut set of principles which can be applied at relatively junior levels, if the principles are clear enough, then accountability is possible. This requires clarity. With us, there has been a trend of treating each case on merit, so no one can say yes or no without having sufficient authority. This means everything goes up to ministers, as no one below is willing to say anything definite. Why? There is mistrust of officials among politicians and some decisions, let's face it, are politically motivated, influenced by political considerations so that politicians want to see them.



BHAWAN SINGH

On delays in government:

The system at present is that a file will go to, say, five concerned ministries which means it will be passed up to five ministers and a bunch of divergent views will come in which can then be resolved only in the Cabinet! Now, while the power to say yes is limited to the top, the power to delay or ask silly questions is widespread, because officers are expected to say something. What is the poor bureaucrat to say, he can't give a red signal or a green, he's forever on amber.

On Corruption:

When I met him, the prime minister said he was very worried about the problem of corruption.

I look at corruption in two broad categories. First, the one who pays benefits more than the fellow who receives. Second, the man who is entitled to something but has to pay to get it. There are two types of remedy. To stop speed money you must stop delays. If the income tax officer has to make a refund but is asking for a bribe, then a computer can easily keep track of refunds issued and delays, and throw out instances where refunds are not being made and ask the officer why not.

In clearances, the laws should be clear and should be applied not by the Government but by people who can be held responsible for them. In making building plans conform to the municipal laws, well, if the laws are clear enough, why should not registered architects certify that they do. If the certification is found to be wrong, they can lose their registration. Why should the Government take the responsibility for saying yes or no, for certifying something. The Government must frame clear laws, and then enforce them. This will help simplify laws and administration, and will change people's attitudes.

On the problem of overstaffing of government:

You can't retrench in the Government, but you can allow for wastage and staff properly in new departments. My answer is that instead of clerks have more teachers. I would say, transfer employment from non-productive to productive uses.

On the fate of his EARC reports:

I found secretaries sympathetic; the difficulties were at the level of ministers because my reports meant that decisions would have to be taken lower down or would simply not come to government.

On his approach to the job:

I propose to go into how the secretariat functions, work methods, consultation process, how files go up and down, controls and regulations and the work of agencies that deal with the public. I want to avoid writing reports. Instead, I want to focus on areas of reform which would be possible to implement on their own. I'm not sure if it is an achievable task.

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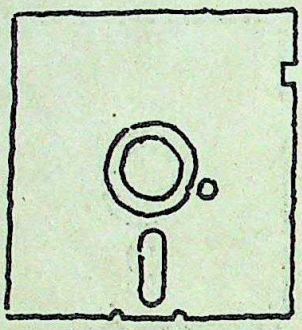
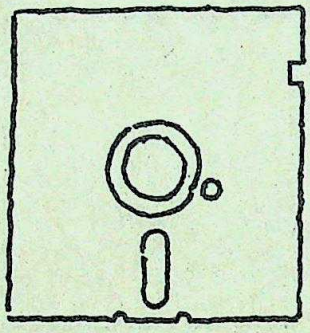
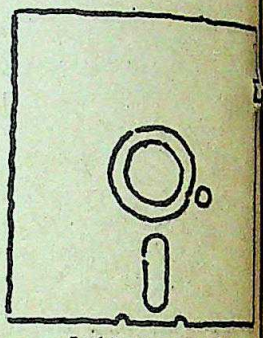


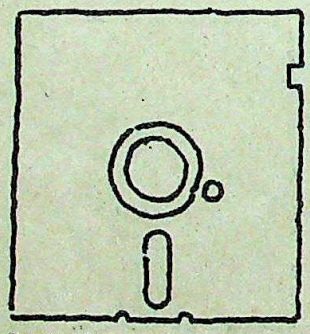
Accountants can draft financial statements.



Travel agents can process requests within seconds.



Architects can study scale models.



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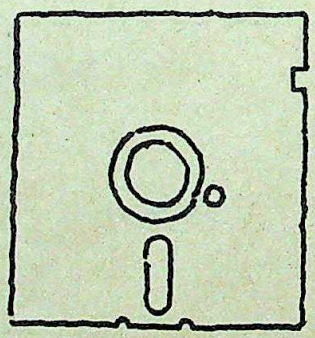
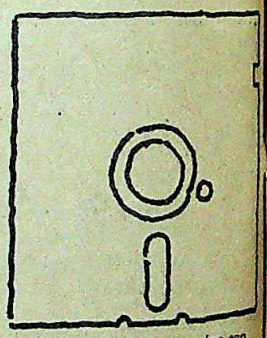


All secretaries can edit, rewrite, rephrase letters.



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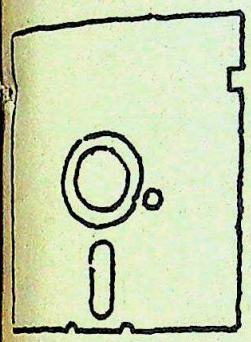
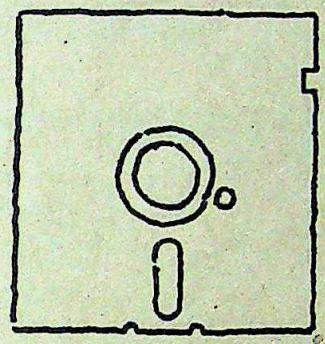
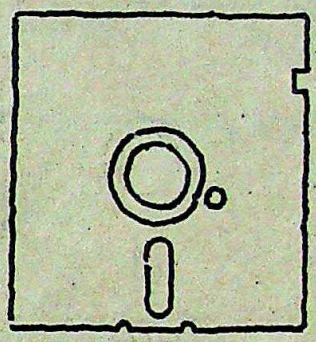


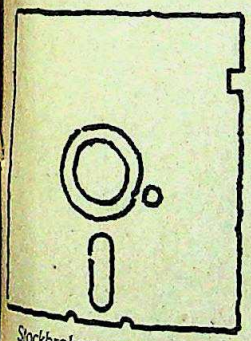
Ad agencies can chalk out media plans.



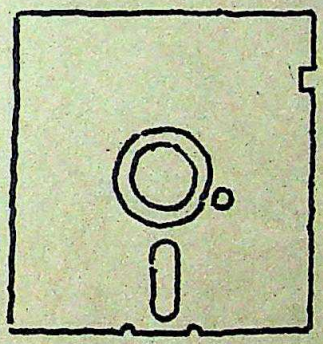
Administrators can compare actuals with forecasts.



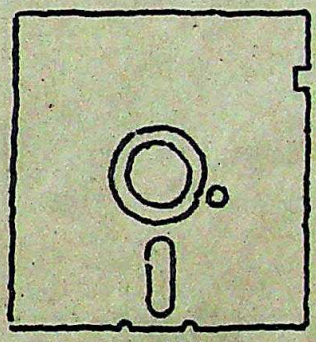
Executives can get three-dimensional graph charts.



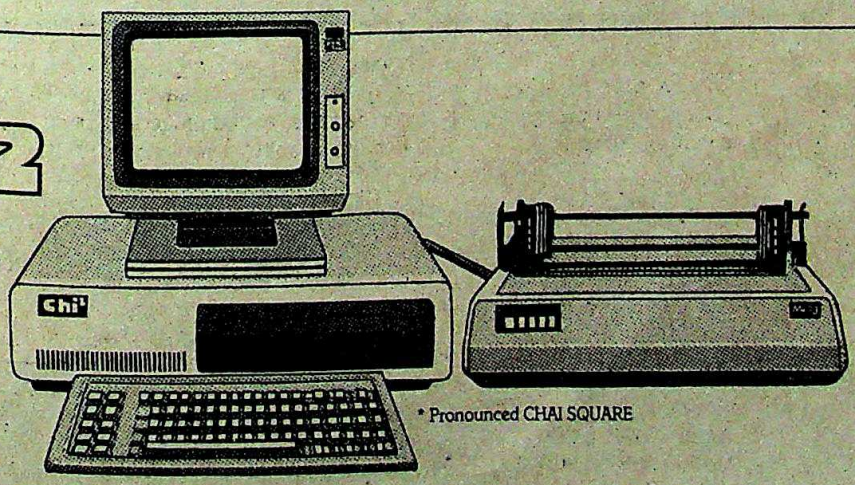
Stockbrokers can evaluate investment options.



Public hospitals can store case histories.



Magazine publishers can use it in circulation depts.



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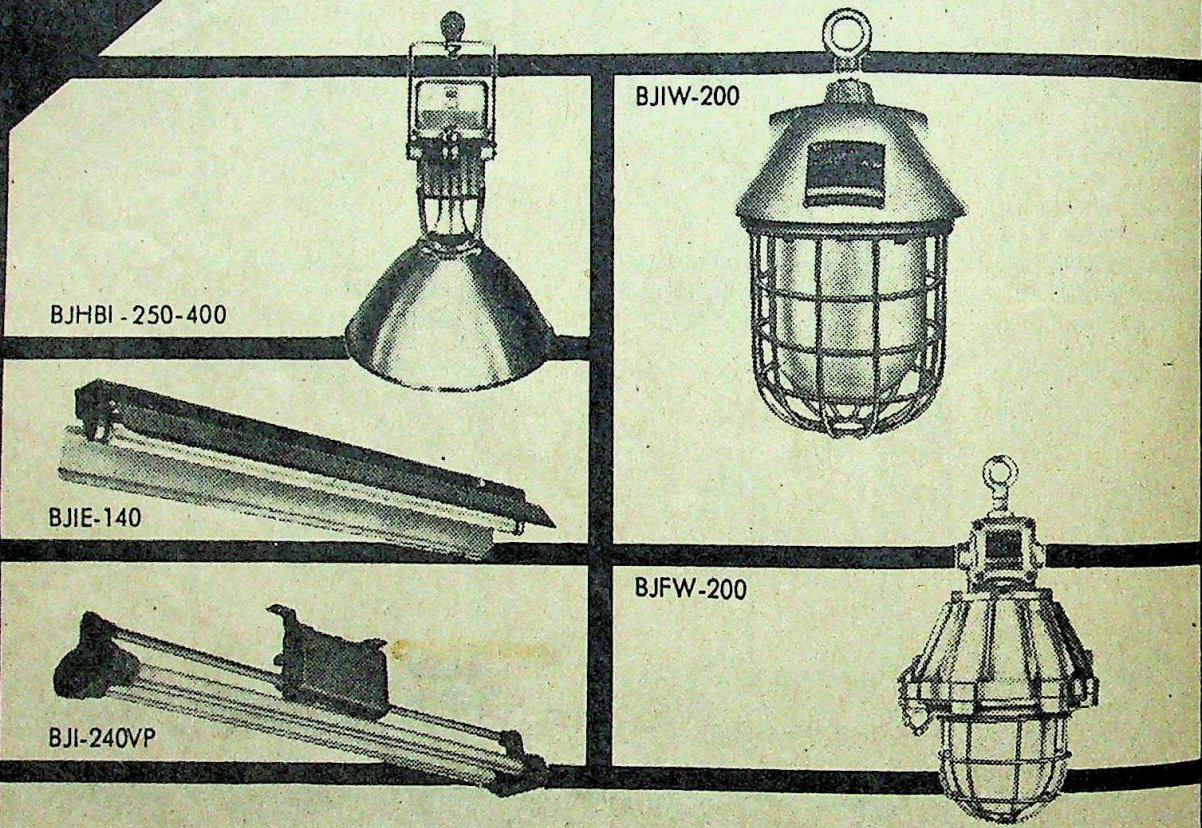

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MAHUA ROYCHOWDHURY

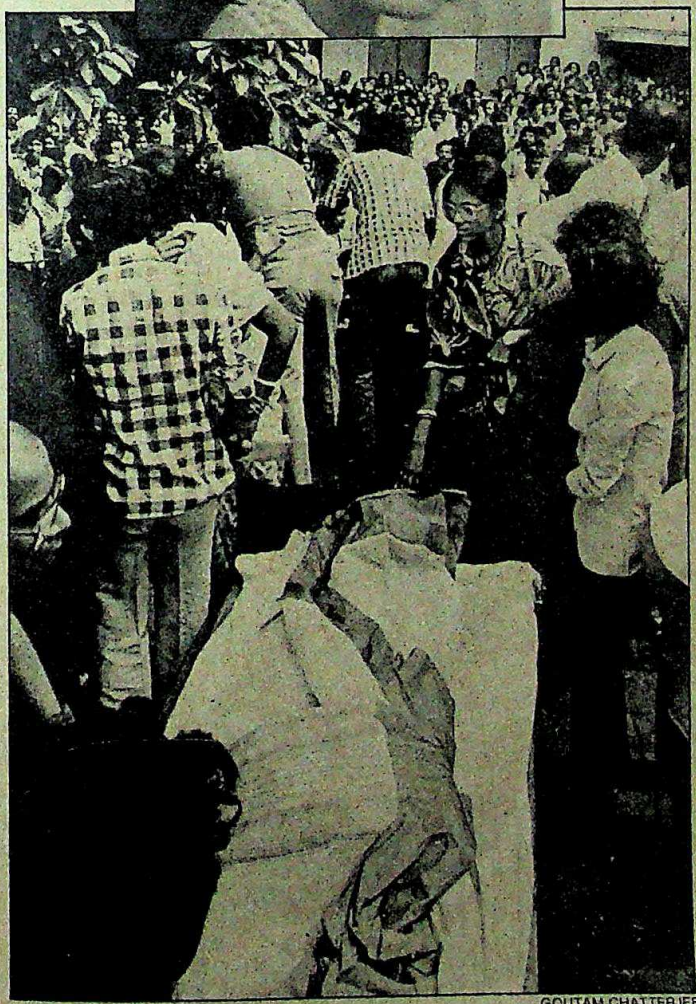
Mysterious Death

IT WAS an end similar in all but one thing to the tear-jerkers in which she had acted—its illogicality. Mahua Roychowdhury, 32, the reigning queen of the Bengali screen, who died last fortnight in a Calcutta hospital after battling for 10 days against third-degree burns, created an even bigger splash in her death than at any time in her successful career. Police doubt if she could have suffered burns due to the bursting of an oil-stove, as testified to by her husband and later on by herself. And the suicide theory—however tempting—falls flat on its face due to lack of tangible information regarding the possible motive for such an action.

By far the busiest actress in the Bengali film industry, Mahua had 15, or nearly a third of the total number of Bengali films, riding on her shoulders at the time of her death. She had almost all by herself put the Bengali cinema on a come-back trail with *Lal Golap* in 1983 and *Shatru*, last year's runaway success which grossed a whopping Rs 90 lakh on a modest investment of Rs 6 lakh. Her performance in respected movie director Tapan Sinha's television film, *Aadmi Aur Aurat*, telecast in June, won her critical acclaim—a gain that corrected her reputation of merely filling the box-offices coffers. Suicide would have been too unthinkable a turn of event in the middle of such a steep and dramatic ascent.

According to the statement of her husband Tilak Chakravarty, Mahua had returned with him from a party at the next-door flat of film director Anjan Chowdhury (the maker of *Shatru*) around July 12-13 midnight when the accident happened. Mahua, said Chakravarty, had lighted the stove when it suddenly burst, engulfing her in fire. However, the version did not square with the fact that the stove had been found intact by the police later on. There wasn't a drop of kerosene oil in it whereas doctors at the emergency ward of Calcutta Medical Research Institute, a private hospital near Mahua's home at Behala in the outskirts of Calcutta, said that she stank of kerosene when she was brought there.

Mahua Roychowdhury and (bottom) her funeral: reopened case



GOUTAM CHATTERJEE

However, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the West Bengal Police closed the case on July 18 after Mahua had herself given a statement that the fire had been accidentally caused. Significantly, she did not mention any explosion. But, goaded by the noise made in the local media and persistent doubts expressed by some members of the film industry who knew the actress closely, the state police reopened the case shortly after her death. One of the first things they did was to interrogate afresh Chakravarty, 38, and Mahua's ex-dancer father, Nilanjan Roychowdhury, who lived with his married daughter and, with his son-in-law, managed her finances. A CID official told INDIA TODAY that one of Mahua's several joint accounts kept in banks with her husband and father was closed at her bidding only four days before the incident.

Mahua's seven-year-old son, Tamal, is still too dazed to speak. Her friend, starlet Ratna Ghoshal, who spent sleepless nights at the hospital ever since Mahua was admitted, said nothing beyond her conviction that "it was a plain and simple accident". But police claim they have cracked some witnesses who have admitted that Mahua and Tilak had drunk a lot that evening, and that the fire incident was in fact preceded by a bout of drunken brawling in the presence of the father, the child and their two domestic helpers. One investigator hinted that heavy kitchen utensils were used by the couple against each other. This claim was *prima facie* supported by two pieces of evidence: the post mortem revealed marks of haematoma under Mahua's eye and on her back, suggesting that she had been badly bruised; and Tilak had a badly sprained ankle which he said he had got while trying to rescue his wife.

Police say they have also dug up evidence of a chronic cycle of depression and alcoholism in Mahua's personal life, caused reportedly, by her fling with a producer in Bangladesh and resentment at being kept on a short leash by her husband and father, the manager-duo. Nilanjan, for that matter, was totally de-

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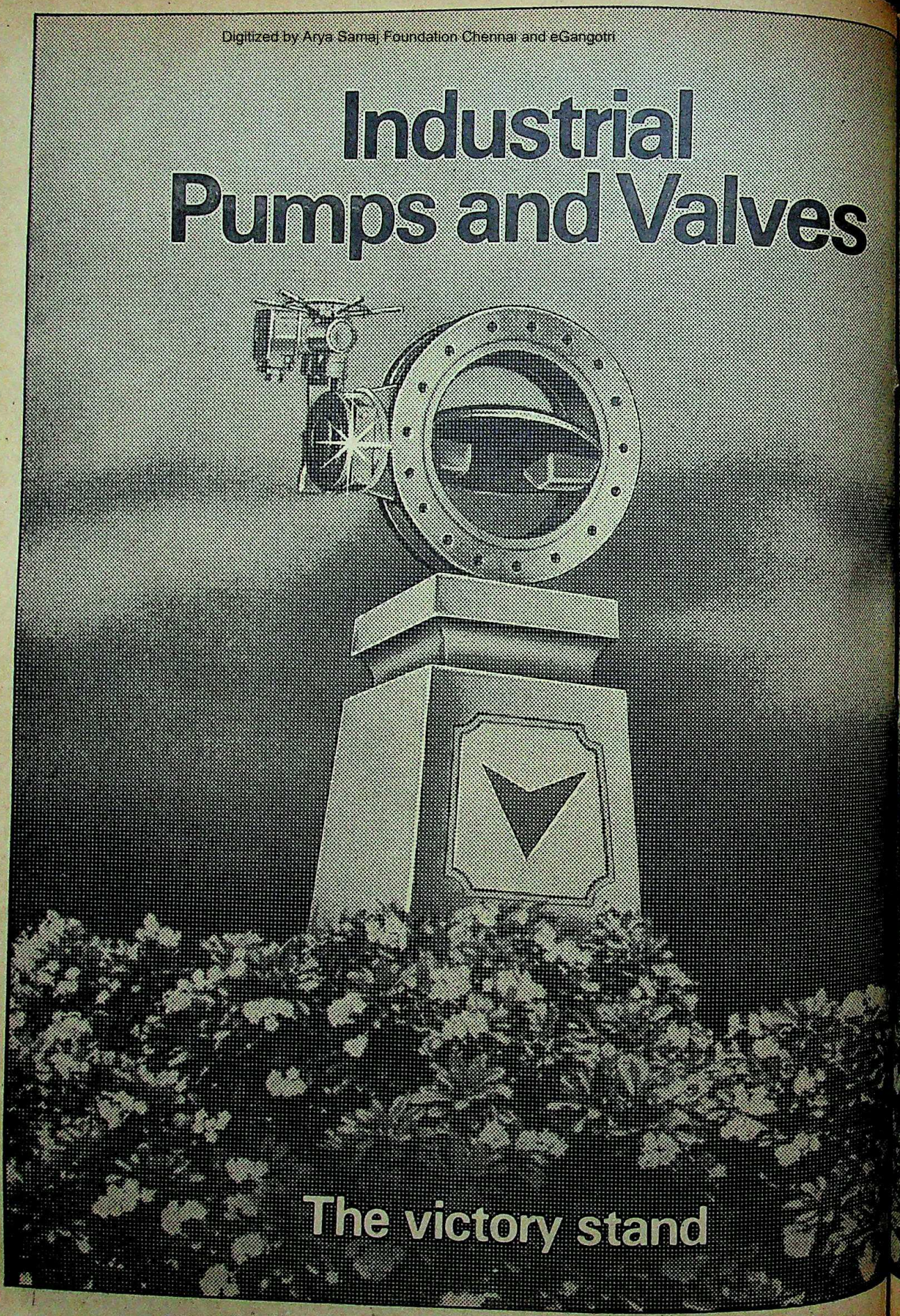

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pendent on his daughter and lived with her, leaving his wife in a cheap and shabby home in the less affluent suburb of Dum Dum. Tilak, who gravitated to films as a child artiste in the 50's, was a subsequent failure in showbusiness and settled for a small job in a bank. "There is no doubt that Mahua was their bread ticket," said a fellow actress who would not go on record but emphatically claimed that it could not have been an accident.

CID officials have also discovered that Mahua had once earlier tried to kill herself. "If we accept it was a case of suicide then everything else falls in place, including her statement which could have been an attempt to cover up the embarrassment," the officials say. Their reasoning is that Mahua was drunk, and overcome by depression after the fight, set herself on fire. As the Special Inspector General of Police (Crime), Rathin Bhattacharjee, explained: "Now it is entirely up to the forensic department to determine whether accidental death can be totally ruled out."

Specialising in plain-as-Jane girl-next-door roles, Mahua neither had the glamour of a Suchitra Sen, Bengal's screen legend, nor the talent of a Madhabi Mukherjee, the most famous of the Satyajit Ray heroines. But she was luckier than perhaps all of them as she could create an empathy with the audience for her sheer ordinariness and got her slot readymade in the most popular of Bengali pot-boilers, the domestic drama. Ironically it was through Suchitra Sen's personal make-up man that Mahua's father, who had been long planning a career in films for his daughter, got her the first screen role—that of a zestful teenager in the famour 1971 chart-buster called *Shriman Prithwiraj*.

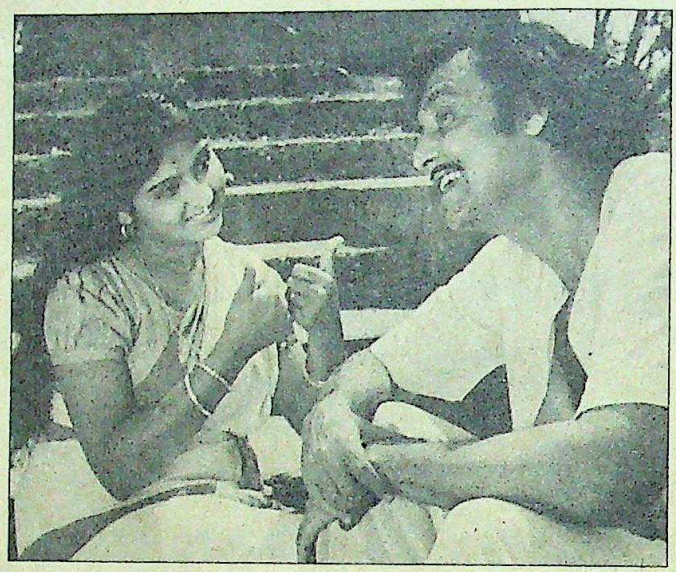
But her career nosedived shortly afterwards and even getting paired with the famed Uttam Kumar could not save her career. She was married to Tilak in 1976 and was cast with him in yet another unsung bomb. And, as recession hit Tollygunj, the nerve centre of the Bengali film industry, Mahua fared no better than others going along with the on a downhill course, except for flashes in the pan like *Sheshraksha*, *Pipasa* and *Sabitri Satyaban*—films that did relatively well in the districts. But she came back with a vengeance in a film called *Dadar Kirti*, directed by Tarun Mazumdar, the maker of *Shriman Prithwiraj*. Running for 50 weeks in Calcutta, the film pulled up the moribund Bengali cinema by the boot-straps. Nor did Mahua have to look back again. She bagged the *Filmfare* best actress award for regional films for her performance in *Dadar Kirti*.

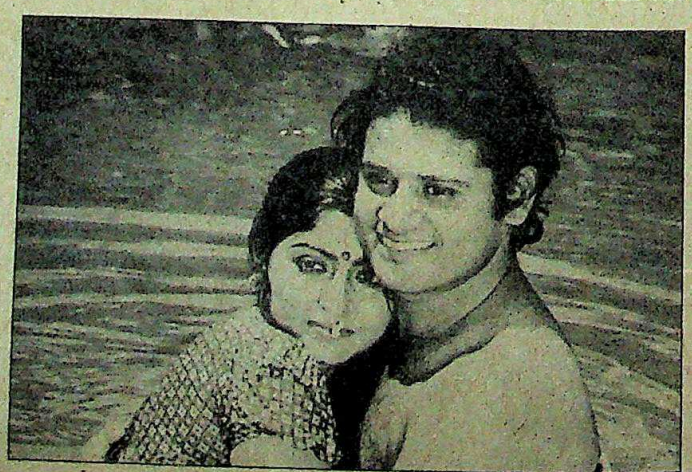
Financial success in low-budget regional films compares very poorly to success on a national scale, and actors and actresses in Bengali films are often cheaply hired. Even the *guru* of Bengali cinema Uttam Kumar, never commanded much more than a lakh of rupees in the high noon of his career. Even films in colour are generally made within a budget of around Rs 10 lakh. Despite such daunting circumstances, Mahua could raise her fees pretty fast and to heights that no other Bengali actress has ever reached. She was reported to be demanding, and getting, around a lakh of rupees per film from this year.

Maybe success was first delayed and when it came it did all at a time for Mahua, the daughter of a lower middle class family, in the money-starved Bengali film industry suddenly recovering from its protracted coma. But after having relied so heavily on her, the industry will be hard put to get another pair of crutches to hobble on. "Stars don't grow overnight," said Tarun Mazumdar who should know. But the shattering loss to Tollygunj apart, the mysterious burning to death of Mahua Roychowdhury will remain a taut suspense drama till all the elements in it are properly explained away.

—SUMIT MITRA with INDRANIL BANERJIE in Calcutta

Stills from Mahua's films: critical acclaim





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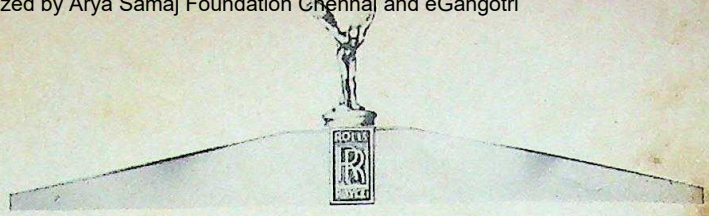

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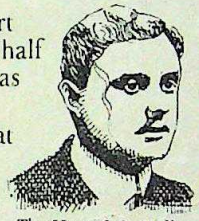
Royce had a car but who was to ...ll it?



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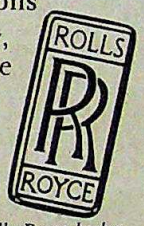
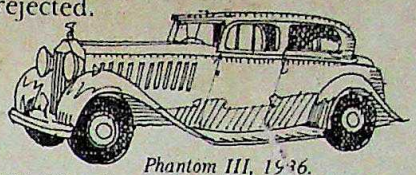
Rolls-Royce Revelations

Some extraordinary, some surprising, some well ... just 'British'!



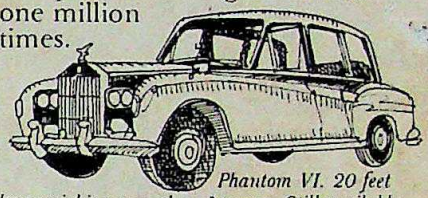
The Rolls-Royce badge. After the death of Royce, the red letters were changed to black.

- Traditionally, the wood panels and trimmings of Rolls-Royce cars are layered with fine veneer of circassian walnut (from the Caucasus mountains). If a wood panel were to get damaged, the owner would merely have to quote reference numbers on the panel, to get a replacement prepared with veneer from the same log(!) as a portion of each of the original logs is kept in storage.
- Steering gears are tortured by smashing them against concrete blocks for 30 hours. If they then ... not meet standard measurements they are rejected.



Phantom III, 1936. 105 mph performance in quiet, unruffled dignity.

- "Squirming Irma" a 200-pound load squirms about on sample seats to check how the seat settles with use. It reproduces the effects of a person moving on the seat one million times.



Phantom VI. 20 feet long weighing more than 3 tonnes. Still available.

- Engineers at Rolls-Royce check bearing noise in assembled engines with a stethoscope.
- While recessed door handles are in vogue, Rolls-Royce still prefer push-button handles on the exterior. Why? So that doormen at upper crust hotels like the Dorchester can open them without fumbling and losing their composure.

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- Rolls-Royce never quotes the horsepower of their cars. All you'll get from them is a terse "sufficient".

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Rolls-Royce is one of the last bastions of perfectionism and individual attention. In these days of mass manufacture, economies of scale rule the industry.

Maybe one day, the differences between a Rolls-Royce and other premium cars may become very very slim. However, it is unlikely even then, that any other car will ever evoke the same reverential admiration.

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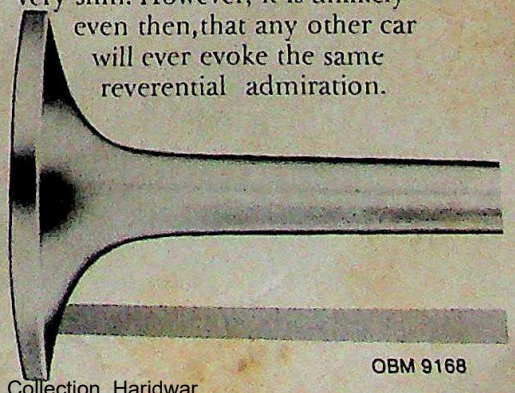

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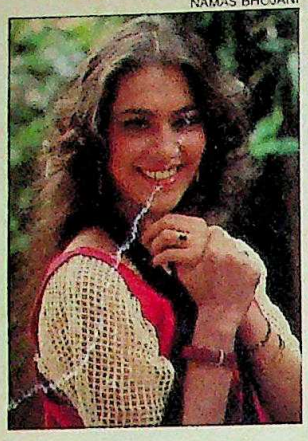
NAMAS BHOJANI



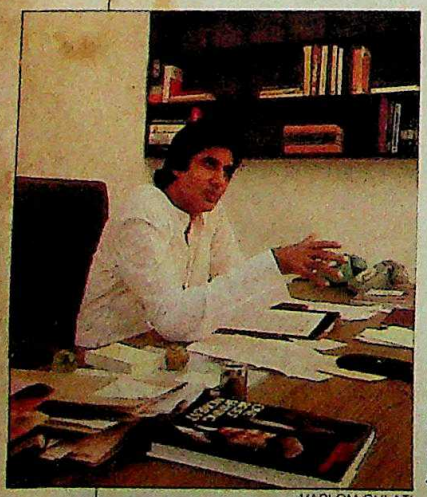
Priya: angry young woman

◆ Sunday mornings have become the time to get it all out, to damn the taximen and wham the postmen. The angry young woman is **Priya Tendulkar**, 27, who as *Rajani* has become the country's best-known middle-class housewife. But Rajani is no flibbertigibberti woman, she's the whir-stir-get-lost-sir kind of lady sticking her nose— and it's a long one—into everyone else's business, teaching all the mean misters of bureaucracy a tough lesson. Last fortnight, however, Rajani had heated up gas cylinder men to boiling point and driven Bombay taxi drivers right round the bend. Over 1,000 taximen gheraoed Bombay Doordarshan saying Rajani had given them a bad name and demanded a written apology. Said an unperturbed Priya: "I do what I'm asked to do. I'm not involved with the ethics of the role."

◆ She wanted to be a graphics designer but she became, alas, Miss India instead. Since the crown landed on her pretty little head last year, the only thing **Juhi Chawla** has been drawing are film producers. Next month is Miss India's big debut in a film set on Arabian sands; *Sultanat*. It has everything you could want from a film—sex, romance, violence—and a little bit more. But the thrills are not cheap. At Rs 2.5 crore, *Sultanat* is billed as the biggest film of the decade. It has yet another newcomer with an impressive price-tag: **Karan Kapoor**, so far seen in more suiting-shirtings than almost any other male in the country. At last we'll know what he has up his sleeve. Other biggie-wiggies include Dharmendra, Sridevi, Sunny Deol. But lovely Juhi is unfazed: "It's been rough," she smiles, "but the film has turned out to be very slick."

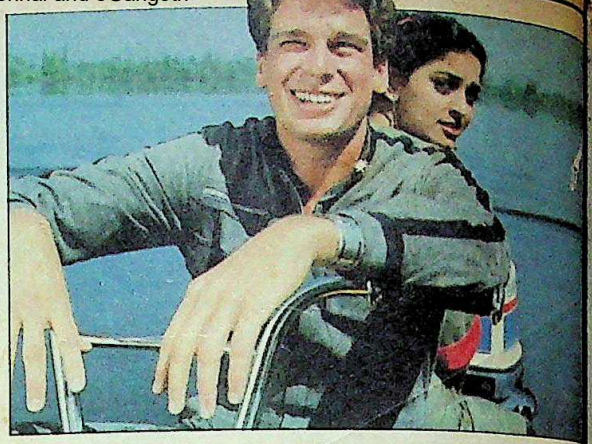
◆ It's not such a formidable fortress after all: the old office of the new prime minister which is the new office of old **Amitabh Bachchan**. Pleasant whitewashed walls, olde-world green fencing, sun-dappled roses and the superstar himself driving up in his chocolate Mercedes. Ten days ago Bachchan moved in to his new seat of power at 2-A, Motilal Nehru Marg, soon after which he broke his silence in Parliament. "It took me a while to get acclimatised to political life," he grinned, "and now I find I have less time than ever to myself." He has managed to read most of the books that line his office though: *Iacocca, Remembering Kennedy, Karma Cola.*

Bachchan: seat of power



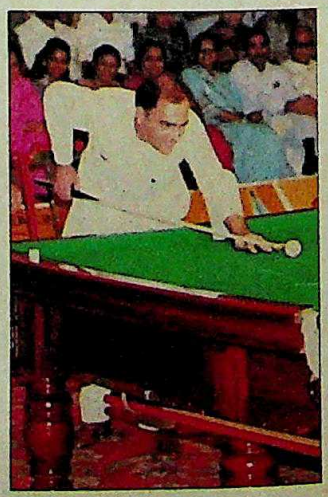
HARI OM GULATI

◆ What is green and white and red all over? Why, a blushing **Rajiv Gandhi** playing billiards of course. Last week, the prime minister decided not to spare the rod when he inaugurated the 25th World Amateur Billiards Championship held in New Delhi under the aegis of Taj Hotels and TISCO. But even more sparkling than his table manners—in his very first inaugural shot, he scored a cannon—was his opening speech that had all present roaring with laughter. "I haven't picked up a cue for 20 years," he beamed and blushed as he recalled his salad days at Cambridge when he had played while the others debated. "Now it's just the reverse," he groaned. Rajiv then compared billiards to politics: "One uses just the right amount of force, not more not less, for the desired results. We hit one ball to hit another... and after one ball is in the pocket you pick it up and bring it back in the game." And so politics, seems, is one ball game—and Rajiv has certainly got his hands full playing it.



Karan Kapoor and Juhi: Arabian nights

Rajiv: prime performance



HARI OM GULATI

Menaka: pet project

◆ Now that it's all over **Menaka Gandhi** has gone to the dogs—and cows and horses too. The once royal *bahu* has a very special day—that every second day—that should give her political life something to truly think about—at a neatly-kept, 6-acre hospital for animals that she has started in Raja Gardens in the name of her husband. It had long been her pet project and now she finally has the time to do it. When she arrives, bright and early, at the hospital it is usually with an armful of squeaky animals. "I pick them up on the way, mostly strays or accident victims," she explains patiently, "and we treat them, nurture them and find homes for them." There's Menaka weaning streak at last.

—Compiled by SIMRAN BHAR

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FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

The New Breed

With the eighth Lok Sabha in its third session, the performance of the 86 new members of parliament has been under sharp scrutiny. An analysis and interviews with a selected few indicate that they have a refreshingly different approach.

COVER STORY 78

The Rajani Phenomenon

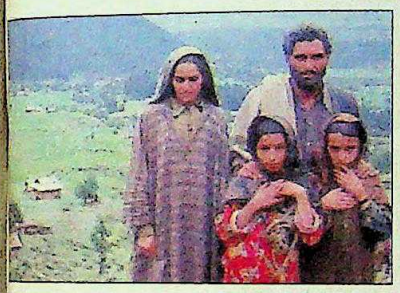
Sponsored programmes on Doordarshan have suddenly come into their own with the massive public reaction to *Rajani*. The spontaneous, nation-wide approval by the common man has elevated Rajani's status to that of a national heroine.

SPECIAL FEATURE 68

The Odd Job Man

He has been unobtrusively associated with every major political initiative in the last few months, including fire-fighting forays to Nepal and Bangladesh. Almost overnight, P.Shiv Shanker, Rajya Sabha member, has become one of the most powerful men in the country.

PROFILE 65



Village Wiles

Sensational stories regarding the blinding of 60 children in a remote Kashmir village turned out to be something of a hoax. But it was also a unique ploy to focus attention on the problems of a village on the border with Pakistan.

LIVING 128

Revolution on the Road

Numerous new makes of cars, two-wheelers, and trucks are preparing to make their debut on Indian roads. The new generation of vehicles promises to revolutionise the industry with the quantum improvement in economy, power, safety and style.

BUSINESS 100

The Big Break

The World Amateur Billiards Championship in Delhi produced yet another Indian world title-holder in the young and talented Geet Sethi, the third so far. With an Indian also holding the world title in snooker, India exerts a virtual stranglehold on the sport.

SPORTS 136

CONTENTS

COMMENT 14
VOICES 14
INDIANOTES 19
CURRENT EVENTS
Punjab: The Election Question 22
Gujarat: A Land of Scandal 26
Assam: Prospects of Peace 28
Congress(I): Costly Flak 33
Delhi: Extreme Danger 34
Andhra Pradesh:
Leader in Waiting 40
Orissa: Battle Ground 45
Tamil Nadu: Shying Away 46
West Bengal: Allies at War 52
Kerala: Leaky Controversy 54
Kerala: Merger Blues 55
CRIME
Punjab & Sind Bank:
Loans to the Dead 56
Narcotics: Cutting the Conduit 58
PROFILE
P. Shiv Shanker:
The Odd Job Man 65
SPECIAL FEATURE
Doordarshan:
The Rajani Phenomenon 68
COVER STORY
Rajiv's MP's: The New Breed 78
NEIGHBOURS
Sri Lanka: The Fight for Peace 93
TRADE WINDS 97
BUSINESS
Automobiles:
Revolution on the Road 100
Swadeshi Polytex:
Change of Guard 108
SFT: Missing Links 113
Detergents: Clean Winner 115
IPCL: In the Top Bracket 116
Economy Monitor 120
Markets: Still Rising 125
LIVING
Keran: Village Wiles 128
ENVIRONMENT
Rajasthan:
Stream of Destruction 133
SPORTS
World Billiards Championship:
The Big Break 136
HEALTH
Sex: Mounting Myths 139
THE ARTS
Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai:
Crowning Achievement 140
ARCHITECTURE
Calcutta: Wiping Out History 144
SCIENCE
Dhruva: Nuclear Landmark 148
EYE-CATCHERS 152

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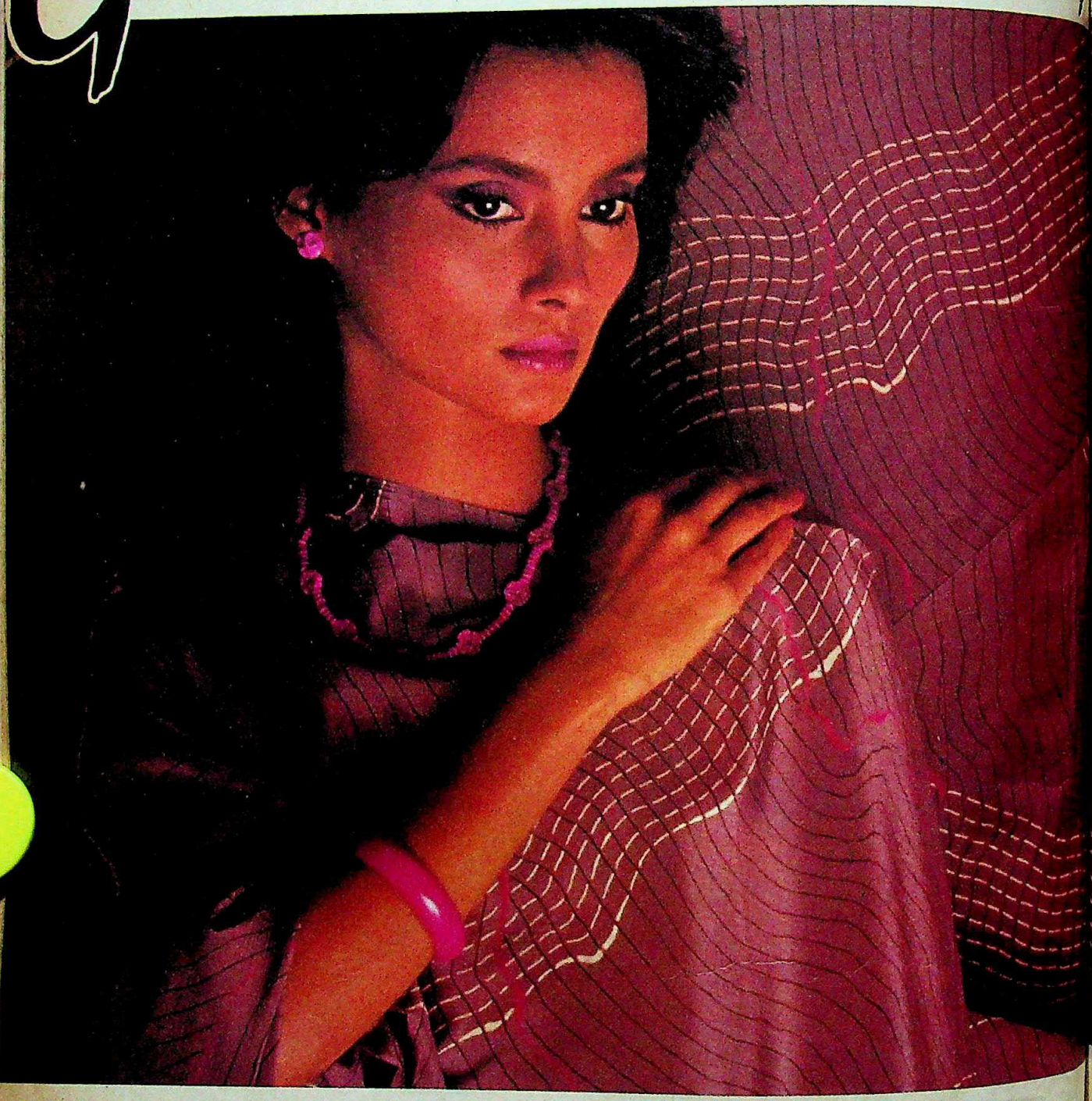
"Geometric designs have always been there. Right now they are on top."



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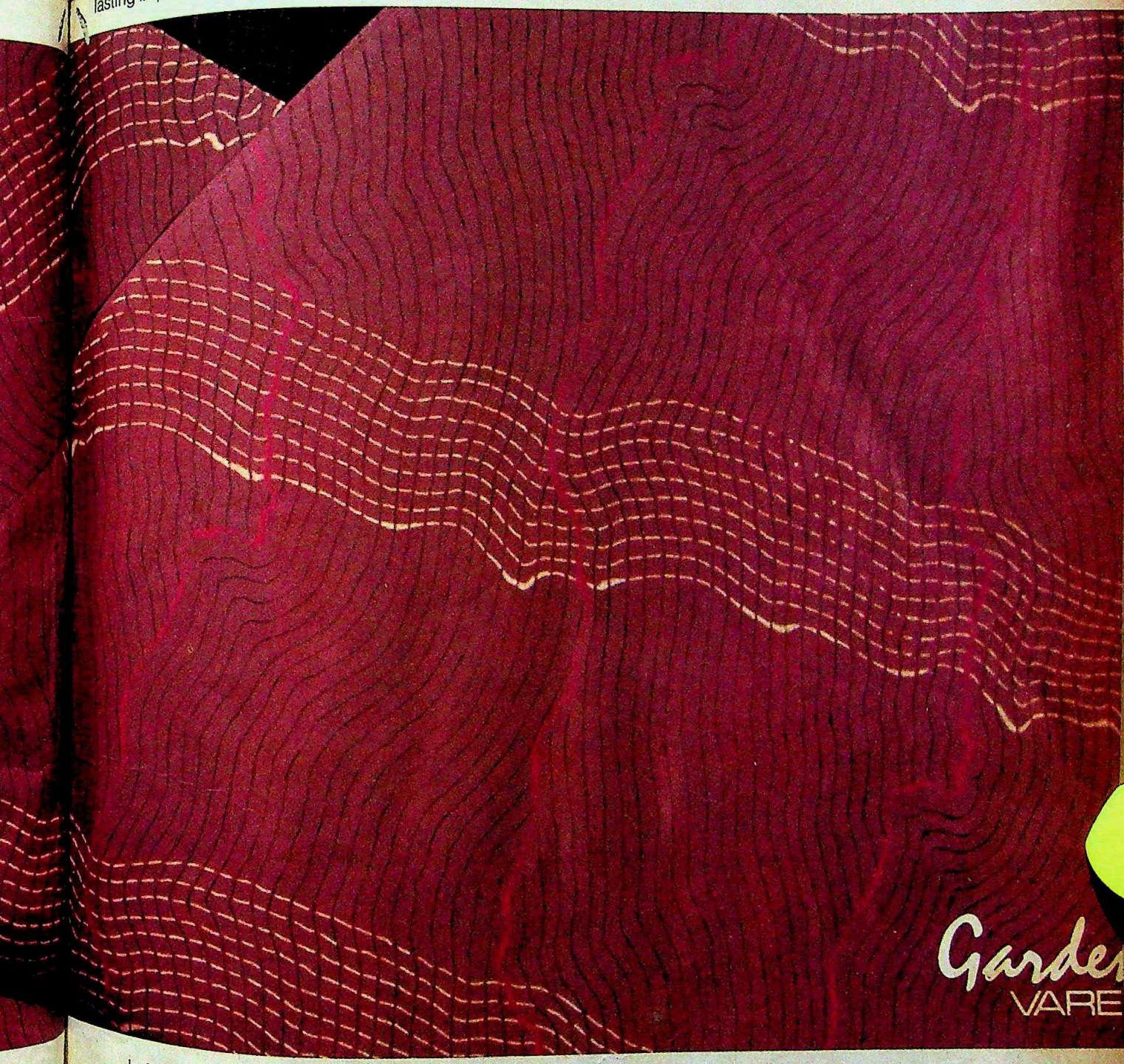
"The geometry factor in art, introduced by early Egyptian architects and artisans, has had a lasting impact on aesthetic concepts of today.



In fashion, the elements of geometry come as a liberating relief from the dominance of floral patterns. The geometric line becomes the fashionable stripe, the point and circle, a dot, the square, a check. Add to these the cube, zig-zag, diamond and arc and we have a panoply of shapes, simple yet permanent. Since these shapes are fundamental, they allow ground colours to have full play.

"Geometric" is the new story line for Garden-Vareli fabrics — trendy, futuristic...in keeping with the image of the modern woman as a liberated one."

Praful A. Shah, Managing Director, Garden Silk Mills Pvt. Ltd.; Chairman, Vareli Group.

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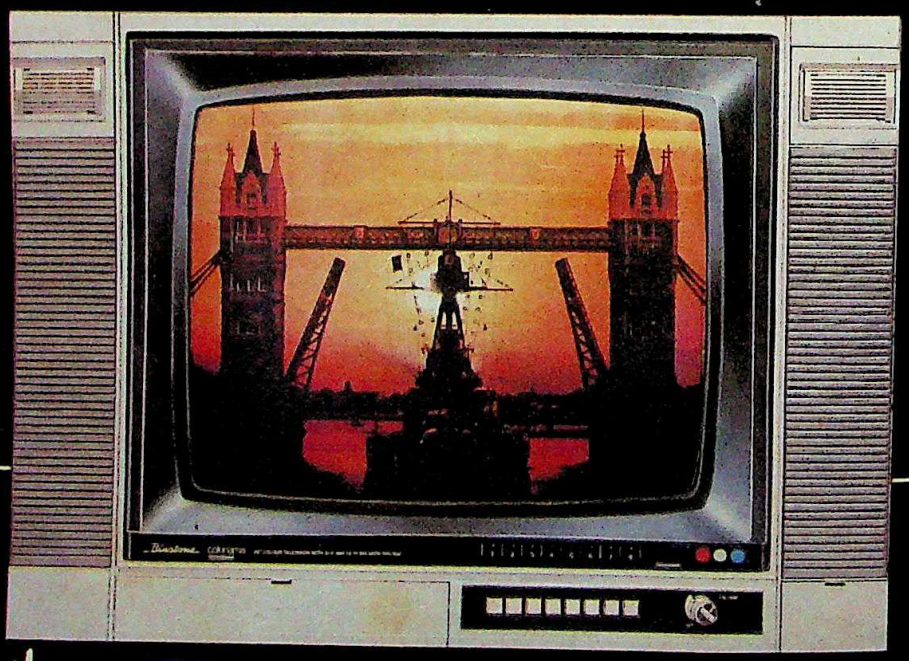

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE
VOLUME X NUMBER 16
FOR THE FORTNIGHT AUGUST 16-31, 1985

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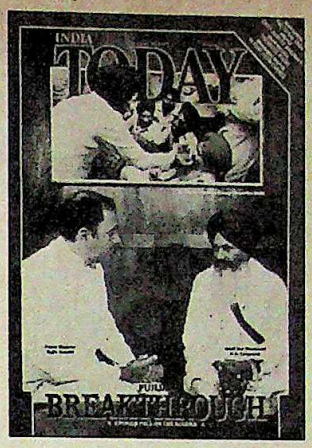

DIPLOMATIC MOVE

Rajiv Gandhi has ingeniously proved his acumen in diplomacy and statesmanship by resolving the Punjab problem ("Breakthrough", August 15). The Punjab imbroglio which was simmering needed an exigent solution and by cooperating with the Government in reaching the settlement, the Akali Dal President, Harchand Singh Longowal, should also be hailed. By granting most of the Akali demands—transferring of Chandigarh to Punjab, sharing of river water, rehabilitation of army deserters and disposal of pending cases—Rajiv Gandhi has considerably appeased the sentiments of the Sikhs. However, the clause providing greater autonomy to the state in the Anandpur Sahib resolution should be relinquished as other states would also demand increased federalism if it is granted to Punjab.

As a mediator, Governor Arjun Singh has done a great job in getting the Akalis to the negotiating table. One tends to think that if the negotiation was made a few months back, then perhaps hundreds of innocent lives could have been saved. But we should now stop thinking of the past and hope that the accord works out successfully.

Bangalore **K. CHIDANAND KUMAR**

■ Your cover story on the vexed Punjab problem, which eluded a solution due to the rigid posture adopted by the Government and the religious leaders, is another feather in the cap of our prime minister. However, at a time when efforts are being made to assuage the feelings of the Sikhs and the mood is of national reconciliation, your showing the ravaged Akal Takht was highly inappropriate.

New Delhi **MANU BHALLA**

■ Having achieved what is negotiated for the people of Punjab, Akali Dal, their new caretaker, would now have to exterminate all extremists hiding there and thwart their potentially destructive engineered machinations. Immigration from across the Punjab border would also have to be selective and under constant scrutiny. After all, the peace that has returned here after such a long time has to be durable.

Sagar, Madhya Pradesh **SACHIN SAKSENA**

INTRIGUING DRAMA

The article on the disappearance of the Nitya Ram and Nitya Nanak ("Voyage into Oblivion", August 15) makes intriguing reading. The whole episode reminds me of the true story that appeared in an American detective magazine. The story revolved around a man who got himself into hot financial waters and tried to collect insurance over his corpse. This owner also seems to think in terms of insurance and it is hoped that the New India Assurance Company will accede to the wishes of the families of the crew to withhold all payments till formalities are complete.

Insurance payments apart the authorities should take strong action against the man for negligence and suppressing information.

Bangalore **A. BRITO**

■ Your article on the disappearance of the ships highlights the serious shortcomings in the Indian merchant navy, and the callous attitude of the ship owner and the authorities combined show that there is no regard for the men that go down to the sea. It is a well-known practice of the ship owners to try and pass the various surveys by spending as little money as possible with very little regard to the safety aspect, and if someone has the courage to question the safety aspect the person concerned is usually sent on leave and paid no wages. The various authorities are very fast to act upon a crew member but extremely reluctant to do so with a ship owner.

New Delhi **CAPT C.M. KHULLER**

WINDOW-DRESSING

The frantic face-lift prior to the prime minister's visit to the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa ("Tribal Trail", August 15) placed the state Government squarely in the dock. They reduced his visit to the level of a farce and a fraud. It reminds one of the story in an army unit where the wife of the visiting dignitary tried to pluck a flower, the entire bush came into her hands—the result of

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last minute window-dressing. The prime minister should proceed on such tours on very short notice, otherwise it deceives the entire purpose.

Lucknow — LT COL S.K. MUSHRAN

DEPRIVED FARMERS

Your cover story on the stock-market ("New Money Spinner", July 31) made interesting reading. The lucid style helped the general reader understand the article easily. The stock-markets have succeeded in attracting the middle class but the farmers, who form such a major part of our population, are still ignorant about the industrial developments. They are totally deprived of the benefits of industrialisation. In the other developed countries they play a major role in the stock-market transactions.

Dharwad, Karnataka — S.N. BHAT

■ Your article has presented only a partial picture. The troubles the upcountry investors face and the cheating the brokers do with tacit support of the stock exchange authorities were ignored.

In December 1982, I bought some cash shares of Ranbaxy from a Delhi broker paying the full amount. When I met the broker in February this year, I was told that no delivery is to be given as the authorities have decided that all pending deliveries of shares be settled on the prevailing rate on March 26, 1984, and yet no payments have been received. As you can see the payments have been delayed by more than a year. On writing to the concerned authorities I was told to collect that amount now. Today I cannot even buy half the original contracted shares and the amount of loss small investors like myself face and the phenomenal profits the brokers get will only embolden them to further cheat the investors.

Sindri, Bihar — K. APPALACHARYULU

■ Your cover story made interesting reading, in that you did touch upon a very important cause of the current "boom" —too much money chasing too few shares.

However, the statement attributed to Amrit Lal Bajaj ("In Japan where shares are quoted at 50 times net post-tax earnings of companies") is very misleading. The price-to-earnings ratio of Japanese blue-chips was 7:7 in 1980, 14:5 in 1981, 13:8 in 1982, 16:2 in 1983 and 14:5 in 1984. Bajaj may have come across one or two companies with such high ratios but they are definitely the exception rather than the rule.

Shares in India are overpriced and seem to be riding on the reality of the "Great Fool Theory" which states: if I am fool enough to buy shares at today's ridiculous prices, there will be an even greater fool who will buy the shares at tomorrow's ridiculous prices.

Bombay — AJIT DAYAL

CONFORMIST PRESS

In your Comment "The Media Message" (July 31) you say "the print media has never before been so approving of the policies and actions of a head of government as it has been with Rajiv these past few months. Praise and approval have been lavish; criticism, where it has been delivered, has been guarded. And yet the media is accused of irresponsibility." I find the implied definition of journalistic responsibility quite unsettling and disturbing. Do you mean that responsibility in journalism is to flatter the Government or its head? If so, I must accuse you of spawning a pretty perverse, and highly irresponsible, definition of journalistic responsibility.

If, as you say, the press has been lavish in its praise and approval of Rajiv Gandhi as the head of the Government, I would say that is irresponsible. The press has been unduly guarded in its criticism of him, that again is irresponsible. In a democracy, for a free press to do either, is to fail in its full duty, which must essentially be adversarial in spirit. In view particularly of the fact that the electronic media, with the widest reach, are the Government's mouthpieces, and the fact that the national opposition is so weak and fragmented, the need for the print media to perform such an adversarial role is all the more great. In these circumstances, a conformist press would be worse than a blinkered or muzzled press.

Bombay — C. ANTONY LOUIS

PRICEY NAME

Apropos the article "Peico: Name Game" (July 31) Savita Kohli deserves kudos for whatever reason had prompted her to probe into something which is most often taken for granted: thinking everything that glitters is gold. Apart from the unpleasant fact that 'Philips' products are manufactured by lesser known firms, what is more than shocking is the exorbitant price the ignorant customers have to pay just for a name, and that too a pilfered one.

Neyyattinkara, Kerala — K.P. MOHAN

■ Savita Kohli has sent a chill down the spine of many a company who will now be answerable to the public. Example: "manufacturers" of bulbs, fluorescent tubes, TV's, and refrigerators. The concept of farming out manufacturing jobs to ancillary industries hangs in the balance.

Mysore — L.A. RAMANATHAN

■ I hope your article serves as an eye-opener for the prospective buyers and a warning to those already engaged in such fraudulent activities.

Surat — KANDARP JANI

HEART-RENDING CASE

Your special feature on the agony of Kalahandi (July 31) was excellent and heart-touching. Kalahandi is perhaps not the only case. There may be several Kalahandis in the country, if not in Bihar itself.

This is the irony of fate: that our leadership is trying to push the country forcefully towards the electronic and space age while the people are forced to sell their children for survival.

Patna — QAMAR BALIGH

■ Your special feature should open the eyes of the higher-ups in the Indian hierarchy. A country, which has eminent personalities forming aid committees to help the starving people of other countries, may now spare a thought for the drought-affected within her own folds. It is the duty of the Government to try and put a little more life into the "living skeletons" of Kalahandi.

Ranchi — SOURABH MISHRA

INCOMPLETE LIST

Benjamin Netanyahu is absolutely correct when he says "Terrorism is a cancer" (July 31). But in his list of "cancerous" states, he has forgotten to add his country's godfather—the US.

New Delhi — BRAJENDRA SINGH

INITIAL PROBLEM

In your cover story "Out in the Wilderness", (January 31) it is reported that K.M. Hooda addressed the gathering at Charan Singh's residence. This is factually incorrect. It may have been R.K. Hooda, who is a Lok Dal (then DMKP) leader from Haryana, who addressed this gathering. I am a Congress(I) man and had nothing to do with it.

Chandigarh — K.M. HOODA

The error is regretted. —Editor

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INDIA TODAY of March 31, 1983, carried a report captioned "SSB—Out for Blood" by CHAITANYA KALBAG to the effect that my organisation, Sweccha Sevak Bahini, namely, our Volunteer Force, was a well organised paramilitary force which was responsible for all the violence during the fraudulent Assembly election in February, 1983. He also accuses me of being a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS). On becoming aware of the report, I instituted a case of defamation against Mr Kalbag and INDIA TODAY in a Guwahati Court. INDIA TODAY applied to the Supreme Court of India for transfer of the case to a court outside Assam. As a result of a settlement reached between us, INDIA TODAY has agreed to publish my article, which is a reply to the report filed by Mr Kalbag.

Mr Kalbag has said that he met me in a darkened room somewhere in Guwahati along with 10 others. This is not true since I have never met Mr Kalbag in a darkened room anywhere, alone or with anyone else. He has also attributed the statement "the Government does not know how to keep us in jail" to me. This statement, when weighed against the fact that I have been detained about 50 times during the last four years, should be enough to show that I could never have said any such thing; for my experience has been that the Government has been quite adept in keeping my friends and me in jail without trial on a number of occasions.

AASU's Volunteer Force, contrary to the aspersions made by Mr Kalbag, is not an underground organisation, and has never functioned as such at any time. It is a force without strength of arms, but is a force with the moral strength of believing in the ideals of Bapuji. Incidentally, though my organisation is known as the Sweccha Sevak Bahini in Assamese and the Volunteer Force in English in Assam, it has never been known as the "SSB". Possibly the mix up is with another force of the same name, the Social Security Bureau, set up by the Government immediately after the Chinese aggression in 1962.

Now, to counter Mr Kalbag's allegation that I am a member of the RSS, let me set the record straight by stating that neither I nor any members of my family have ever been members of that organisation. As a matter of fact, I made a public statement (which was widely reported in the local press) that if Mr Kalbag's allegation was proved to be true, I would resign from the AASU executive. Needless to say, I continue to be a member of the AASU executive even now, and have taken part in a number of negotiation meetings with the Government in that capacity. Mr Kalbag, if he was so sure of his facts, could have taken me up on this issue during all this time. Suffice to say that he has done no such thing.

Mr Kalbag has also made a very serious allegation against my brother Daya Sarma. My brother is now dead, having been brutally killed by migrants from Bangladesh in his own homeland. It is a matter of record that my brother was killed on his own farm in broad daylight by a horde of armed men. Surely my brother had the right to self defence in such a situation.

Mr Kalbag has also alleged that I got employment in the Assam State Electricity Board on the strength of my law degree. Let me again set the record straight by clarifying that I passed my LL.B. examination well after the publication of Mr Kalbag's captioned article.

As a citizen of a democratic country, I am proud of the freedom available to the press in India. How I wish that this freedom is never misused to print inexact and inaccurate statements, for liberty is not meant to be a licence to print and publish anything that comes into the writer's mind.

Guwahati — JOYNATH SARMA

Chaitanya Kalbag replies

MR SARMA's claim that he never met me is incorrect. My notes of the meeting amply contradict this claim.

On March 6, 1983, I met some AASU office-bearers at the Gauhati Medical College and was informed that Mr Sarma had just been released from imprisonment under NSA.

I was taken to the Chenikuthi area in Guwahati and was accompanied by INDIA TODAY photographer Pramod Pushkarna, who took the picture printed in the report.

From my notes it is clear that there were several other people in the darkened living-room of the house where Mr Sarma was staying. They included Dhruba Baisya, publicity secretary of AASU, AASU's Nagen Sarma and the Swechha Sevak Bahini's Deepak Das.

The statement "the Government does not know how to keep us in jail" is authentic and was made by Mr Joynath Sarma. It was Mr Sarma who pointed out that the Jalukbari P.S. case was filed on January 25, 1983, three days before the Assam Executive Magistrate (Temporary Powers) Act was promulgated, thus nullifying his arrest. During the meeting on March 6, 1983, Mr Sarma said: "Yesterday I argued before the CJM (Chief Judicial Magistrate)."

The abbreviation "SSB" was clearly that of the Sweccha Sevak Bahini, the Assamese name for what Mr Sarma calls the "Volunteer Force." I have covered the North-eastern region long enough not to confuse the Bahini with the Government's Social Security Bureau (SSB).

As for the charges about Mr Sarma's links with the RSS, it is well known that the RSS does not maintain membership records. From my conversations with Mr Sarma and other reliable sources in Assam Mr Sarma's denial on this score does not stand up.

The differences in AASU's leadership were so deep that several leading Muslim members led by Nurul Hussain, who led AASU when all its leaders including Prafulla Mahanta and Bhrigu Phukan were in jail, walked out of the organisation.

Furthermore, the Press Trust of India said on April 29, 1983, that AASU had suspended its sub-committee on Volunteer Force. Why suspend a body that Mr Sarma claims was a force "with the moral strength of believing in the ideals of Bapuji"?

I never directly described the Bahini as an underground force. I said "SSB men are trained, say sources, to organise a sustained underground movement..." This clearly shows that the organisation had the capacity to operate underground.

As far as Mr Sarma's claim that the Bahini is "a force without strength of arms", in his petition before the Addl CJM, Kamrup, Guwahati, filed on 21.4.83, Mr Sarma says "the SSB is the volunteer force of the AASU with the avowed object of imparting (*sic*) physical training to the students..." Mr Sarma has not explained why a social service organisation needs physical training.

The "matter of record" about Mr Sarma's brother Daya Sarma's death is subject to question. Conditions in the Sipajhar area, where he died, were highly disrupted during the 1983 elections. The version of Daya Sarma's death as it appeared in INDIA TODAY was given after making due inquiries and there is no reason to believe otherwise.

Mr Sarma also avoids denying my charge that he was employed in the Assam State Electricity Board because of his ties to chairman Umanath Sarma.

INDIA TODAY's reports on the Assam elections did not reflect a tendency to "publish anything that comes into the writer's mind." In the three major reports I wrote it was shown that the elections were uncalled for, spawned widespread violence and shattered government credibility. No criticism of government and official mistakes was spared. Surely Mr Sarma cannot complain about that? If in the pursuit of truth some unpleasant facts emerge into the cold light of print it is a small price to pay for Bapuji's ideals.

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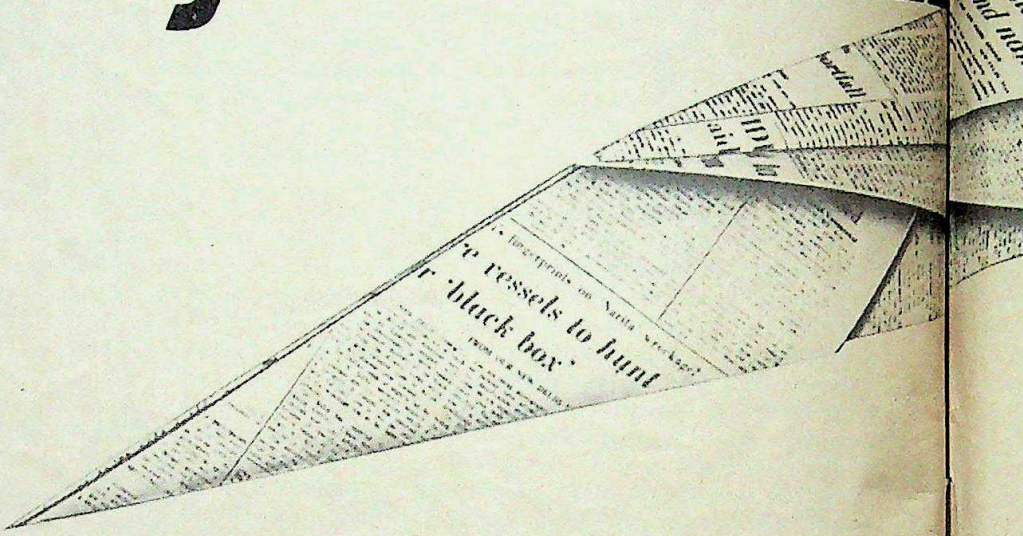
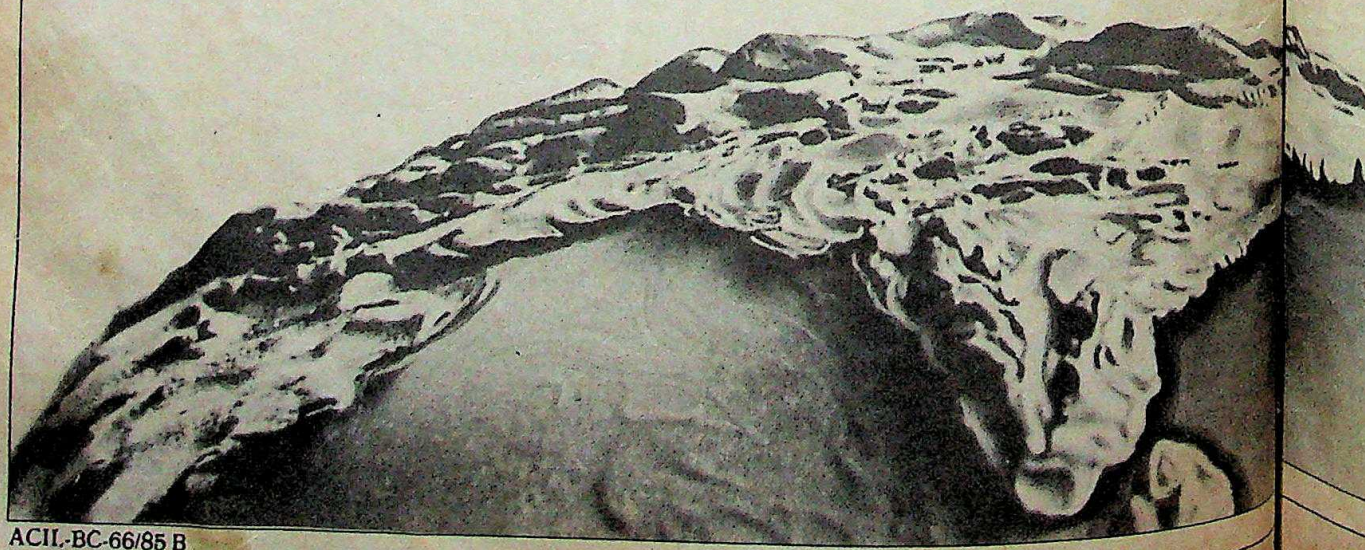
"Okay, okay, but how can you take me





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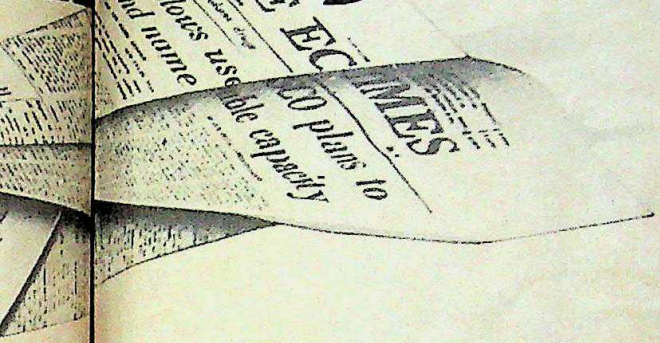
how far me anyway?"



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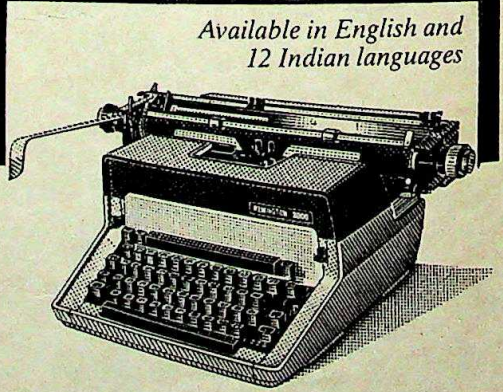

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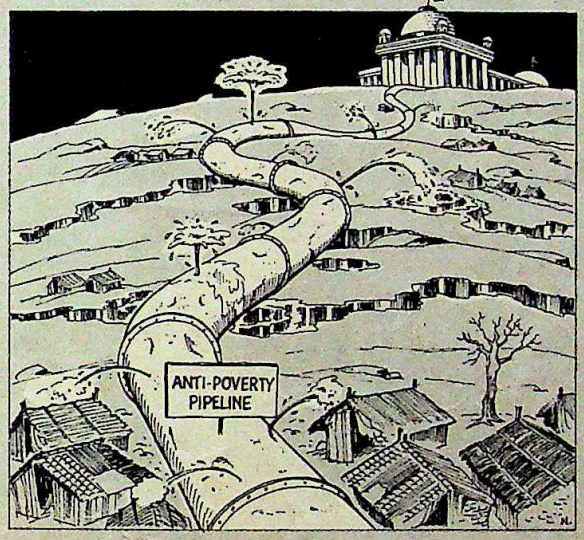
Rural Waste

THERE is a welcome new stress in the Government and the country on efficiency: efficiency in the use of public money, in industrial operations, in the choice of technologies, in getting the best out of public facilities, and much else. However, most of the emphasis so far has been on only the more modern, urban and industrial sectors of the economy. Although more than 40 per cent of plan investment goes into agriculture, irrigation and social services, far too little attention has been given so far to these sectors to assess the efficiency of public investment, and the social and economic returns on this investment.

Yet this is an area requiring urgent attention, perhaps even more than the admittedly inefficient Indian industry. Close to Rs 100,000 crore will be spent in these sectors in the next five years, and it will be a colossal national waste if it is not ensured that this money is spent well and wisely, to yield proper returns. A recent assessment of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) showed enormous wastage and leakages. A study by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute revealed that 30 per cent of the drinking water facilities created in the rural areas do not work. Another survey in Orissa showed that 40 per cent of hand pumps were out of order. As for another area of increasing national concern, forestry programmes have traditionally been ineffective, so that the forest cover in Gujarat—instead of being the 11 per cent claimed by the state's forestry officials—is actually no more than around 4 per cent. It should be 33 per cent. If these examples are typical, and one assumes an inefficiency factor of around 30 per cent on such programmes, the next five years will see investment of close to Rs 30,000 crore yielding no returns in a country that is still starved of capital.



Sometimes, the efficiency factor is even more glaring. For instance, the difference between a well-planned irrigation system and a badly planned one can be enormous: experts from the Operations Research Group (ORG) who have looked at the success of the Dantiwada irrigation project in Gujarat's Banaskantha district report mustard yields varying from 47 quintals per hectare to over 1,800 quintals, a variation explained primarily by the timely supply of irrigation water: the farmer who got his first watering late did not bother with subsequent waterings, and the crop withered. And in the case of programmes in health and family planning, the efficiency of the delivery system is all-important. The involvement of two voluntary agencies in a family planning effort in the Nilgiris resulted in a dramatic rise in the acceptance of family planning in just five years, the acceptance level going up to 80 per cent, which is more than double the national average. Clearly, the government machinery had failed to deliver the expected goods.

In quite a few cases, the truth is that development activity compounds the problems. Numerous irrigation projects have only resulted in waterlogging of the land because of poor drainage: in the Ukai-Kankrapara area in Gujarat, for instance, 41 per cent of the command area of over one lakh hectares is now prone to waterlogging. And in the field of energy, the seventh plan target of installing more than one lakh bio-gas plants across the country will put a price on animal dung, which will therefore be lost to the poor households that now burn dung as domestic fuel.

These and other instances involve complex issues concerning development strategies, delivery systems, control mechanisms and so on. Nevertheless, there are several down-to-earth lessons to be learnt. The most fundamental of these is that financial outlays by themselves mean nothing. Ways should be found to involve beneficiaries directly in programmes, to minimise the role of petty bureaucrats so as to reduce corruption, and to try and make available the infrastructure with which people can improve their standards of living.

Equally important, political interference or intervention in development programmes tends to make it difficult to keep a proper control of such programmes, leading to lax administration, leakages and eventually a corruption of the system. The best example here is the IRDP. Almost everyone now accepts that this has become a vehicle for an unprecedented scale of funds misappropriation. Also, programme administrators may simply be overloaded with work: one survey in Vadodara district showed that 27 implementing agencies were handling no fewer than 2,300 schemes!

There are some indications that the Government is gradually waking up to these issues. The prime minister spoke recently of recasting the IRDP, and his visits to remote, starvation-ridden tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and elsewhere will have given him a hands-on experience of the failures of numerous government programmes. Perhaps because of this, there is a new mood of confidence in the Ministry of Rural Development, which is pressing for more funds and greater programme priority. This is welcome, but the ministry in particular and the Government as a whole should wake up to the question of leakage and wastage in development programmes in the countryside.

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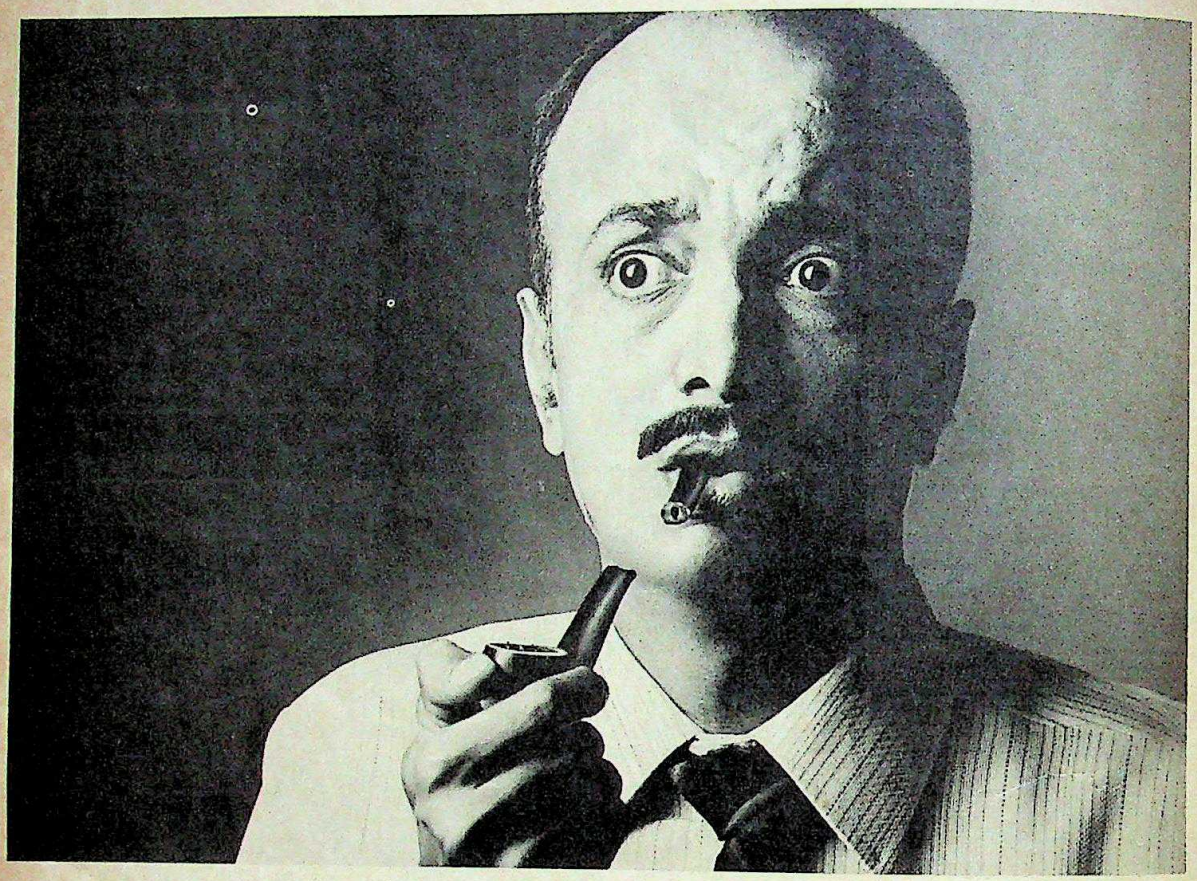

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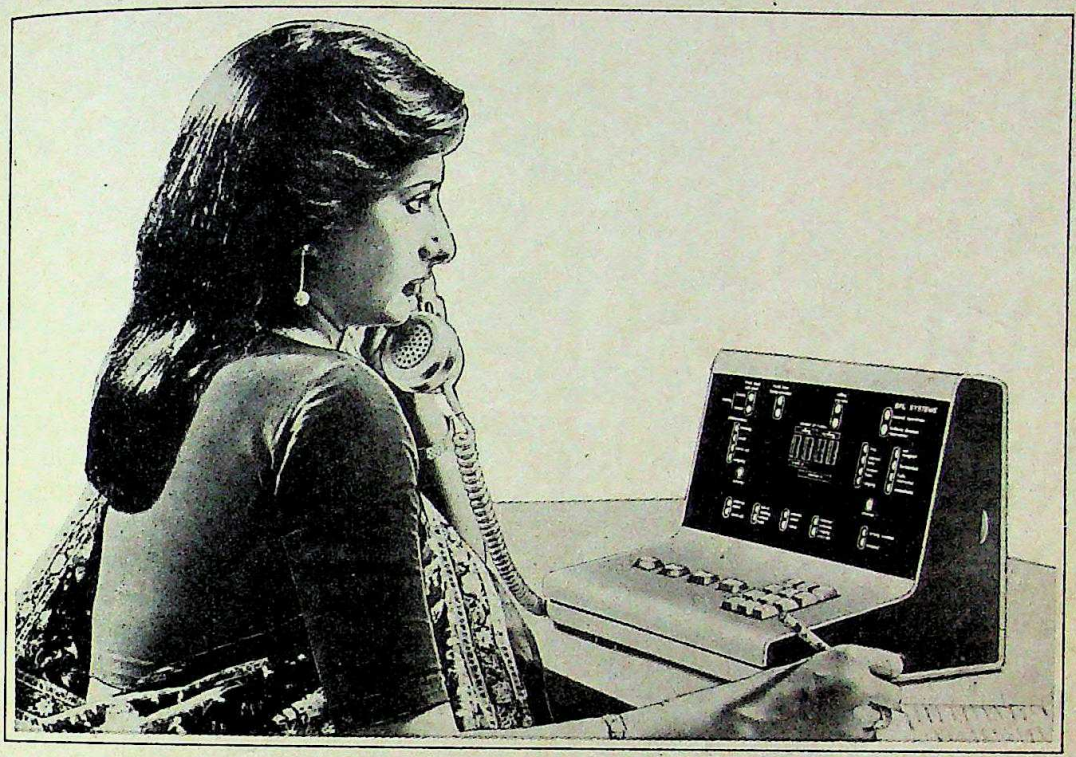

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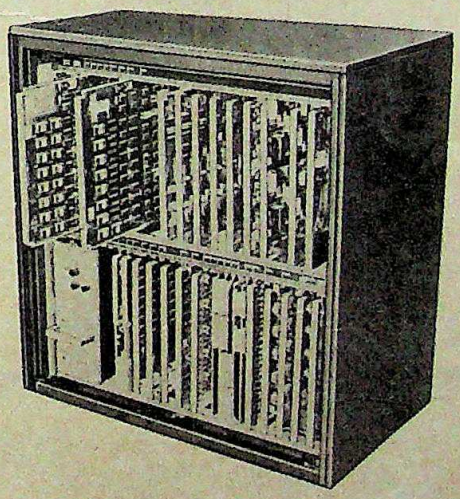

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■ RAJIV GANDHI in *The Statesman*

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■ GEORGE FERNANDES in *Imprint*

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■ SALMA SULTAN, TV newsreader, in *Savvy*

● *The real problem now is the racial prejudice that exists in this country... anyone from the tribal area is an outcast. You see the shape of my nose is the stumbling block in India*
■ LALDENGA in *Sunday*

● *Rajiv's government has brought in a change. This may be a turning point. If I was thirty years younger, I would not have let Russi (Mody) head* TISCO.
■ J.R.D. TATA in *Bombay*

● *He (Jyoti Basu) is a reliable and constructive partner.*
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■ MOON MOON SEN in *Stardust*

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■ SANJEEV KUMAR in *Star & Style*

● *I don't have the feeling about being greatest of all. I don't feel oh! I'm the final word... I just want to function without a thought of getting fruit from what I'm doing... just for the sheer quality of the work.*
■ SHABANA AZMI in *Showtime*

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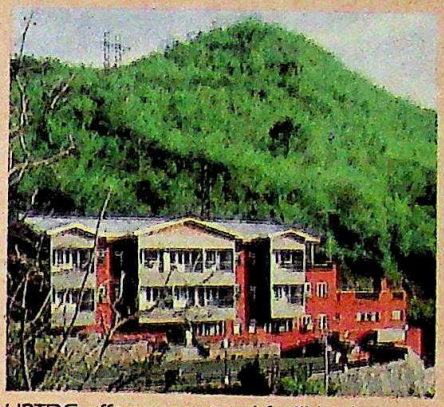

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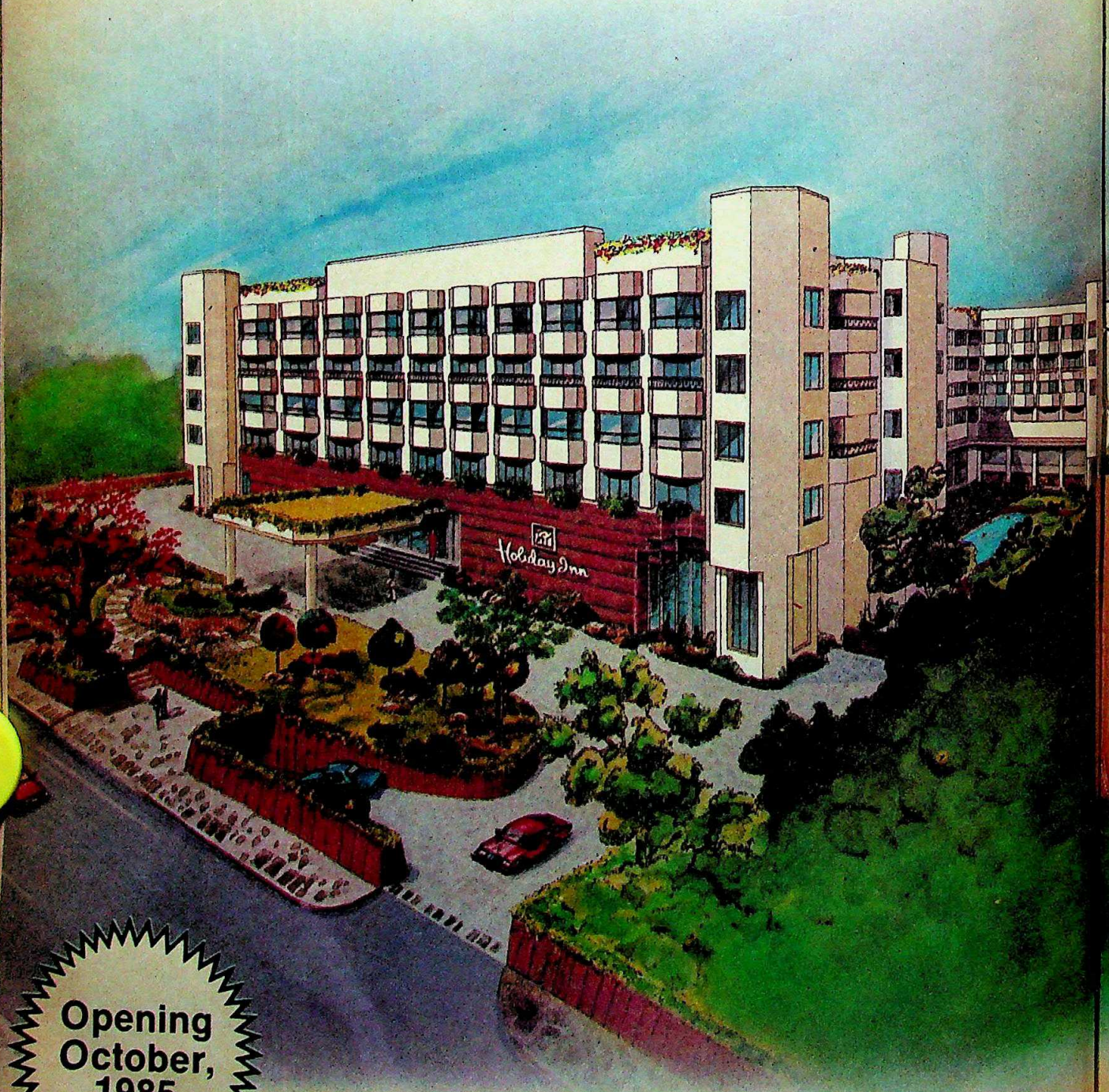

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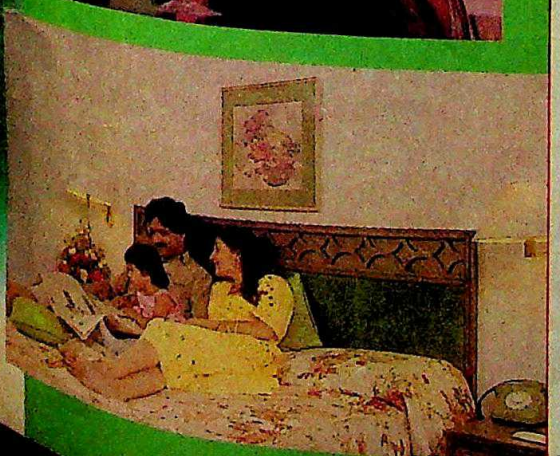

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CATTY TALE

■ Cats are the most mysterious animals on earth. Even the tiniest kitten has a worldly-wise expression on its face and every mouser looks as if it could reveal a lot if only it could speak. Well, Anumon can.

Anumon, according to reports from Kottayam, is a sweet young pet in a middle class household. Anumon is clearly one of the more intelligent members of the cat family, because if its mistress, Sujatha, asks it its name, it will answer in mellifluous Malayalam. The one condition for listeners is that Anumon is shy and will talk only if they stand behind it. It appears to have an extensive vocabulary and first revealed its prowess six months ago when Sujatha kissed it. It said, "umma" (Malayalam for kiss) and "ammamma" (grandmother) and "aana" (elephant). And so, Anumon and Sujatha began carrying on regular conversations.

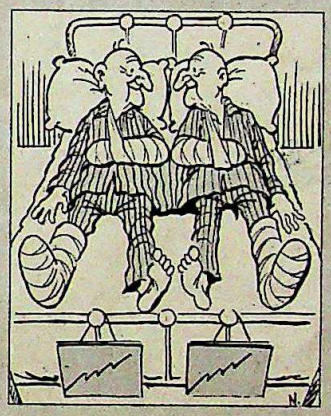
Nowadays, the lady is greeted in the mornings by the sight of Anumon stretching out on her bed and wishing her a very distinct 'good morning', which would have delighted Professor Higgins no end. And wouldn't the great T.S. Eliot have included Anumon in his *Old Possum's Book Of Practical Cats*, if he was alive? Meow!

TWO EQUALS ONE!

■ The threat is well-known. Deep in his cellar, a mad scientist peers along a row of tiny beds in which identical babies are bawling. They are the clones of the master-type with whom he will rule the world.

But the mad scientist wouldn't be very happy to learn that mother nature, as always, has beaten him to the draw: in Alleppey, the Govindramans, octogenarian twin brothers, could be the forerunners of a new race.

The Govindramans, like most twins, share quite a few things, but unlike most twins, their love and affinity for each other is astounding. They sleep on a single cot, eat from the same plate and when the time comes to expound words of wisdom, they speak simultaneously causing the unwary to wonder where the echo is from. They even have the same wife, gentle Janaki, who recalls the day when both of them tied a thali on her.



Recently Govindraman and Govindraman fell and injured themselves at the same time, needless to say. Of course, it was a single bed for both in hospital—although some would call that carrying togetherness too far.

BATTLE CRIES

■ The monsoon causes a fair number of ruffled feathers in India, both when it arrives with a bang, as it did in Bombay, and when it doesn't arrive at all, as was the case earlier in Rajasthan. There, in a small town a hundred kilometres from Jaipur, the rains had been conspicuous by their absence for quite some time and the Adivasis were getting a little jittery. At first they blamed it on the winds, then the gods and finally, on human beings.

One fine day, the town was stormed by about 200 Adivasis brandishing fearsome-looking weapons and uttering screechy battle cries guaranteed to put the fear of god into anyone with a heart. They made their unchecked way to most of the bania-owned shops, ransacking the shelves of valuables. Soon however, they were rounded up by the police.

On being asked why they had descended upon the town in an army they replied innocently that it was the banias who had cursed the skies not to let go of the rain and they were only exacting just retribution. The police were not very impressed by this explanation and even less were the aggrieved banias who gave them a bill for a few crores. It never rains but pours.

JOY RIDES

■ Marriage parties travel in all kinds of transport—bullock carts, buses, boats, tractors. But the kulaks of Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan do it in style—helicopters.

The father of a promising groom of Rajpur Atewa townlet was promised a dowry of Rs 60,000 if he would arrange for a helicopter for the bride and her friends to the groom's house. The bride's father paid the Rs 60,000 only to watch half of that being spent on the betrothal ceremony. The remaining was not enough for the wedding and a helicopter—and the marriage was literally shot down.

But a solution was soon reached: the bride's father agreed to let his second daughter marry into the same family and promised a dowry of Rs 1.40 lakh, in return for a helicopter ride. The groom's father hastily hired one from a Bombay firm. And in no time at all, the elder daughter was flown to her husband's village along with the remaining Rs 30,000. On the return trip, the chopper brought back her younger sister's groom. How's that for high-flying weddings?

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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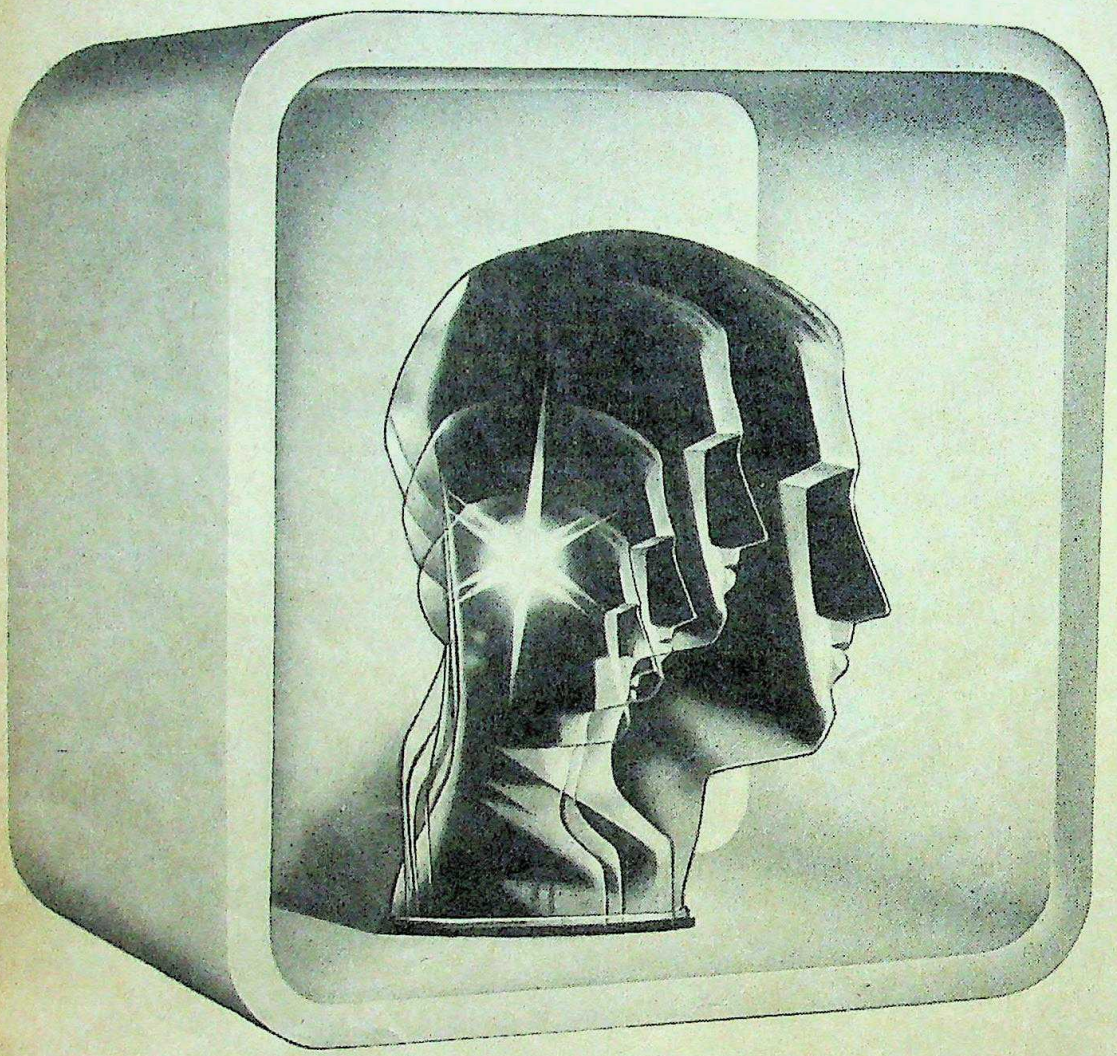

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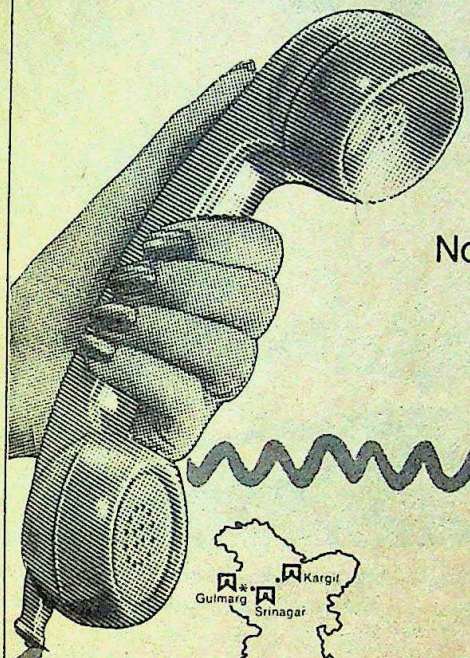

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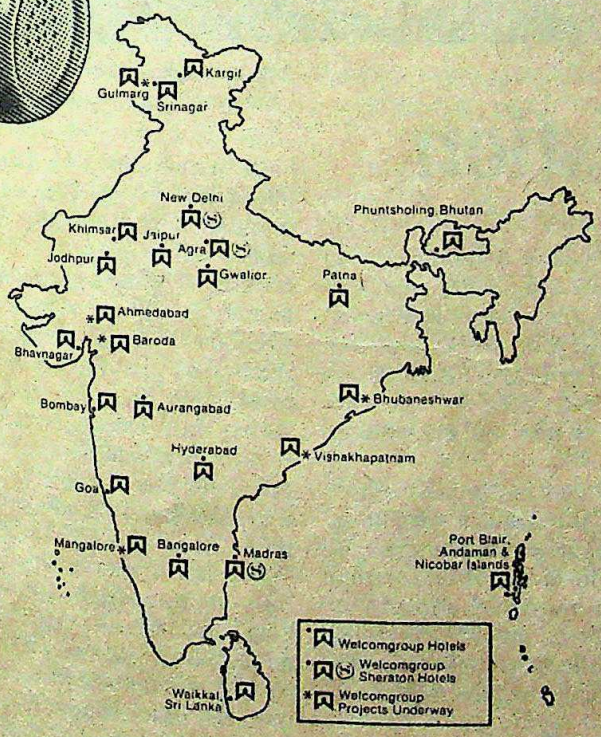

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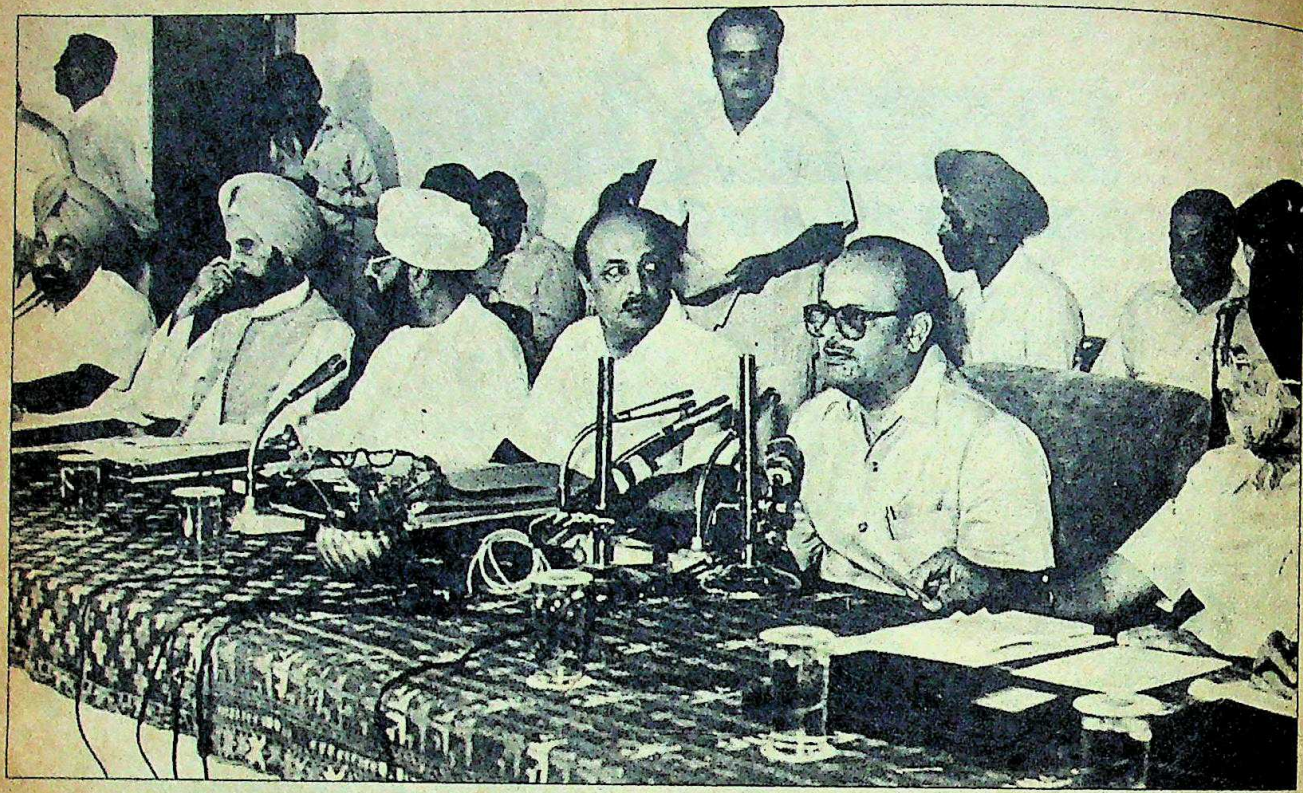

Arjun Singh at the Amritsar communal harmony meet: continuing optimism

PUNJAB

The Election Question

PUNJAB Governor Arjun Singh has succeeded where many others failed—in finding a negotiated settlement to the problem plaguing the state—but he is yet to forge a similar breakthrough on getting the Akalis to agree to hold elections in the state. As Singh sees it, elections to the state Assembly and the installation of a representative government are follow-up steps that logically flow from the Rajiv-Longowal accord. But others clearly do not see it that way. Longowal has yet to speak his mind on the subject and opposition leaders have sounded grave warnings of the threat that an election could pose to peace and communal harmony in the state.

Singh has obviously been encouraged by the popular response that the accord has evoked among a cross-section of Sikhs. A resolution at the well-represented all-party state level communal harmony committee in Amritsar, which the Akalis attended for the first time last fortnight, described the accord as a "victory of the forces of love, rationality and brotherhood." The law and order situation is also significantly better—the last three months have been the most peaceful period in the last four years. Says the Director-General of Police, Kirpal Singh Dhillon, confidently: "We are ready to hold elections any time and are waiting for a signal."

But the opposition parties have severe reservations on the political wisdom of holding elections now. They argue that the heat and din of the electioneering could embolden anti-social elements to rake up emotive and divisive issues like the Operation Bluestar, Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the subsequent bloodbath. In such a situation, the fragile peace might just break. Warned Punjab BJP president Baldev Parkash: "Elections will reopen old wounds which are far from healed...let some more months pass by and there will be a proper climate for elections." CPI(M) politburo member H.S.Surjeet also advised the governor to consolidate the present gains rather than "hurry into elections." Leaders of the CPI(M), CPI, Janata, BJP and Lok Dal told the prime minister at a meeting in New Delhi that they favoured postponement of the polls. Akali leaders Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Parkash Singh Badal, who have yet to welcome the accord, agree. Said Badal: "The heavens will not fall if we do not hold elections right now. The accord does not satisfy the Sikhs and the so-called peace is momentary."

> **Handing power to the Akalis is easier said than done. The divisions in the Akali Dal (L) are just as deep as they were when Longowal signed the accord.**

Singh disagrees strongly, and with good reason. "Let there be a political process to consolidate the gains. People should not be denied a popular government elected by them," he reasoned at the peace committee meeting which turned into a debate on the pros and cons of holding elections. He shrugged off arguments that terrorists would take advantage of the situation to strike by pointing out that terrorism is an unpleasant fact of life which people will have to learn to live

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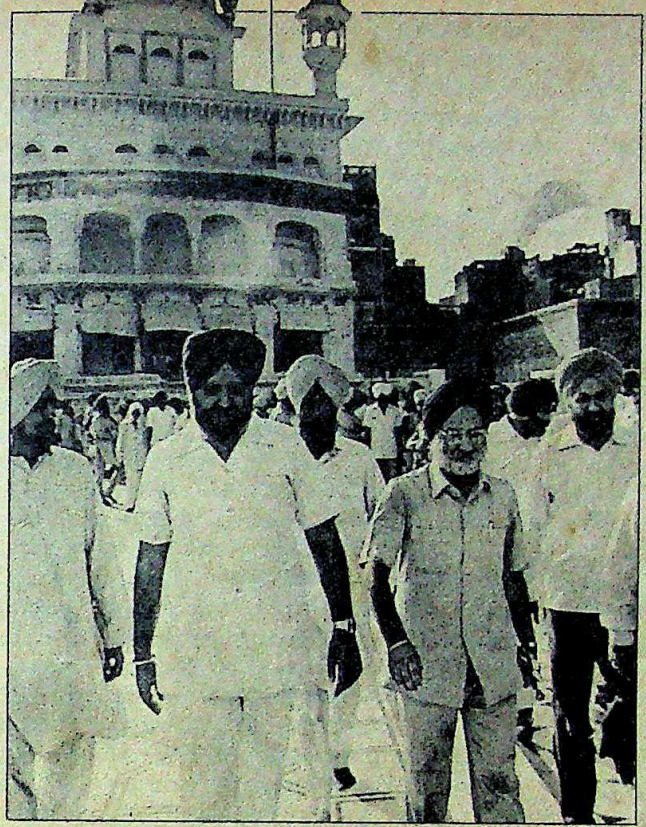
with. Besides, he asked, where was the guarantee that terrorists would not strike if the elections were held later ? Congress(I) circles agreed. Said former foreign minister Swaran Singh: "If the terrorist scare stalls a democratic process, then we have accepted defeat. We must have elections. We must learn to swim against the worst of tides." And in New Delhi, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told the opposition leaders: "I have always had a feeling that President's rule solves nothing."

His declaration also underscored the feverish build-up that the state Congress(I) has been going through. Even as three dozen MP's sent by the party high command to gauge party prospects toured the state, aspirants to party tickets did the rounds of party offices in New Delhi and the major towns in Punjab. State Congress(I) chief R.S. Sparrow's statement, "We are only waiting for the Election Commission's announcement", added to the election tempo. Intelligence reports also indicated that polls in September were a feasible proposition.

Partly, the Congress(I)'s keenness stems from the unambiguity about its vote bank. The Congress(I) is clearly banking on the Hindu and Harijan vote with the projected election rhetoric that the Akalis created the Punjab mess. Other parties are not similarly placed. The CPI(M) and CPI, with four and five seats in the now-dissolved 117-member state Assembly, and the BJP, with just one seat, fear they will be left high and dry in case of a polarisation of votes along communal lines, with the Hindus voting for the Congress(I) and the Sikhs, who comprise 61 per cent of the state's population, largely voting for the Akalis.

But the strength of the Congress(I) is also its weakness. As a senior leader put it, in order to bring stability to the state the central party leadership has accepted the fact that the Akalis must be in the saddle. Explained a senior party leader: "This is a political necessity for two reasons. Firstly, the present political climate in the state demands it. Secondly, there is an urgent need to isolate terrorism, which has its links across the border, and this can be done better by bringing the Akalis back to power. The basic aim of the agitation was to capture power and if the Akalis fail this time, the accord will also fail."



Balwant Singh (second from right) after meeting high priests: instant pardon

However, the divisions in the Akali Dal (L), with Longowal on one side and Tohra and Badal on the other, are just as deep as they were when Longowal signed the accord. Charged Badal: "Longowal for the last two years has been ignoring me and my supporters. In order to finish me he had all my MLA's resign from the assembly, thus taking away my status of an opposition leader, and now he is ignoring me." He still continues to label the accord a "total sell-out", conveniently forgetting that he was prepared to accept even less favourable terms a year ago. As for Tohra, it is not a secret that he aspires to become the chief minister. In fact, the ambitions of these politicians have led to some bizarre developments. Both Tohra and Badal first met Longowal's rival Jagdev Singh Talwandi in Patiala to chalk out a common strategy to checkmate Longowal but suspicions of each other's intentions put a damper on the whole meeting. Subsequently, Badal and Tohra did a *volte face* and met Longowal to work out formulations to fight the elections. Badal stressed that the Akali Dal, which is currenlty split into three factions headed by Longowal, Talwandi and Baba Joginder Singh, must unite to fight the polls. "If we want to win, we must fight unitedly. Otherwise we shall be finished," he argues.

The confusion on elections has been worse confounded by goings-on in Baba Joginder Singh's United Akali Dal and some moves by the high priests. While the Baba told INDIA TODAY: "We shall decide about the elections when these are announced and only God can guide us in our relations with the rival Akali Dal," his general secretary Inderjit Singh Sekhon reportedly issued a statement welcoming the idea of elections. While the suggestion for a five-member parliamentary board to work out the seat adjustments between the two Dals has not found favour, it is believed the United Akali Dal will contest only 15 seats if polls are held—as government sources indicate—either on September 27, 28 or 29. Meanwhile, the high priests have made it clear that if the political leaders fail to unite when the elections are announced, they will issue a *hukamnama* merging all the Dals and taking over the role of seat allotment to Akali candidates. Said Akal Takht head priest Kirpal Singh: "We are keen for unity and shall play a positive role at an appropriate time." The priests, who were in session in Amritsar last fortnight , also exonerated Akali leader Balwant Singh of the charge that he had written a letter to Mrs. Gandhi in June last year in support of Operation Bluestar. The complaint, filed by the United Akali Dal, was disposed of in record time by getting a written reply from Balwant Singh. "We do not want to create more problems, the *panth* has already a bag-full of these," said one priest.

While the issue of elections hogged the headlines, the last word had apparently not been said on other matters relating to the accord. Former finance minister and one of the three leaders who met Rajiv, Balwant Singh claimed that "Rajiv and Longowal reached a definite understanding" on the issue of army deserters, Sikhs undergoing trial in special courts in Punjab and Rajasthan and adequate compensation for victims of the Punjab tragedy. Governor Arjun Singh did not deny this but hastened to disclaim: "How can I know what the prime minister and the Akali Dal president discussed in their private meeting ?" But some of the steps have taken the wind out of the criticism of the accord voiced by dissenting Akalis. These include suspension of

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the martial law trials and recruitment of as many Sikh army deserters as possible into the paramilitary forces. The Central Government is also actively considering financial help for the families of nearly 7,000 deserters.

A committee has also been constituted to review the cases of those arrested from the Golden Temple during the crackdown and now facing trial in special courts in Jodhpur and Ajmer. Officials say that out of 370 less than 40 will ultimately face trial. Hardcore pro-Khalistanis like former minister Sukhjinder Singh and Dal Khalsa leader Harsimran Singh have already been released and have declared their support for the accord. The Punjab Government has withdrawn cases

PUNJAB ACCORD

Behind the scenes

The Rajiv-Longowal accord on Punjab, signed on July 24 in the capital, was preceded by four weeks of behind the scenes negotiations. Few records were maintained of the unfolding events except for a slender bunch of letters, business-like and bereft of emotion, exchanged between the two leaders. Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA *visited Chandigarh last fortnight to piece together, from the letters and the scraps of evidence available, a chronicle of the weeks leading to the historic accord. His report:*

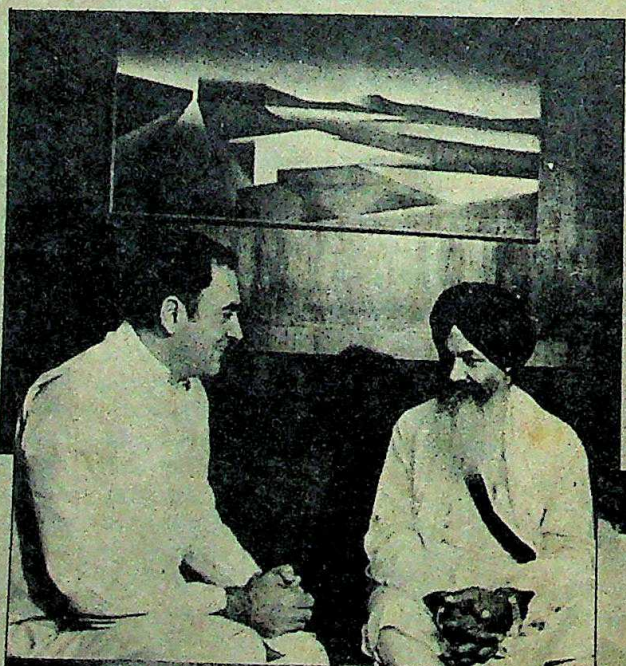
ARJUN Singh is known to be peripatetic. So no one took notice when, in the weeks following Rajiv Gandhi's return from his US visit on June 18, Singh flew in and out of the capital every few days. There was speculation about fresh initiatives on the vexing Punjab problem but Singh gave nothing away: he met only the prime minister and scrupulously avoided the Punjab Government's officials based in Delhi. Not surprisingly then, very few people were in the know when, on July 2, Rajiv handed Singh a sealed letter addressed to Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, president of the Akali Dal. The same evening, Singh, with the letter safely in his briefcase, flew back to Chandigarh. Within hours, Shankar Narayan, joint secretary to the Punjab governor who had been on Singh's staff since 1980 was driving to Longowal village, 80 km from Chandigarh, to deliver the letter to the Sant.

The 16-line letter was brief and to the point. It read: "Dear Sant Longowalji, you are aware that finding a solution to the problems in Punjab has been one of our foremost concerns. Despite many handicaps, in view of our commitment to bring peace and prosperity to Punjab, we have taken a number of initiatives on the economic, cultural and political fronts to create an atmosphere in which sincere efforts for a solution could be made. It is a matter of satisfaction to us that the Shiromani Akali Dal and you personally have responded positively to these measures and we feel that the stage has now been reached when a formal initiative for a settlement of the outstanding problems can be taken. I would request you, therefore, to come to Delhi at your earliest convenience for a meeting with me so that we could discuss and decide the manner in which further steps are to be taken. You may decide, if you so choose, to bring any other person along with you for the meeting."

For days together, the letter elicited no overt response from the Akali leader. But Singh knew what Longowal needed most at that stage: time. Perhaps no one knew more than Singh—chief minister of Madhya Pradesh when the Akali triumvirate of Parkash Singh Badal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Longowal was lodged at Panchmarhi Jail in his state—that the detention of the leaders in the months after 'Operation Bluestar' had brought about a sea-change in both Badal and Tohra. While Longowal remained a moderate leader, Badal and Tohra had toughened in their stance. Singh knew that Longowal would have to hasten slowly if he did not wish to be outflanked by his fire-spewing comrades.

So, hiding the fact of his receiving the letter from the prime minister, Longowal decided to go ahead with his already fixed calendar of events. Accordingly, a convention of all ex-MP's, ex-MLA's, district level office-bearers and jathedars of the

Rajiv and Longowal (below), (left) Arjun Singh and (right) Balwant Singh: peace moves



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against nearly 4,000 facing trial in special courts. Those involved in serious crimes are to be kept in jails, the rest will be freed soon.

To absconding Sikh youths, the Government has promised sympathetic consideration. They could present their cases before the deputy commissioners and also the high level committee for fair treatment. A kind of general amnesty is in the offing though the Government has not used that expression. Doubts about the Centre's commitment to the Punjab accord were lessening and whatever decision the Centre finally takes on holding the elections, the next fortnight may well see the accord more strengthened.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

Akali Dal was convened on July 9 at the historic shrine of Anandpur Sahib. Presiding over it, Longowal gave a call for resuming the *dharam yudh* (holy war) against the Centre from August 20.

A member of the committee was Balwant Singh, industrialist from Jalandhar who had served the Akali ministry as its finance minister, and who was in the know of things. Only a day after the fireworks at Anandpur Sahib, Balwant Singh wrote to Arjun Singh on July 9: "He (Longowal) has desired me to convey through you his warm greetings to the prime minister. He has further desired me to intimate it to you for the information of the prime minister that he will be writing to him in response to his letter on his return from the tour of Rajasthan."

Longowal continued to play with his cards close to his chest. His tour of Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the following days was, therefore, a delicate blend of caution and aggression. On the one hand, he made it clear that he was looking for a settlement within the framework of the Constitution. But on the other hand, he repeated his preconditions for peace, reiterating the familiar theme of the Centre being untrustworthy.

Balwant Singh was not the only one in touch with Arjun Singh: Prithpal Singh Kapoor, a retired principal of Amritsar's Khalsa College and a trusted friend of Longowal, and Attar Singh, a Chandigarh academician also close to the Sant, were constantly carrying messages, tying up loose ends and clearing the deck for a top-level parley. The Rajiv administration was not lacking in reciprocity: as many as 1,700 alleged extremists were released from detention, and it was announced that the special courts to try extremists would not have their term extended. Longowal's negotiators were also told that the scope of the judicial enquiry into the November riots in Delhi would be extended to other areas, as demanded by the Akalis, and the Sikh deserters from the army would also be rehabilitated.

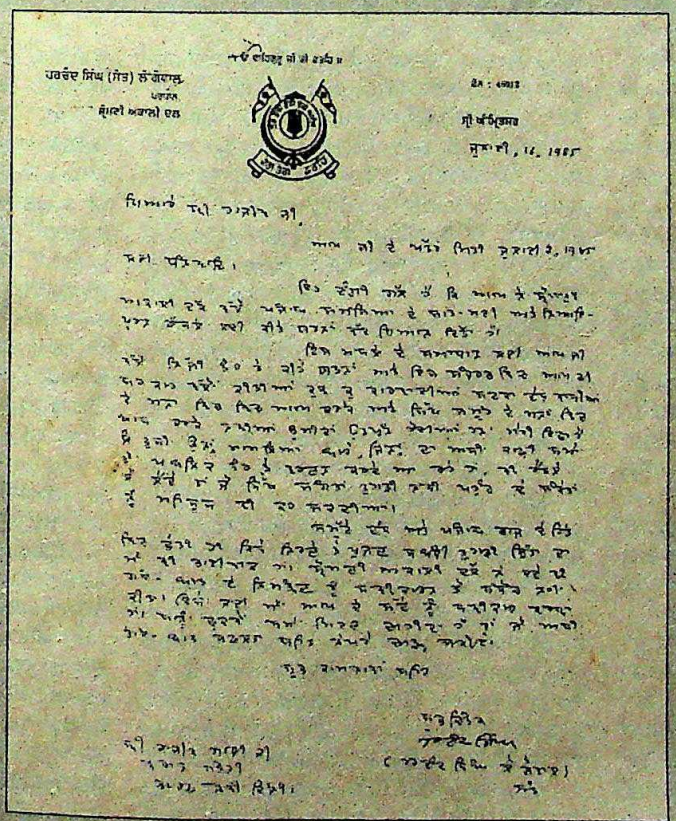
Now the climax was in sight. Longowal, convinced that he was close to clinching peace, finally wrote a letter to Rajiv on July 16. He drafted the letter in Gurumukhi and Kapoor, who took it to Singh, translated it en route into English. The letter read: "It is good of you to have taken note of the efforts of the Shiromani Akali Dal towards a peaceful and just solution of the Punjab problem. Your personal efforts towards finding a solution to this problem and certain measures taken by your government in this regard have generated new hopes in the minds of the people of the country in general and the Sikhs in particular. I wish it were possible for you to take a few more steps in this regard to solve the matters mentioned by me on public platform to enable the Sikh masses to have the feel of your fresh approach. I share your anxiety for an early settlement in the larger interests of the country and the Punjab state. The Shiromani Akali Dal has never failed to respond to the invitations for talks. Accordingly, I accept your invitation. We may meet at a suitable time to carry the dialogue to a successful end."

The "suitable time" was six days away. On July 17, only a day after Arjun Singh had faithfully rendered his same-day courier service and carried Longowal's letter to Rajiv, came a reply from the prime minister. Rajiv wrote: "I welcome your readiness to come to Delhi for talks. It would be appropriate in my view that we meet at 1000 hrs on Tuesday, the 23rd July, 1985."

Characteristically, Longowal hesitated once again. He did not reply quickly to the prime minister. On July 21, prepared to break all protocol, Singh drove down to the house of Balwant Singh at Sector 6 in Chandigarh, where he met Longowal for the first time since becoming the governor of Punjab. Besides Longowal, the other Akali leaders present at Balwant Singh's house included Badal and Tohra.

After hours of hemming and hawing at the meeting, where Singh was also present, Badal and Tohra sourly agreed that Longowal should talk to the prime minister. But Longowal's written acceptance did not arrive till the next day, minutes before Singh was to leave for Delhi. The letter simply read: "I will reach at the appointed time for the meeting on July 23, 1985." With the letter in his pocket, Singh drove to the prime minister's residence. It was evening already. By night, the press announcement was made about the talks next day. The rest is history.

Longowal's letter to the prime minister



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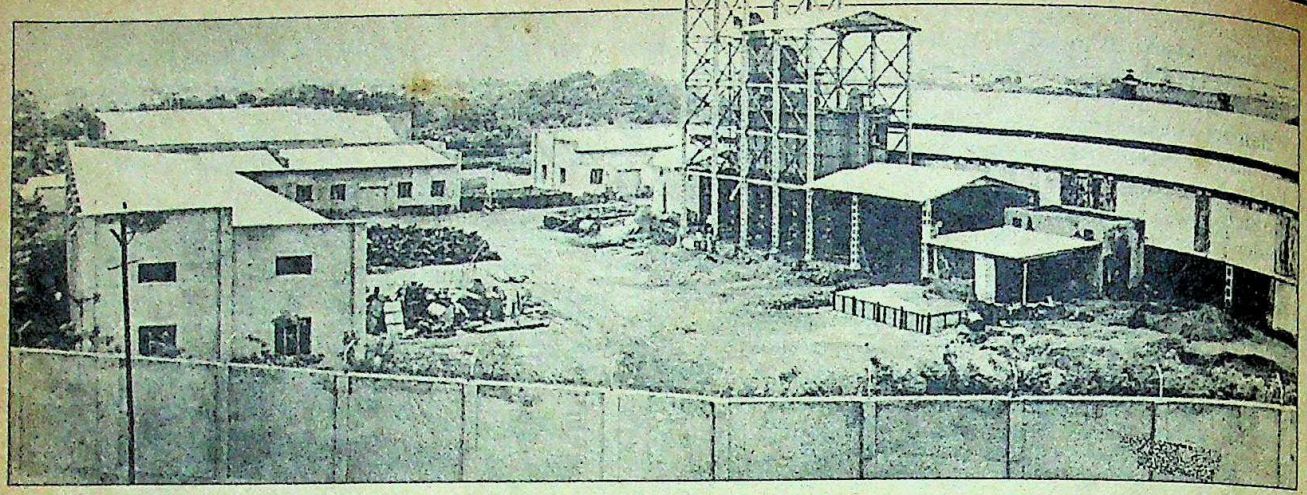

GUJARAT

A Land of Scandal

Barely a month after taking over the troubled state, Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary found himself last fortnight in the throes of a massive land scandal which sullied his promised government with a "clean image" in its first test. The arrest of Popatlal Patel, a prominent Rajkot industrialist accused of land-grab, and subsequent release under pressure from a minister belonging to the same caste also showed that the once all-powerful Patels, who had been overshadowed by the Kshatriyas in the reign of Madhavsinh Solanki, are again reasserting themselves.

It all started when Devender Kumar Sikri, the Rajkot collector, arrested Patel who has grabbed 10,000 sq m of government land (market value: Rs 90 lakh) for his unit, Field Marshall, which manufactures oil engines (annual turnover: Rs 20 crore). Land-grab has been endemic in Rajkot and the civic authorities have found themselves helpless in the face of covert political backing for the offenders. Sikri thought he would circumvent the pressures by arresting Patel under the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act, better known as the 'Goonda Act'.

Senior ministers of the Chaudhary Cabinet, led by Health Minister Vallabhai Patel, a close friend of Popatlal Patel, immediately mounted pressure on the chief minister to have Patel released. Vallabhai Patel openly lashed out against the arrest, describing Patel as a "thorough gentleman" and accusing Sikri of ordering the arrest only because the industrialist refused to strike a deal with him. Along with Sushila Sheth, his minister of state, Vallabhai Patel sent a joint letter to Chaudhary demanding action against Sikri for "misusing" the Act and "indulging in corrupt practices". Vallabhai Patel, a powerful farm leader, joined the Congress(I) only this year but has come to command a lot of clout after he prevailed on Shankerbhai Patel to call off the anti-reservation agitation.

His ministerial colleagues were clearly in agreement. Mahant Vijaydasji, president of the Pradesh Congress(I) Committee and minister of agriculture, argued that the Goonda Act should be used only against "habitual" and "professional" offenders. Even Chaudhary said that the Act had not been implemented in its "true spirit". Only Finance Minister Arvind Sanghvi backed Sikri. Sanghvi maintained that there was no difference between a 'habitual' landgrabber and an ordinary landgrabber. Party circles in Rajkot were even more incensed: all 25 Congress(I) corporators wrote to Rajiv Gandhi seeking permission to resign. The upshot of all this pressure was that Popatlal Patel was released within 48 hours.

The hair-splitting and weak rationalisation only made the Government look ridiculous. The Act clearly lays down that a landgrabber can be arrested under it. As BJP corporator Vinod Sheth asked: "Is the government trying to say that if a man grabs 200 sq m five times he is an offender because he does it repeatedly but if he were to grab 10,000 sq m at one go he is not an offender because he has only done it once?" Rajkot's people share the scepticism. Said Ramesh Mavani, a shop owner: "If a poor slum dweller builds a shack on government land he is an offender but when the rich grab thousands of square metres, the Government gets upset." Adds a bitter T.K.Makada, CPI activist: "Thousands of poor people have no place to live and here the Government supports defaulters who have grabbed thousands of acres." But, defending his stand, Vallabhai Patel told INDIA TODAY: "It is true that we would not have been upset over the arrest of a slum dweller for a similar offence, but isn't there a difference between a slum dweller and a man of stature like Popatbhai?"

Patel's illegally constructed factory in Rajkot; collector Sikri (left) with minister Vallabhai Patel

Patel's remarks against Sikri, predictably, resulted in a rift between the bureaucracy and the executive. Several IAS officers demanded that Patel and Sheth publicly apologise to Sikri and the executive committee of the state IAS Officers' Association submitted a memorandum to Chaudhary asking him to clarify the situation to avoid further complications. Sikri himself wrote a letter to Chief Secretary R.V. Chandramouli

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saying that the minister's charges were baseless and an obvious afterthought.

Sikri's critics also alleged that he had discriminated by moving against industrialists but sparing slum lords who had similarly grabbed land. But this criticism lost its edge when he arrested Kana Ahir, a much-feared slum lord and Congress(I) leader. Ahir controls 50-odd slums and was granted the privilege of garlanding Rajiv Gandhi when he came to Rajkot last December. Sikri had collected evidence that Ahir had grabbed 48,880 sq m of government land. Sikri had similarly drawn up a list of 40 city industrialists who have grabbed some 50,000 sq m of land. Popatlal was one of them.

Now, of course, Sikri has drawn back and other detention orders have been stayed. But ironically enough the Patel arrest has had a salutary effect on landgrabbers. The Rajkot Engineering Association has asked its members to surrender land illegally taken and six of the 40 businessmen on Sikri's list have written to Municipal Commissioner C.J. Jose promising to surrender land. Popatlal himself, who refused to comment on the issue when contacted, was making plans to pull down structures he had set up in the land he had grabbed.

The affair has also exposed Patel leaders in the Opposition. Chimanbhai Patel, state Janata chief and leader of the Opposition in the Assembly who loses no opportunity to criticise the Government, joined the chorus of Patel leaders against the arrest. Caste loyalty was not the only consideration behind this show of solidarity. Had Popatlal Patel's release not been secured, many other well-placed Patels would have been arrested in Rajkot.

Chief Minister Chaudhary realises that the affair has only made the Government unpopular and desperate efforts were being made to recover lost ground. Chaudhary dashed to Rajkot where he tried to win over the local press by promising all journalists free trips to anywhere in India. But back in Gandhinagar he accused the media of creating discord between ministers and bureaucrats. Revenue Minister Harsinh Mahida announced that he had asked all collectors to arrest landgrabbers but INDIA TODAY learnt that no such instructions had been issued. On the contrary, some collectors who were planning similar arrests have decided to stay their hands. Former health minister Manoharsinh Jadeja summed up the episode aptly when he said: "The Gujarat Government stands exposed."

—RAMESH MENON in Rajkot

ANTI-RESERVATION STIR

Peace at Last

CALM at long last seems to have returned to Gujarat, after months of trauma and turmoil. Last fortnight was virtually incident free and, with curfew finally lifted from Ahmedabad, it looked as if the nightmare was finally ending. Though tension still prevailed in certain areas in Ahmedabad's walled city, life was rapidly coming back to normal with the army withdrawn and

Chaudhary: clamping down

the police given back the charge, shops reopening, students returning to their books and examinations scheduled for later this month.

The Amarsinh Chaudhary Government, which started off well by reaching an accord with the anti-reservationists, has been continuing the good work. The accent is now on tackling Ahmedabad's anti-socials who were taking advantage of the discontent on the reservations issue. Bootleggers were the focus of the police action and a multi-pronged strategy was adopted. On the one hand, a massive crackdown was ordered on them: over 120 bootleggers were arrested and liquor worth over Rs 2.5 lakh seized. The effect of this on the people was stunning in its impact. When they swooped down on a well-known bootlegger, Mohammed Panjabi in Shahpur area of Ahmedabad, over 3,000 onlookers collected to watch in disbelief.

The police also moved to clean its own stables. City Police Commissioner B.K. Jha was told to disband four special prohibition squads in a tacit admission that the squads had been compromised by the bootleggers. The credit for this refreshingly objective look at itself goes to Director-General J.F. Ribeiro. More and more it seems the Centre's decision to send him here was an inspired one.

Communal tension was also being slowly defused as various gangs of anti-socials organised on communal lines were at last tackled by the police. One such gang, using heavy explosives, was responsible for a number of bomb blasts in the city. The police grew suspicious when six youngsters, all in their 20s, were admitted to hospital with their right hands injured. They claimed to be victims of a bomb blast. Interrogations, however, revealed that they were injured while trying to make a bomb.

The anti-reservations agitation is all but over. Dr Gaurang Shah, convenor of the Students' Committee, was still making protesting noises but the stragglers with him hastened to buy peace with the Government on the assurance that more medical and engineering colleges will be opened. But the Government's problems are not over. Government employees protesting the roster system, were still on strike though here too a settlement seemed imminent. The administration's major worry was its inability to unearth illegaly held private arms.

Nor have all social tensions subsided. The anti-reservations agitation, predictably, has united the backward castes and the tribals and last fortnight these sections showed the clout they command by taking out an impressive 1.5 km procession in Baroda warning against any termination of the roster system, shouting "*Roster mita sake voh zamane mein dam nahin*" (nobody has the courage to lift the roster system).

With total peace imminent, Chaudhary and his officials shifted their attention to reviving the image of the state as an industrial paradise. They realise that the last five months' violence and lawlessness has worried potential investors. But as the Additional Chief Secretary H.K. Khan said: "Gujarat will continue to be an investor's dream. Temporary violence will not kill the traditional Gujarati enterprise. We will soon be back on the road to rapid industrialisation." The words no longer ring hollow.

—RAMESH MENON

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ASSAM

Prospects of Peace

THE six-year-old Assam crisis, for all practical purposes, seemed almost resolved last fortnight with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi all but announcing the actual terms of the settlement. Addressing an unprecedented 60,000-strong gathering in Guwahati's George's Field on August 12, the prime minister said that he would be making the happy announcement soon. With that the Assamese finally heaved a sigh of relief. But Rajiv's reassuring speech was not altogether unexpected.

Rajiv's visit to the state came close on the heels of the Centre's talks with the agitation leaders in New Delhi after an undertaking to negotiate without any pre-conditions. To the battle-fatigued All Assam Students Union (AASU) agitationists yearning for a "respectable" solution, the first flush of hope had seemed like sunshine, dimming the memories of slaughter, remorseless parochialism and hysteria hanging like a spectre over the state. "It is a time of opportunity", observed AASU leader Bhrigu Phukan, "and hundreds of people have been coming to us asking to end all this once and for all."

The Centre's truce signals had come like a bolt from the blue to agitation leaders. In Delhi for submitting a memorandum of complaint to the chief election commissioner on the new electoral rolls being prepared, the leaders were surprised by an invitation from the Union home minister. At the meeting the Centre's proposals were an even bigger surprise: the Saikia Ministry would be dissolved if the agitationists agreed to moderate their demands for the deportation of all foreigners who had settled in the state after 1961.

The three agitation leaders present at the talks—AASU's Prafulla Mahanta, Bhrigu Phukan and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) Convenor Biraj Sharma—were almost tempted to finalise the accord, accepting 1967 as the cut-off year for the deportation of foreigners and fresh elections called on the basis of the electoral rolls under preparations.

But back in Guwahati, the three leaders found themselves on the firing line. Dismayed by press reports that they had tentatively agreed to 1971 as the cut-off year, AAGSP hardliners demanded an explanation from the trio. According to state intelligence sources, the negotiators were told to return with a written draft proposal from the Centre during the August 11 meeting and not to commit themselves to any agreement. And as if to reaffirm their militancy the AAGSP executive passed a resolution calling for a 12-hour bandh on Independence Day.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Assam agitation leaders arrive for meeting in Delhi: optimistic mood

Bhrigu Phukan told INDIA TODAY after the stormy AASU-AAGSP meeting on the evening of August 9: "The Centre must make some concessions, otherwise people who are now hoping for a satisfactory solution will be completely frustrated and we cannot be expected to have control over everybody's action." Some people looked forward to the imminent accord. Said Trabin Kumar Gogoi, president of the Asom Jatiadabai Yuba-Chatra Parishad, one of the constituents of AAGSP: "It's only people like me who have had to give up their jobs to devote time for the movement, but so many others have died for the cause and all this time it seemed everything had been in vain. Obviously people can't go on fighting for years—there must be an honourable settlement." Gogoi is looking forward to returning to work. A housewife in Guwahati felt the urgent need for an accord : "What was the agitation for I wonder, we supported the boys thinking they were agitating for the good of the state but nothing happened except people were killed and the prices of everything went up. Now we only hope Rajiv Gandhi will offer the boys something that they can accept."

Last fortnight the Congress(I)'s election pledge understandably assured a solution to the Assam problem and nobody could accuse it of not trying. The manifesto declared that the party was:

- no longer insisting that 1971 be accepted as the cut-off year;
- the Saikia Ministry would be dissolved the moment an accord was forged;
- the Election Commission would ensure that the names of all foreigners were deleted from the voters list maintaining 1971 as the base year.
- it was ready to negotiate with the agitationists on other demands like the withdrawal of repressive measures, release of arrested agitationists etc.

On the face of this, it would appear difficult to understand what more the Assam agitationists could want. But as an AASU member explained sheepishly: "The leaders do not want to give the impression that the six-year-long agitation has not gained anything but token gestures from the Centre." And it does seem a matter of saving face because neither the state nor the Centre had shown any inclination to actually deport anyone detected as foreigner.

Whatever the pronouncement, even Saikia cannot deny that the proposal for the dissolution of the assembly in Assam has been the cruellest cut to Congressmen. "My people remind me that in the worst days of the party they stood by it while their children, friends and relatives were killed. Today all that has changed because they fought and never surrendered," Saikia said.

In a meeting of Congress workers and minority leaders two days before Rajiv Gandhi visited the state and delivered his reassuring speech, Chief Minister Saikia compared himself to a soldier who had to fling himself before death if ordered by his leader. "This is a compromise we have to make for the good of the state and the country," said Saikia accepting his fate as the louder din of distant celebrations sounded over the state.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Guwahati

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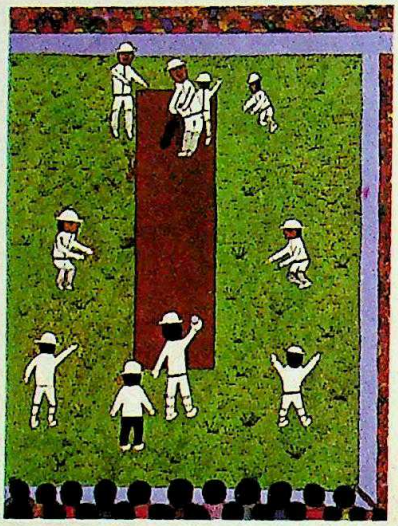
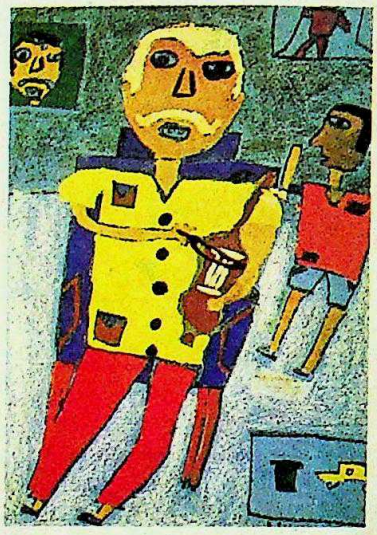
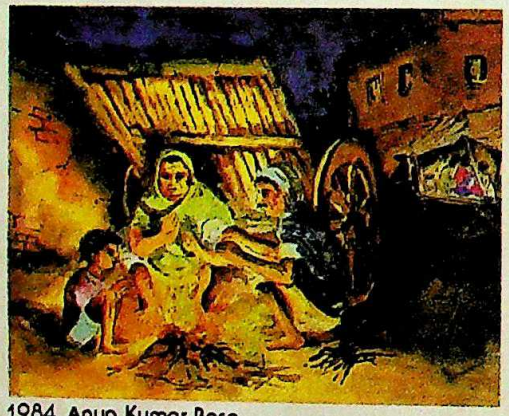


1982
Reynold D'cruz,
Model English School,
Dombivili, Maharashtra.



1983
Devang Mistry,
Bal Kala Kendra,
Vadodara, Gujarat.



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CONGRESS(I)

Costly Flak

"We do not understand the figures given by the Government but we do understand that the price of every commodity has increased."

—GIRDHARI LAL VYAS, MP, in the Lok Sabha.

"The price rise is mainly attributable to the increase in the prices of petrol, diesel, fertilisers, pesticides and agricultural products after the presentation of the budget"

—VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN, MP.

"The common man put various questions to us regarding this abnormal price rise and as a member of Parliament we had no reply to their questions."

—MADAN PANDEY, MP

"Poor people are suffering due to collusion of corrupt politicians, government employees and the rich."

MOOL CHAND DAGA, MP (Congress-I)

"Government figures are not near to reality because they relate to the wholesale price and not the retail price."

NIRMAL KUMARI MP (Congress-I)

MEMBERS of Parliament are supposed to echo the voice of the people but over the last two decades this job has increasingly been appropriated by those from the Opposition. No longer: there is growing evidence that ruling party MP's are finally finding their voice. Vyas, Jain and Pandey all belong to the Congress(I) and last fortnight they minced few words as they attacked their own ministers in the Lok Sabha in the course of a discussion on the rise in prices. The target of their attack was, in the main, Union Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh though some of the flak was also directed at the Food and Civil Supplies Minister Rao Birendra Singh.

It all started off at the July 22 eve-of-the-session meeting of the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party. Traditionally this is an occasion where the prime minister and senior ministers acquaint the party MP's with what is expected of them in the session ahead. Fireworks are rarely the order of the day and when Rajiv Gandhi asked Singh to address the MP's on the last item on the agenda—the increase in prices—nobody could have predicted the volcano that erupted. The soft-spoken, conscientious Singh had barely launched into the statistics in support of his contention that there hadn't been a significant price rise when the hall erupted with cries of "we don't want statistics" and "statistics lie". One MP recalled: "There were only a few MP's who were not on their feet shouting. You won't believe this but among those shouting 'we don't want statistics' was Amitabh Bachchan. Even some ministers covertly joined in; (Minister of State for Steel) Natwar Singh was heard telling people 'Shout, shout'."

The result was that even as a dumbfounded Rajiv looked on, Singh was not allowed to continue. Old-timers assert that the only previous time when a Union minister had been heckled in this manner and prevented from speaking at a party parliamentary group meeting was in 1962 when defence minister V.K. Krishna Menon came under attack over the war with China. Sensing the belligerent mood of the MP's, Rajiv promised a special general body meeting of the parliamentary party devoted exclusively to the subject of prices.

As it turned out, one meeting was not sufficient; the ire of the members spilled over to another meeting and even a third was scheduled but had to be put off because of Maken's murder. At the first meeting the budget was the special target. MP's felt that the Government was not sincere about bringing down prices and one particularly acerbic critic, 67-year-old Mool Chand Daga (Pali), accused the Government of trying to "fraud" the people. At the second meeting members pilloried the Government for the inadequacies in the distribution of civil supplies.

It was soon clear that members had not yet exhausted their ammunition. In a two-day discussion on prices in the Lok Sabha, several ruling party MP's criticised the Government in terms that would have done the Opposition proud. Vyas (from Bhilwara), Jain (Barmer) and Pandey (Gorakhpur) were not the only ones who lashed out. Partymen from all parts of the country were critical. Said Y.S. Mahajan (Jalgaon) "There is no doubt that the price rise (in sugar) is due to maladministration." Added Nirmal Kumari Shaktawat (Chittorgarh): "The figures given by the Government are not near to reality because (they) relate to (the) wholesale price and not to the retail price." Noted K.V. Thomas (Ernakulam): "Cloth is one of the major items where the people are cheated." Charged Girdhari Lal Dogra (Udhampur): "The 20-point programme is not being implemented properly." Thundered the venerable Daga: "Poor people of the country are suffering due to the collusion of some corrupt politicians, rich people and government employees."

Strictly speaking, Rao Birendra Singh should have been primarily answerable but party MP's directed the attack on Singh because they feel that it is the budget that set the spiral off. There is always a seasonal price rise before the monsoon. This year MP's feel the budget has made things worse. Singh's response was typically conscientious—he sent off two detailed letters to party MP's, along with charts of price rise over the years and tables of commodities' prices in the last few months, arguing that prices had gone up mainly only of sugar and vegetables and seeking their cooperation in restraining the price increase.

But his reasoned arguments seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The fact is that prices are this year very much under control and there's been no great general price increase in the last three or four years. But sugar has shot up to Rs 12 a kg and some other essentials like vegetable oils which have hit the bulk of the population rather hard. "We curse the Government when the people curse us," explains Vyas. The price debate is obviously destined to register a rise in the days ahead.

—AJAY KUMAR

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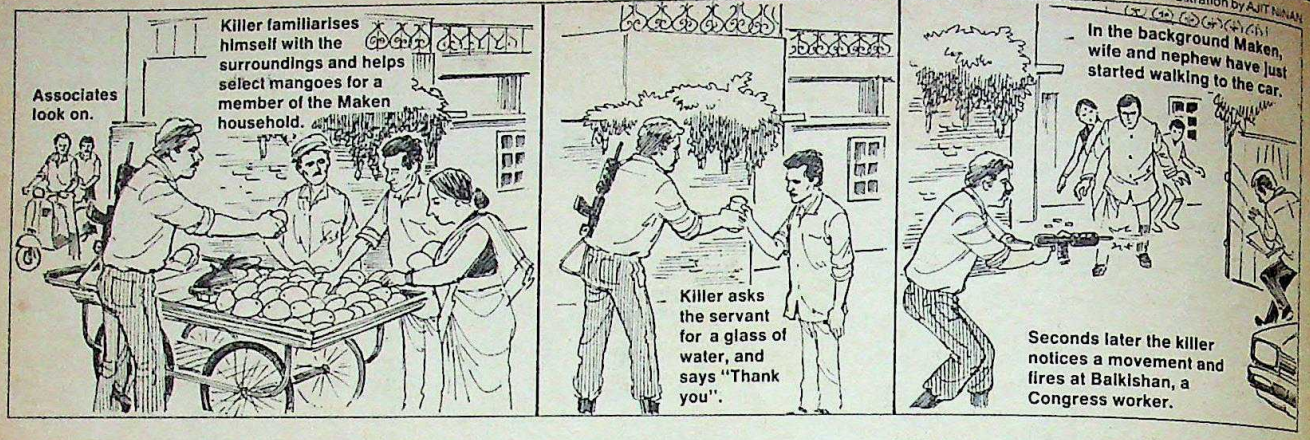
Illustration by AJIT NINAN



DELHI

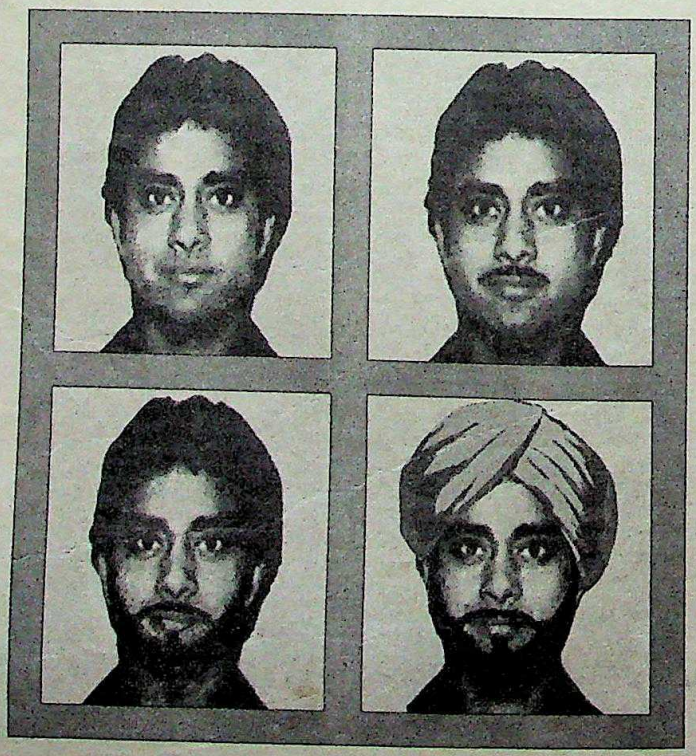
Extreme Danger

INVESTIGATIONS into the brutal slaying of Congress(I) MP Lalit Maken and his wife Geetanjali in end-July took a dramatic turn last fortnight with the police announcing that Lal Singh, the American mercenary school-trained terrorist wanted in connection with the Air-India jumbo crash was a key suspect in the case. The announcement and photographs of Lal Singh released to the press, came five days after Home Minister S.B. Chavan was grilled in Parliament for the poor state of security in the capital. Agitated opposition leaders had demanded action against the police officials who ordered the securitymen to be withdrawn from the Maken residence a few days before his death.

But the Lal Singh announcement was met predictably with widespread scepticism. The main doubt centred around the improbability of a terrorist wanted by the security forces in the US and Canada, besides the Government of India, evading the massive manhunt and crossing international borders to arrive straight into the lion's den in Delhi where security measures have of late been the tightest ever imposed. It also seemed unlikely that Lal Singh, who has rarely visited India in recent years, was able to quickly mobilise support, get hold of sophisticated arms and efficiently plan the killing of an MP in broad daylight and in a crowded area. Confessed a police officer connected with the case: "It seemed a surprise to us too. For one thing there were no intelligence reports that Lal Singh was in the capital. Moreover the very idea seems bizarre."

But the police were "sticking their necks out", as one official put it, on the basis of an accurate identification by two independent witnesses who had pored over 300 pictures of terrorists and other suspects. Disclosed one police officer: "The identification was initially the reason why we were prompted to publicise Lal Singh's picture. Later, some leads began to work out and we are at least convinced on one thing: the Maken murder is the handiwork of the extremists."

Lal Singh's photograph with possible variations released by the police



The investigators are basing much of their convictions on the several eyewitnesses to the tragedy: Suresh Mullik, a Congress worker who was in the driver's seat awaiting Maken when the assailants shot him and injured his shoulder, obtained a side view of the killers. The other witness is Karan Kapoor whose scooter, used as the get-away vehicle by the killers, was snatched at gunpoint at about 11 p.m. the previous night. The third witness was Dhiraj, Maken's nephew who was trailing behind Maken and who fled when the killers opened fire. Yet another was Maken's servant Islam, 15, who watched the entire drama from his hiding place. The last witness was a mango seller with whom one of the terrorists struck up a nonchalant conversation.

Islam, the servant, who denies that he has seen Lal Singh's picture before, says: "I was taken to the police station and asked to identify the killers from about 50 pictures. I took some time but I was able to spot him (Lal Singh) out." For his age Islam has a remarkably photogenic memory: "He was wearing jeans, a blue self-designed shirt and gum boots that can be zipped up." But what probably clinched the issue for the police is Islam's disclosure that the killer had a scar on his right finger. "That was quite a disclosure," confessed a police official. Lal Singh's police dossier

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PUNJAB

The Hit Men

A DECEPTIVE quiet hangs by day over what was not too long ago a major terrorist arena—the 'Bhindranwale belt' along the border areas of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. But come dusk and the undercurrent of tension is far more palpable. Then, heavily armed policemen seem to sprout all over, manning barricades at roads leading to the interior and asking searching questions at the rural police posts. All this is evidence of the massive efforts to trace those extremists who continue to give the authorities the slip and operate with impunity not only in Punjab but other states—having successfully engineered the Delhi bomb blasts and, more recently, been associated with the murder of Congress (I) MP Lalit Maken.

Last fortnight the Punjab Government announced for the first time a series of rewards worth lakhs of rupees for information leading to the capture of 13 of the more prominent terrorists. Photographs and descriptions of some of them were published in the *Akali Patrika*, the widely-circulated Punjabi daily. The rewards were of Rs 1 lakh each for the capture of five of the extremists and Rs 50,000 each for eight of the others.

But it is not only a small remnant of die-hard terrorists that is worrying the authorities. In the first exhaustive survey of its kind on the number of youths missing in the state, the Government has concluded that as many as 400 cannot be accounted for. Although not all have taken to terrorism, the number of officially listed extremists is as high as 125. This dangerous situation has, however belatedly, led to greater coordination between the police forces in the different states affected and the Union territories of Delhi and Chandigarh.

The suggestion that Maken may have been a victim of terrorists comes at a time when intelligence officials—at least in Punjab—were boasting of having come a shade closer to unravelling the terrorist network. So far the intelligence agencies had only been giving out general information, but now some officials say they have an idea of the terrorist hierarchy and leadership, its organisation and who the professional hit men employed are.

Anok Singh
Amritsar district
status: organiser/hit man

Sewa Singh
P.S. Verowal
status: hit man

Not many of the suspected extremists have previous records, although a few lumpen elements and smugglers operating on the Indo-Pak border seem to have joined the extremist bandwagon. Of them only a few—less than 10—are said to be shaping the movement, either independently or in tandem with the others. This hardcore had strong links with Bhindranwale and are tied to many previous offences, and as the rewards announced by the state Government indicate, they are the terrorist kingpins. INDIA TODAY was able to examine the files on some of them. Excerpts:

Sukhdev Singh, 35, resident of Dasuwal in Amritsar district. Status: dangerous. Probably an organiser. Suspected base of operation—Pakistan. Before Operation Bluestar was head of the notorious Babbar Khalsa. Rarely participates directly in terrorist acts but assigns targets to the hit squads. First came into prominence on September 21, 1981, when he and his associates sprayed bullets as they ran along a busy market-place in Amritsar district. He is close to the Akhand Kirtini Jatha run by Amarjit Kaur which clashed on many occasions with the Bhindranwale group and was suspected of organising its own hits. Sukhdev is a key suspect in the attack on an additional superintendent of police in April 1983. Last year a pamphlet purported to have been signed by Sukhdev pasted in Amritsar claimed that he had personally supervised and organised 34 murders in the state. Intelligence reports say he is now in Pakistan.

Anok Singh alias J.S.Kohli alias Inspector alias Karan Singh, 30, resident of Varring Suba Singh, Amritsar. Status: organiser/hit man. Suspected base of operation—Pakistan. An *Amirtdhari* Sikh and part of Bhindranwale's inner circle. Suspected to be involved in selected killings; involved in Taran Taran shootout in September 1981. After Operation Bluestar involved in attack on the SSP of Ludhiana, clear evidence of involvement in Delhi bomb blasts.

Bhai Kanwar Singh Dhami, resident of Sandra Sodhiah village in Hoshiarpur district. Status: organiser/motivator. Suspected base of operation: Pakistan. Principal motivator for Pak-trained terrorists. Suspected to have been in touch with Pakistan for the past few years. Before Operation Bluestar, background unknown—not connected with Bhindranwale and no known violent activity.

Ex-constables Sewa Singh, Gurnam Singh and Amarjit Singh. Operational status: hit men. Before Bluestar, they were close to Simranjit Singh Mann, former SSP of Faridkot and now in detention in Bharatpur under the National Security Act. Two of the constables suspected to be involved in a shootout in Jalandhar in which an inspector of police was killed. One of them connected with the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft after Bluestar. Sewa Singh is wanted in the Delhi bomb blasts case.

Others: Atinder Pal Singh, a Bhopal-based AISSF volunteer and Sandeep Singh, of Multani village in Bhatinda district.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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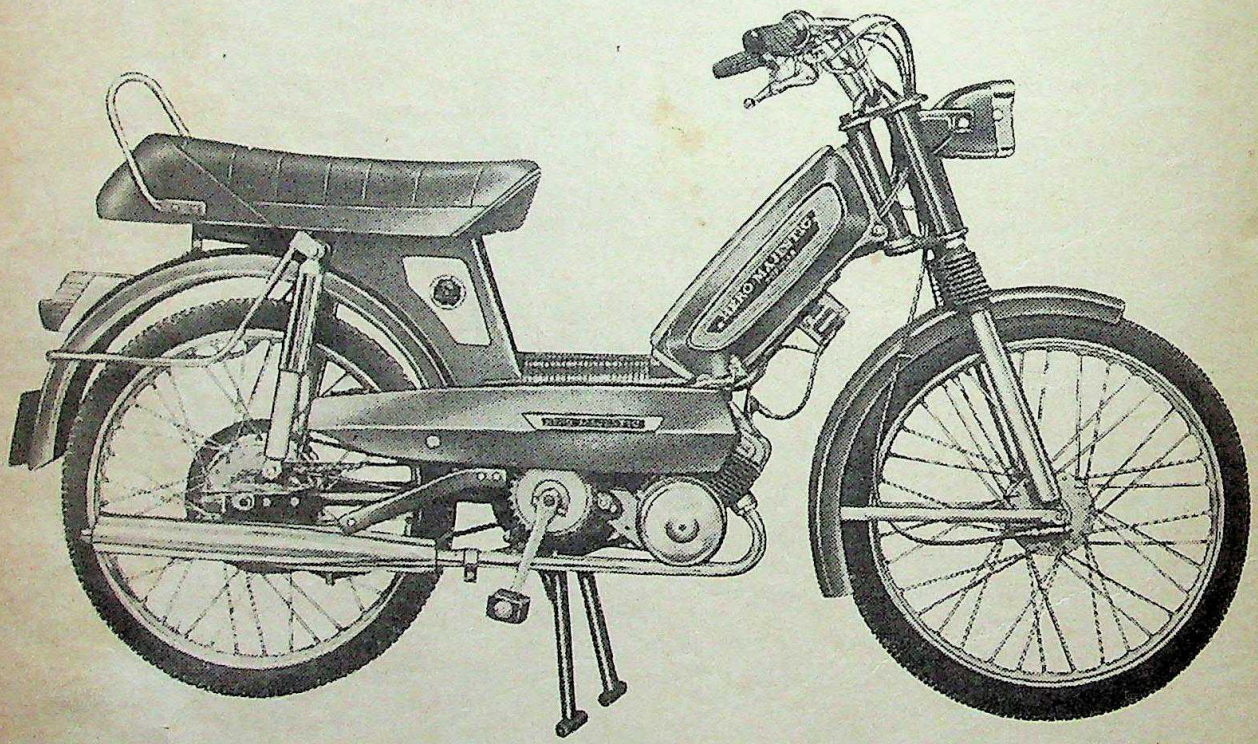
MAXIMUM SPEED	46.39 Kms./ph	



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describes him as having a scar on his right hand. Islam says he noticed the scar when the killer asked him for a glass of water which he gladly gave in the belief that it was an official security guard accompanying Maken to Parliament. Besides Islam's testimony, the identification was confirmed by a mango fruit seller present at the spot just outside the gate where the cold-blooded killings took place.

By itself, the killing and the manner in which it was effected suggests professionalism to a remarkable degree. Said one official: "It seems like a copy-book style terrorist hit, perfect in every way. There is no doubt that the killer was professionally trained." According to the police, the killing took place at about 10.23 a.m. Maken's nephew Dhiraj recalls that his mother was buying some fruits near the iron gate outside. Islam, who was helping her in selecting the fruits, remembers that one of the killers, whom he later identified as Lal Singh, was also there talking to the fruit seller. The man had his gun slung across his shoulder and everyone could see it. "We thought he was part of the security staff," he says. Islam remembers only one of the killers. While the fruits were being selected he noticed two others in a two-wheeler scooter but took very little notice of them. The man with the gun helped in selecting the fruits for Dhiraj's mother. He then asked Islam for a glass of water. Says Islam: "I used to be very friendly with these security chaps and even joked with them. I thought to myself this chap seems nice." Islam recalls that the killer drank the water and said "thank you" in English. A few seconds later all hell broke loose.

A few feet away, Maken was coming out of the house with his wife behind him. Dhiraj was to go with them to Parliament. A Congress worker, Balkishen, was waiting for Maken. Says Islam: "I think it was Balkishen's movements that triggered the first shot. The killers noticed that Balkishen was writing something. They must have thought he was noting down the number of their scooter. Actually he was writing down something else in his application." The killer described by Islam as the leader, suddenly unslung his machine-gun and shot Balkishen. Dhiraj recalls: "When I heard the shot I was paralysed. I heard my uncle telling us all to run." Dhiraj ran upstairs and hid. The killers ignored him and started firing at Maken. A bleeding Maken dragged himself inside but he was followed and his body sprayed with a hail of bullets. The other killer had also joined in the firing and Geetanjali was riddled with bullets. As they were making their get-away, Mullik tried to prevent them and was also shot. The two killers got on to the scooter kept running by the third accomplice, and sped off. An old woman in the neighbourhood recalls having seen the killers putting their weapons into a bag and laughing loudly as they fled.

Funeral of the Makens: professional killing

Police investigations have revealed that the weapons used for the killings were a .30 Mauser, a 9 mm pistol or a Sten gun. Police officials say that they are certain about the Mauser which is fitted with a holster and at times has a shoulder strap. These weapons are not easily available and support the police theory of the killers being professionally trained men. Police officers have also virtually ruled out the other theories of inter-union rivalry and political animosity after extensive investigations. Lal Singh's pictures have been flashed to airports and checkpoints and roadblocks put up in all roads leading out of Delhi. The police theory is that the terrorists may still be there trapped somewhere in a safe house. But there are doubts too: "If Lal Singh slipped the net and has come in it would be the easiest thing for him to leave," says one officer.

The Lal Singh element has added a new dimension to the terrorist threat. Admitted an intelligence official: "Even assuming it was not Lal Singh, the fact remains that the Maken killing was done professionally. The bomb blasts in May were planned well but the people used were relations of riot victims." Police officers feel that the professional element seems to have joined the terrorists already operating in the country. The impression now gaining ground after the Delhi bomb blasts is that the capital has become the nerve-centre where terrorist plans are being hatched.

But those investigating the Maken murder were not ruling out the possibility of some men involved in the blast case being involved in the MP's killings too. In the blast case, as many as 57 persons were involved and the police were able to arrest 43 persons including Delhi lawyer Kartar Singh Narang. But Narang was not considered the key man and they listed out and identified 13 prominent extremists who planned the entire operation but stayed in the background. They included Anokh Singh of Varring Suba Singh, ex-constable Sewa Singh and Sukhdev Singh of Babbar Khalsa (*see box*). In their chargesheet, the police detailed the entire conspiracy and established that the top extremists used to visit the relief camps and talk to victims at length and note down their names and addresses.

In Maken's case, the assumption is that the killers joined the existing group, who are already committed to the terrorist cause. But if the Lal Singh theory does indeed turn out to be correct it does not speak very highly of security at the airports. Besides, if he has been able to slip through the net, the police with the limited resources at their command may not be able to deal effectively with a terrorist allegedly trained in America. As one official pointed out: "Even the home-grown terrorist is proving elusive and the foreign element may be impossible to tackle." And as another added: "We think the Lal Singh lead is correct but in our hearts we are hoping that we are wrong."

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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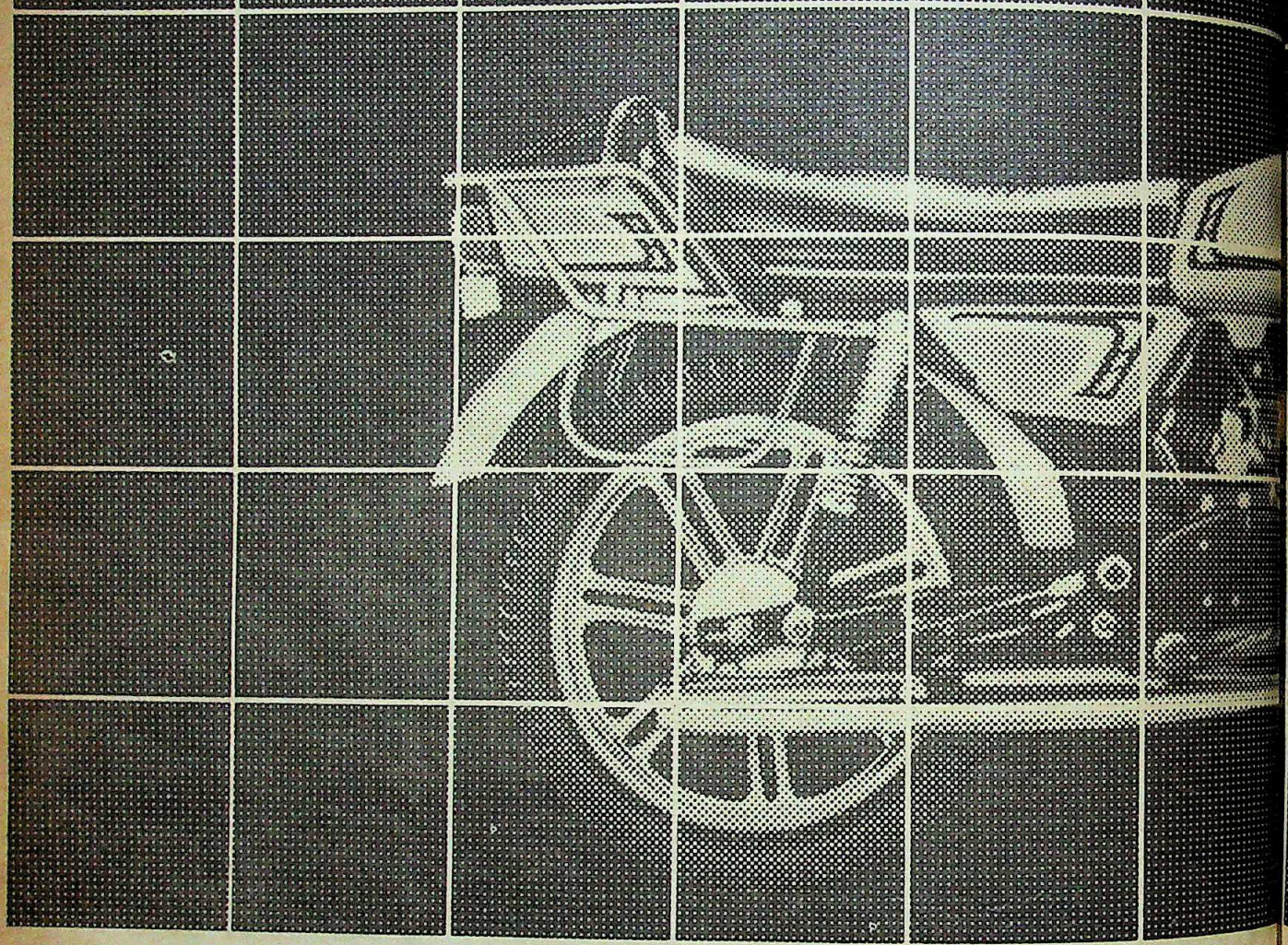

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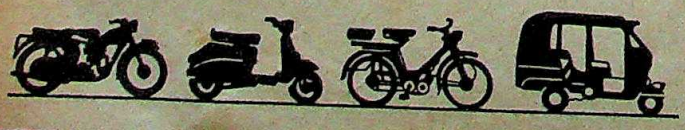

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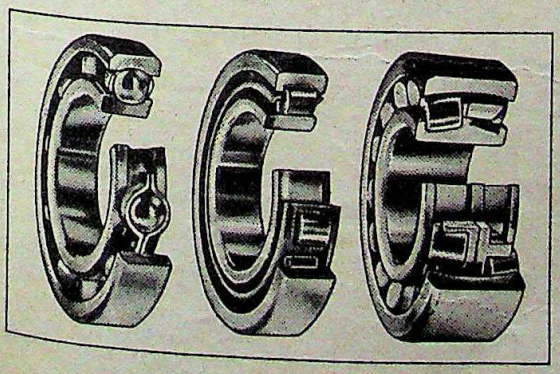

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Leader in Waiting

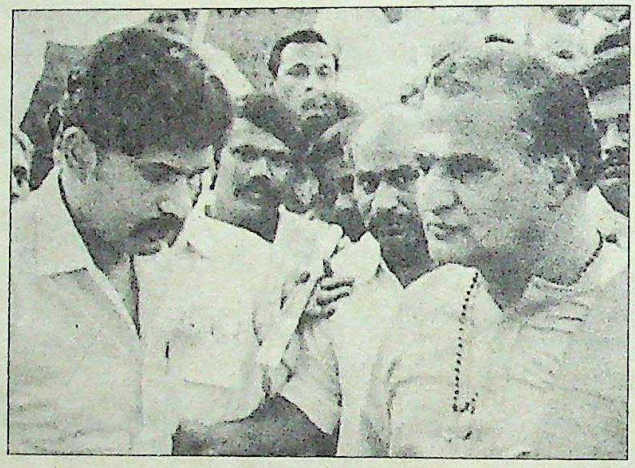
WHEN the last of the legislators left the Telugu Desam training camp in the backyard of party chief N.T.Rama Rao's Shanti Kuteeram last fortnight, the haggard face of the camp's chief convenor Naravirapalli Chandrababu Naidu brightened up. For the 34-year-old son-in-law of the Andhra Pradesh chief minister, it was a personal achievement since the whole training programme had been his brainchild. Said a beaming Naidu: "The success of the training programme has been greater than expectations. A lady MLA who could not open her mouth at the start of the camp walked away with the third prize in debating on the last day. The training has proved to be very useful and the difference will be seen during the budget session of the Assembly from August 12."

No doubt more voices will be heard from the treasury benches now. As it is, the legislators have sat in session for only 12 days since their election in March. And this, with only one microphone per eight legislators. With a topic of debate as interesting as the budget and a venue as well-equipped with mikes as the new hall inaugurated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi last fortnight, Naidu's trainees will now have ample opportunity to display their newly-acquired debating skills.

But increasing confidence in their debating skill was not the only purpose of the training scheme. The most important message driven home to party legislators at the training camps was that next to party chief NTR, Naidu is now the most important man in the party set-up. It is rumoured that no party decision can be effected without Naidu's nod of approval. NTR, it is said, has left the headache of running the party to Naidu, while he himself grapples with the problems of the state.

NTR's trust of Naidu was much in evidence in his inaugural and valedictory speeches at the camp where he made special mention of Naidu's efforts. Partymen took the cue from there and started singing Naidu's praises to please their boss. Yet, NTR cannot give Naidu a formal post in the party for fear of the charges of nepotism that will necessarily follow. NTR's dilemma is simple: if someone else is given the post, it may threaten Naidu's power in the party. On the other hand if Naidu is appointed, it may affect NTR's popularity for promoting his son-in-law.

BABJI JANATA



NTR with Naidu: strange dilemma

A safe way out is to make Naidu an equal among equals—one of a pool of secretaries—so that he can continue as the de facto working chief of the party without raising many eyebrows. NTR will have to decide one way or the other before the party holds its *mahanadu* (convention) in October. And NTR knows this only too well. Still he has had to prolong the suspense so far by keeping the post of general secretary vacant for the last two months. Though Naidu consistently denies any interest in post or office, he is quick to add: "If the circumstances demand and if there is no alternative, I will have to abide by what the party leader asks me to do."

Naidu is an ambitious man and his track record in his six years in politics bears this out. The then Congress minister N. Amarnath Reddy had picked him in 1978 as the Congress(I) candidate from his native Chandragiri constituency in Chittoor district. Barely two years later, he got a seat in T. Anjiah's infamous 'Airbus' cabinet. A year later in 1981, when he was minister for cinematography, he married NTR's third daughter, Bhuvaneswari. His disillusionment with the Congress(I) began when he could not find a place in the ministry of K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy.

After he lost the January 1983 election from Chandragiri on a Congress(I) ticket he was one of the first to knock on Telugu Desam's door after the elections. But, the party legislators objected vehemently to any influx from the Congress(I). Naidu had reportedly justified his defection saying: "The Congress(I) has become a laughing stock. I lost even after visiting the constituency once every ten days. My followers feel we should join the Telugu Desam party and so I have to agree. But I am not aspiring for any office." To pacify his men, NTR had said: "I am against nepotism but if a large group from a district wants to join, we should consider it." Though the members were molified, Naidu took the hint and decided to keep a low profile.

It was in the August-September toppling crisis last year that Naidu emerged from the shadows. He kept the party legislators together at a hotel im Mysore, while scuttling all attempts at horse-trading by the supporters of the "usurper chief minister" N. Bhaskara Rao. Since then NTR has come to rely increasingly on his son-in-law, making him his closest aide. Still, both avoid talking to each other in public, even at the training camps.

When talk first began last year of giving Naidu a party post, party general secretary P. Upendra, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha, offered to resign on the one-post-one-man principle. But the party's Vishakhapatnam convention in May 1984 authorised NTR to make the change at an appropriate time. Finally, Upendra and others in the executive bowed out at the end of their two-year term in May this year when the party's constitution was changed to allow NTR to hand-pick his men for the executive.

Now that partymen have started singing Naidu's praises, it should not be difficult for NTR to have Naidu's preeminence finally, and formally, established within the party. And if any charges of nepotism are levelled, he can always point out that power in the country, like family business, passes naturally to the heir apparent.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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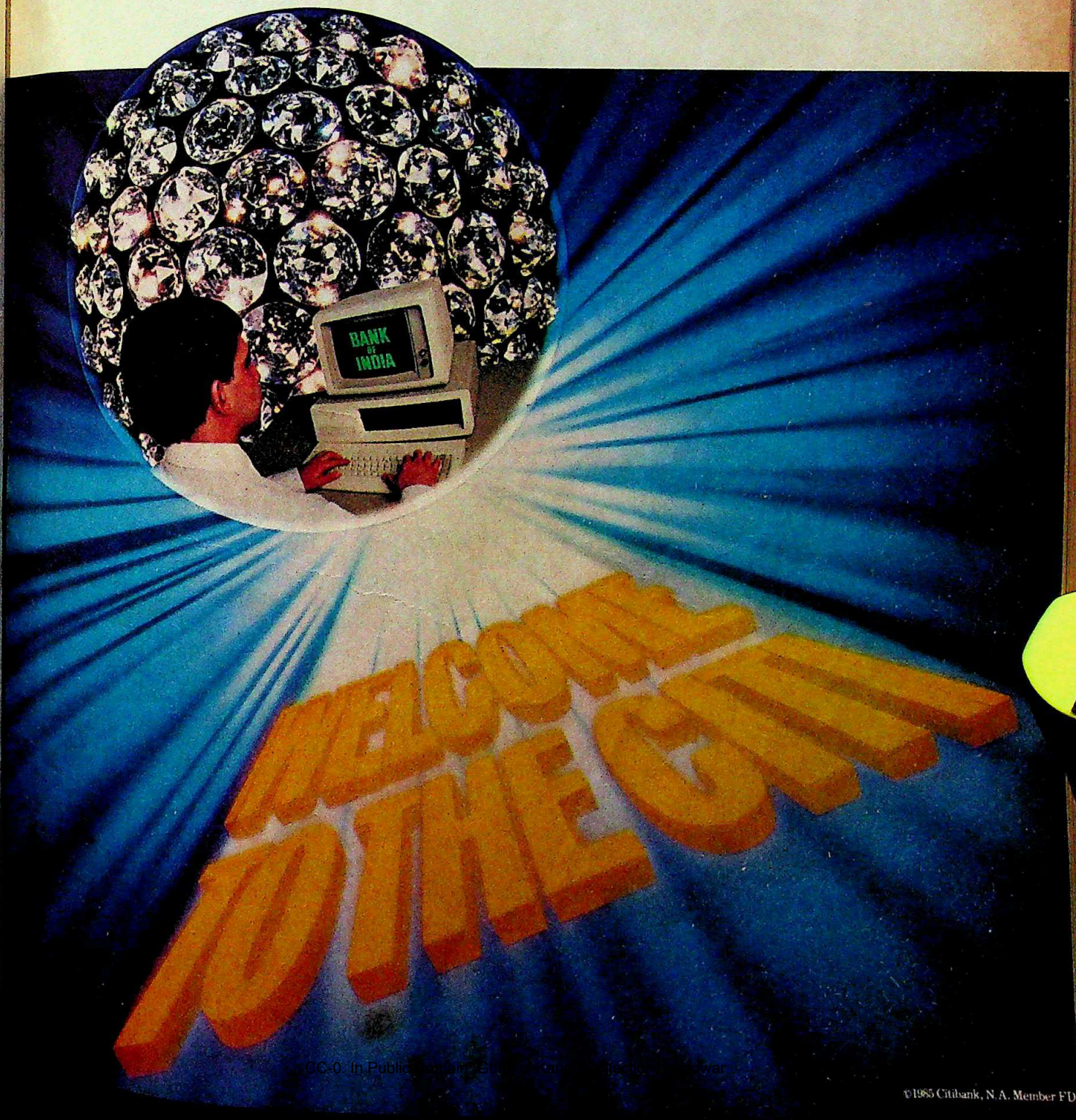

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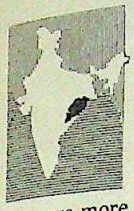
ORISSA

Battle Ground



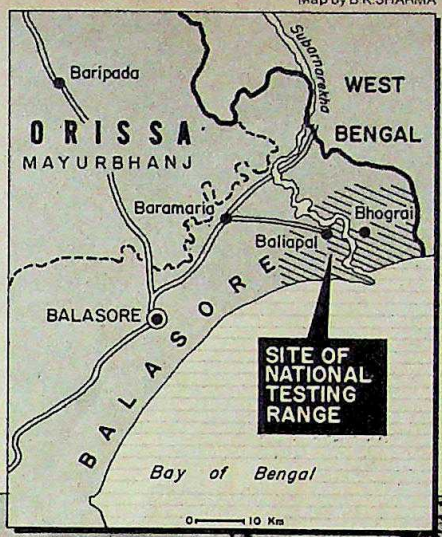
THE BATTLEGROUND is an old one, the lush coastal area of Balasore in Orissa, the scene of many a battle in Indian history. The combatants this time, however, are more unevenly matched. On one side is the Central Government which has launched an offensive aimed at acquiring a large chunk of land comprising almost the whole of Baliapal and Bhograi blocks for setting up a national testing range under the Defence Ministry to test newly-developed missiles and rockets. On the other, grimly defending their vulnerable—and valuable—territory, are over one lakh farmers, agriculturists and fishermen who have refused to leave their fertile land despite the promises of adequate compensation and rehabilitation.

Their stubborn resistance is understandable and so is the current dilemma. The fertility of the area makes it a gold-mine in the eyes of the agriculturists. But the area's shallow coastal topography and history of warfare makes it the perfect site for the Rs 3,000-crore testing range. The exact area needed for the purpose is still to be decided. But the Additional District Magistrate, Bansidhar Mahapatra, who is in charge of the acquisition and rehabilitation, said that the Defence Ministry has given a tentative estimate of 115 sq km. This land, which lies along the seashore, covers a total of 132 villages in the Baliapal and Bhograi blocks.

Mahapatra said that a socio-economic survey revealed that over 1,000 families involving 99 villages would have to be shifted from the main project area. Almost all of them are prosperous farmers, the area being rich in cash crops like betel, cashew and coconut. The Bay of Bengal too provides a steady catch of fish to the area's fishermen.

Though the smallest district of the state, Balasore is not only the richest, it has the highest literacy rate of 42.06 per cent for a population of 22.53 lakh. According to Baliapal Panchayat Samiti Chairman Sashadhar Pradhan, the area's income from its cashew and coconut crop alone is close to Rs 15 crore per year. In Baliapal block, 800 betelvines are spread over an area of 1,000 acres. A farmer with a betel crop on just five decimal of land can support a family of 20 with his income. Says Shipati Samant of Chaumukh, who earns Rs 4,000 a month from his eight decimal grapevine: "Nothing can compensate this." As tension built up in the area last fortnight, sarpanches of all the eight panchayats under Baliapal block held a meeting to discuss their strategy and sent a memorandum to Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik and District Collector Ishwar Chandra Das condemning the project that threatened their livelihood. Chief Minister Patnaik told INDIA TODAY: "Yes, we are aware of the situation but we are only doing it in the interest of the nation. At the same time, we have chalked out the best of rehabilitation programmes."

Map by B.K.SHARMA



A village in prosperous Baliapal block: threatened existence

Meanwhile, Defence Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was apprised of the situation last fortnight by former minister of state for external affairs Samrendra Kundu, who has been actively involved in the resistance against the proposed acquisition. Rao promised to visit the area in the last week of August to see if anything could be done to protect the farmers' and landowners' interests. However, this gave little cause for hope as, according to official sources, the project was in the final stages with only the issue of land left to be finalised. Defence Ministry officials visited the area last month and asked the district authorities to acquire the land as quickly as possible.

But that is not going to be an easy task. The farmers have flatly rejected the rehabilitation plans which include shifting the whole lot of villagers to an industrial area and absorbing them into industry. The farmers, who have known nothing but farming all these years and are quite content with it, dismiss all these plans as far-fetched and useless. Said Sarpanch of Badas, Suresh Kumar Senapati: "We are not opposed to the project as such but nobody wants to leave the area. People would prefer to die rather than surrender their land and property. Nobody believes that the Government would really compensate and rehabilitate them." Dagra Panchayat Sarpanch at Chaumukh Dev Das Hazra echoed this determination. "We are not going to yield an inch of our land, come what may." Said the 26 year old leader.

Though the project was first conceived in 1982-83, it was not announced until August last year. Soon after the announcement, there was a furore over the issue, with the Opposition making much of it in the elections and the Government preferring to remain silent. Just as the inhabitants had begun to believe that the area had been spared, the Government announced its intention to go ahead with the project and stepped up its efforts at convincing the people to move out, using the national interest as their new lever of persuasion. Said District Collector Das: "Persuasion is the only means now. Let the people realise the national importance of this project."

However, Das will need more than psychological persuasion if he wants to succeed. As one farmer argued: "In the name of defending the country, why should the people be uprooted when there are other places available?" Balasore, it appears, is readying for yet another battle in its aggressive history.

—FARZAND AHMED in Balasore

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TAMIL NADU

Shying Away

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran and his ministers lose no opportunity to appear before their public, whether on television, posters and billboards or the screen. But when ordered to appear before courts of law, however, then it is a different story. The courts also are accommodative and grant extension after extension of the deadlines for their appearance. The irony is that it is the chief minister and his colleagues who have filed a plethora of cases (at the last count, 15) against opposition politicians and publications.

Last fortnight this tendency of AIADMK ministers, particularly the chief minister, to file cases and then shy away from the courts was spotlighted for the umpteenth time when the second additional sessions judge in Madras filed a petition before the Madras High Court registrar seeking an extension of time to dispose of three criminal defamation complaints. The cases had been filed by the city public prosecutor on behalf of the chief minister against DMK headquarters secretary Arcot N. Veeraswamy as long ago as 1978. Each complaint was against a speech of Veeraswamy accusing MGR of corruption, and naturally enough the chief minister was cited as the most important prosecution witness in each case.

But though seven long years have passed, the chief minister has yet to grace the witness-box. The examination of all the other prosecution witnesses in all three cases was over by October 18, 1978. The defamation cases have had to be adjourned repeatedly because the chief minister has been too preoccupied with official work to appear in court. And the second additional sessions judge was granting adjournments time and again despite the repeated protests of Veeraswamy and his lawyer.

An infuriated Veeraswamy and his lawyer P. Subramanian finally filed a petition in the Madras High Court in April, 1982, seeking to quash the criminal defamation proceedings in the lower court on the grounds that the most crucial prosecution witness, the chief minister, was just not showing up and allowing himself to be cross-examined. A year later on April 30,1983, Justice M.N. Moorthy of the high court dismissed Veeraswamy's petition but directed the second additional sessions judge to dispose of all the three defamation cases before the end of August that same year. But again, that was not to be. The sessions judge came back to the high court just before the expiry of the deadline and sought an extension of the time limit because the examination of the witnesses could not be completed —in other words the chief minister had not yet made himself available. Justice S.Natarajan of the high court extended the deadline till the end of 1983. Again the sessions court failed to meet the deadline and sought another extension, which too was granted. This process has been going on ever since. One estimate has it that there are two postponements granted every month.

M.G. Ramachandran

C. Ponnaiyan

AIADMK ministers promptly file defamation cases against DMK leaders but then drag their feet when the court calls them to appear in some cases.

M. Karunanidhi

Arcot N. Veeraswamy

A frustrated Veeraswamy said: "MGR does not want to come to court after filing all these criminal cases against us because he is not willing to run the risk of being cross-examined by my advocate. Then he will be exposing himself. I think, and I have said so in my petition before the high court, that the whole game is to harass the people who are being complained against."

The chief minister is certainly not helping his public image any by not coming to court and repudiating the allegations against him, which are serious indeed. Veeraswamy attracted the first defamation complaint by alleging at a public meeting organised by the DMK in Madras on September 25, 1977, that MGR had received a Rs 20 lakh kickback by awarding a Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board contract to the Indian Hume Pipe Company of Bombay, which had quoted a figure of Rs 218 lakh in its tender bid, and not to the Karnataka Cement Pipe Company which had quoted Rs 40 lakh less. Veeraswamy even alleged that the chief minister had gone out of his way to sanction an advance of Rs 23 lakh to the Indian Hume Pipe Company to begin the work.

The second defamation complaint was against Veeraswamy's allegation at another public meeting in Madras on April 10, 1978, that MGR had accepted illegal gratification of Rs 10 lakh for awarding a contract for the purchase of some 177 bus chasses for the state-owned Pallavan Transport Corporation. The third complaint was for alleging in the same speech that the chief minister had received an advance of Rs 5 lakh from a company called Omega Cables in return for the company getting a Tamil Nadu Electricity Board contract for the supply of power cables. The DMK leader had alleged that Omega had bagged the contract even though two other tenderers had quoted lower amounts.

The public prosecutor stated in the defamation complaints that all these allegations were "false, mischievous and misleading". In all the cases, he said, the contracts had been awarded by specially constituted committees of the relevant organisations, all of which were autonomous bodies. The chief minister had nothing to do with the awarding of the

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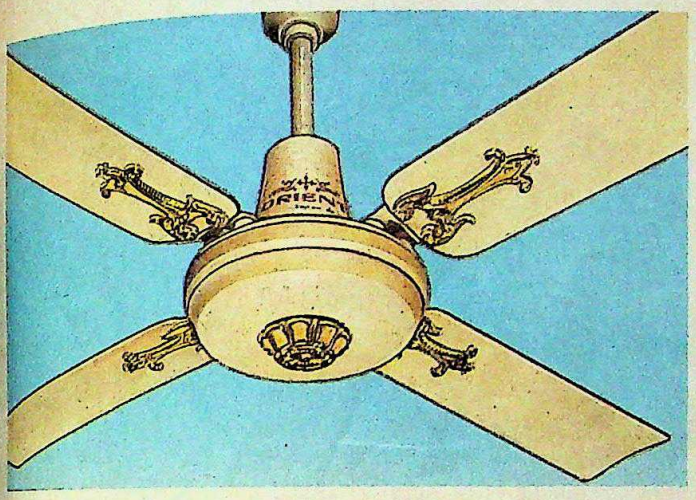

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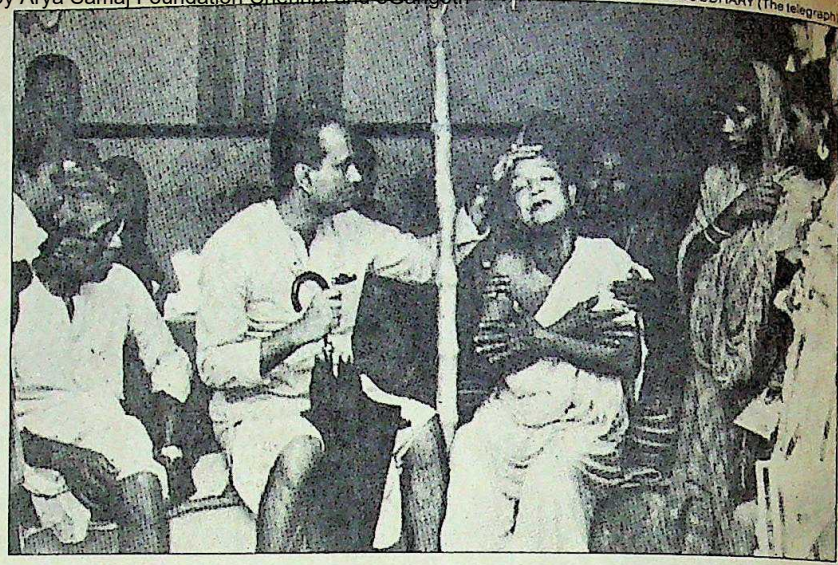
contracts to particular parties and these serious allegations of corruption had caused considerable mental agony to MGR. His arguments are now being thrown back at him. How come, it is being asked, the 'agony' has not prompted MGR to appear in court.

There are nearly a dozen other criminal defamation complaints against DMK politicians and the party's publications like *Ethiroli* and *Murasoli* by the public prosecutor on behalf of MGR and other ministers. An interesting story is that of the defamation complaint filed against DMK President M. Karunanidhi by the public prosecutor on December 22, 1979, in the court of the principal sessions judge. The complaint was against Karunanidhi's allegation on different occasions that the chief minister had tried to get a kickback on the state-owned Poompuhar Shipping Corporation's deal for the purchase of a Bulgarian ship. The former managing director of the corporation P.C. Cyriac and the former state transport secretary R. Shanmugam were both examined in court but when it was the turn of the former transport minister, C. Ponnaiyan (who is today the law minister) the public prosecutor filed an application asking that Ponnaiyan's examination should be in camera. The court agreed to it on December 23, 1983, but a couple of weeks later Karunanidhi's advocates challenged the court's grant of permission for the in camera examination. From then on the case has been getting adjourned.

Other AIADMK ministers have also been following the footsteps of their leader in appearing too busy to come to court after launching criminal defamation proceedings to safeguard their honour. But the case that takes the cake is the defamation complaint against Karunanidhi filed for accusing MGR of accepting bribes for granting liquor licences. Karunanidhi said in a public meeting in 1982 that he held the chief minister squarely guilty of corruption as far as the sale of liquor was concerned, and even openly challenged him to initiate defamation procedings against him. The defamation complaint was made, but the case was quietly withdrawn a year ago. All of which gives rise to the suspicion that in the many cases that are still dragging on MGR and his ministers will ultimately back out of courtroom battles. The sooner they do that the sooner a lot of people will be put out of their mental agony.

S.H. VENKATRAMANI

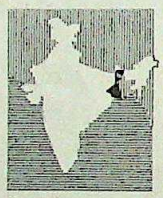
KISHORE ROYCHOUDHARY (The telegraph)



CPI(M) minister A.R. Molla consoling the mother of a victim: gruesome killing

WEST BENGAL

Allies at War



THE SEARCH for Left unity in West Bengal has been a tortuous one and murder has hardly helped matters. The gruesome killing in a remote area of the Sunderbans last fortnight of four CPI(M) workers by a mob led by activists of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)—a key constituent of the ruling Left Front—has brought to the fore the protracted power struggle underway in rural areas of the state between the two front allies.

Reacting quickly to this murderous incident—the first of its kind—the state Government rushed in armed police contingents to keep the peace among the shaken inhabitants of Chandipur village in South 24 Parganas district and despatched senior ministers of both parties to inquire into the circumstances leading to the clash. But the peace parleys got bogged down in the wake of polemics by the two sides and the CPI(M)'s refusal to withdraw the police case filed against the local RSP leadership. The Left Front Chairman and Secretary of the CPI(M) state committee Saroj Mukherjee angrily pointed out that the workers were holding a meeting to decide on the daily wage rates for the current sowing season when they were suddenly attacked. Added state secretariat member Sailen Dasgupta: "There is no scope for any bilateral talks with the RSP since the police have filed a case in connection with the murder of our party workers." Of the 53 RSP activists named in the first information report, the police have already arrested 10 and a manhunt has been launched for the rest.

The version of the incident put out by State Irrigation Minister Nani Bhattacharya and other RSP leaders who visited the area has only added to the bitterness. He claimed the slain workers were anti-socials who had been harassing the RSP-organised sharecroppers. In a graphic report, Bhattacharya pointed out that three of the four—Bimal Mondal, Fatik Barman and Mritunjoy Mondal—could not possibly have been attending a political meeting since they were wearing informal vests, shorts and canvas shoes. Moreover, no Chandipur residents have mentioned any CPI(M) meeting taking place on that day.

While other CPI(M) leaders made frantic efforts to gloss over the incident as an isolated and unfortunate one, the RSP party organ *Ganabarta* charged that the CPI(M) is only the latest of a number of other groups which are trying to suppress the sharecroppers' movement in Chandipur. While landlords, moneylenders and the police have been traditional opressors, CPI(M) activists also got into the act when on July 18 they attacked and destroyed houses belonging to poor RSP workers at Manmathnagar in the same district. This was followed by the ransacking of their office in Gosaba town and serious injuries inflicted on Subodh Maiti, a member of the party's district committee. A peace meeting was called by both parties on

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August 7 to work out their differences but this was pre-empted by an attack on the sharecroppers by antisocials on July 26 culminating in a repeat clash the next day that led to the deaths of the four CPI(M) workers.

The conflicting claims apart, it is clear that what really sparked off the clashes is the CPI(M)'s sustained efforts to muscle into South 24 Parganas which is an RSP stronghold. Sanat Kumar Mondal, MP from Joynagar, has been able to consolidate his party's base in the area. The CPI(M), in contrast, has been faring poorly. In fact, in the last Lok Sabha elections the CPI(M) lost one South 24 Parganas seat, Mathurapur, and barely managed to scrape through to get the third seat, Diamond Harbour.

Even more interesting is the fact that it is only the RSP among the parties in the Left Front which has been able to resist a slide in its power base. As compared to the 1982 assembly elections, the Left Front's total votes in the 1982 parliamentary elections declined by 4.22 per cent but the RSP increased its share by a marginal 0.68 per cent though it lost one seat to the Congress(I).

The effort to take over pivotal organisations has led to low-key struggles with other Front partners. Currently, such conflict is evident in Cooch Behar, parts of Jalpaiguri district, Birbhum and Murshidabad—a fact not denied by the CPI(M) party bosses. Peasant leader Benoy Choudhury who is also state land reforms minister candidly told INDIA TODAY: "What Left parties do not see is the necessity of socialist competition and consider themselves to possess national strongholds where they want to keep off other parties because they fear that the others will do a better job for the masses." The struggle for ensuring the rights of the masses is a continuous one he feels. And if that is any indication, it looks like the lush green of Bengal will soon be stained by the politics of blood.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

LEFT FRONT

Left is Right

OF ALL the bizarre accidents of contemporary Indian politics, none is perhaps as curious as the reversal of roles between West Bengal's leadership and the state unit of the Congress (I). While the state Congress (I) leadership last fortnight took up an anti-Centre stance, the state's Marxist Chief Minister Jyoti Basu seemed to have moved closer to the Rajiv Gandhi Government.

State Congress(I) leader Subrata Mukherjee raised not a few eyebrows when he announced that the state unit of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), of which he is the chief, would participate in the one day state-wide strike on September 12 in collaboration with the state's Left unions, including the CPI(M)'s Centre for Indian Trade Unions. Among the significant strike demands endorsed by Mukherjee is the one to nationalise the state's ailing jute industry. This is in spite of the Central Commerce Ministry's consistent refusal to take any such step.

Hailing the strike announcement of the state's nine major trade unions as a "historic" decision, Mukherjee criticised the new Central Government's policy of reducing investment in public undertakings. He also deplored the Centre's open door policy towards foreign investments and declared that public sector units should be prevented from retrenching any of their workers or from winding up their operations.

"My sole objective is to put the INTUC on a firm footing..."

SUBRATA MUKHERJEE
state Congress(I) leader

Mukherjee's unilateral decision to collaborate with the Leftists in the state surprised the party high command and the very next day the central INTUC President G. Ramanujan reportedly sought an explanation. Before rushing to New Delhi to explain, Mukherjee told newsmen that his decision had the sanction of the PCC (I) chief Pranab Mukherjee. Mukherjee argued that the decision had been prompted by a desire to uphold the interests of the working class and pointed out that more than 75,000 jute workers had been retrenched. It was absolutely impossible, he said, to be "indifferent to such a grim situation".

In contrast, the Left Front leadership, despite the continued insistence by its trade unions, has not only become lukewarm to the policy of take-over of sick and closed industries but is also openly in favour of denationalising half a dozen units under its control. Moreover, the Jyoti Basu Government has also shown a readiness to allow foreign investment, demonstrating a line of thinking which is remarkably similar to that of the present Central leadership.

While the Marxists' motives for getting closer to the Central leadership are straightforward—confrontation has got them nowhere—Subrata Mukherjee's aims in projecting a mildly anti-Centre stance are more complicated. Mukherjee's critics claim that his recent moves are designed to subtly pressurise the high command to acknowledge him as a "force in his own right". Mukherjee, of course, denies this vehemently: "My sole objective is to put the state INTUC on a firm footing and consolidate the tremendous gains made by us in the last two years."

Yet, it is also true that Mukherjee's isolation within the Congress(I) has never been so complete as it is now. Rumours that his mentor and PCC(I) chief Pranab Mukherjee is on his way out and the rapprochement between his ally Somen Mitra and arch rival Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, have rung alarm bells for Mukherjee. Observers feel the only way he can remain politically afloat is by projecting an independent, albeit a somewhat parochial, image. Mukherjee is evidently counting on a little help from his Marxist friends, including Chief Minister Basu. They flew back together from London last month where they had jointly inaugurated a Bengali book fair. From now on, Mukherjee might just be inaugurating more such joint programmes.

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KERALA

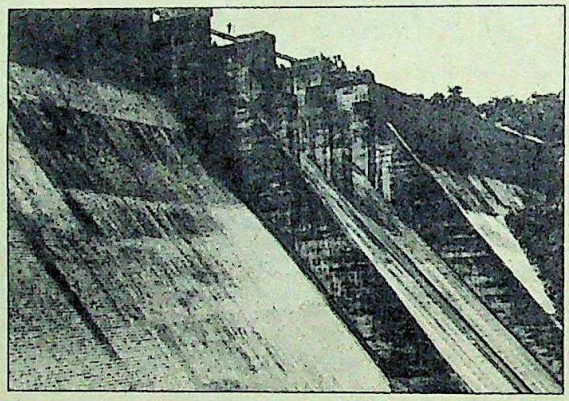
Leaky Controversy

KERALA is one state where hydel projects generate more controversy than power. But there's been nothing quite like the noise that's being raised over the prestigious Edamalayar hydro-electric project near Idduki and the Parappar dam of the Kallada irrigation project near Quilon. The reason: both the irrigation dam and the facilities of the hydro-electric project have sprung leaks and the Government's opponents have begun crying foul.

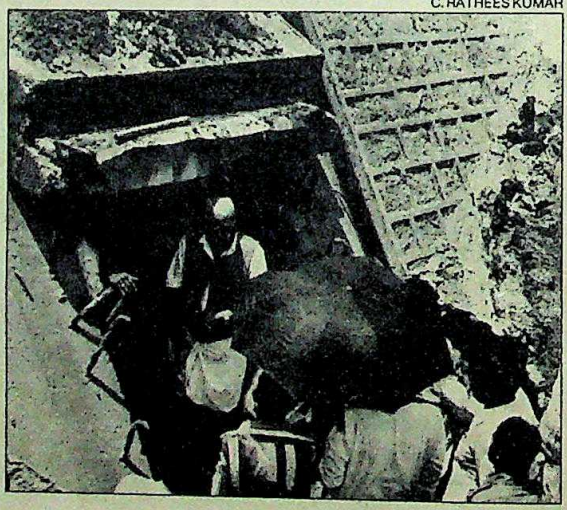
The timing could not have been more provocative. While the Edamalayar project was supposed to have started production this month, the Kallada dam was due for inauguration by the end of the year. It was proved that both the leaks were due to poor construction and use of sub-standard materials and that the contractors had had the blessings of top political leaders. What made matters worse was the alleged involvement of former electricity minister R. Balakrishna Pillai, who was in charge of the Edamalayar project, and Irrigation Minister M.P. Gangadharan, who holds charge of the Kallada project. And this was not the first time that the two leaders found themselves the target of corruption charges.

The allegations this time came from opposition leader E.K.Nayanar, who pointed out in the Assembly that the contractor of the Edamalayar project was a leader of the Kerala Congress, whose President K.M. Mani now holds the electricity portfolio in addition to finance. He also said that when some engineers of the Kallada dam objected to the way the work was being carried out, they were persecuted and threatened and eventually transferred. It was also alleged that cement meant for the dam was quietly removed from the project site from time to time.

Apparently, the Edamalayar project did not spring a leak overnight. After a trial run of one of the generators recently, a leak had been found in the concrete lining of the power tunnel, about 50 feet from its mouth. Close inspection had showed a tiny, hairline crack in the tunnel's lining. But the leak was too profuse to be plugged by the standard practice of grouting, which involves filling the crack with fluid mortar. The contractor for the power tunnel had sub-contracted the job to P.K. Sajeev, a Kerala Congress leader close to Mani. The principal contractor is said to have just lent his name to the contract since Sajeev did not have the requisite experience to qualify for the contract. Sajeev's taking over the job under a sub-contract was also irregular since a sub-contractor can execute only a part of the works.



C. RATHEES KUMAR



The leaking Kallada dam (top) and Nayanar going inside the Kallada tunnel: corruption charges

Further, it was discovered that the power tunnel had neither steel lining nor reinforced concrete. As a result, the tunnel was vulnerable and prone to leaks. Said a top engineer of the electricity board: "The contractor not only saved time but also a lot of money. Some engineers who pointed out these lapses were transferred from the project site." Work on the project had begun in 1976 and was expected to be commissioned in 1982. The total cost had then been estimated at Rs 23.45 crore. However, progress has been slow for various reasons including strikes, and nearly Rs 82 crore has already been spent on the project. As Nayanar said: "Balakrishna Pillai and the contractor directly took over the supervision of the project and kept out engineers who did not toe their line."

The Opposition has demanded a judicial inquiry but Mani and his partymen are not in favour of it. Said he: "There is no room for anxiety as it is not a serious leak. The leak will be plugged in three months' time. Only the commercial generation of power would have to be postponed." But what Mani missed out was that the loss due to this in monetary terms would be something like Rs 4 crore, not to mention the expenditure on repairs. Remarked Nayanar acidly: "I hope they do not entrust the repairs also to Sajeev."

The story of the Kallada project is not very different. Already Rs 187 crore have gone into the project and the end is nowhere in sight. The first phase, aided by the World Bank, is not expected to be completed before March 1987. And even these should be great expectations going by the rate at which things are progressing since 1961. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was scheduled to commission part of the first phase in September but the plans have again gone awry after last fortnight's leak.

This is only the beginning of the troubles, or so it seems. The leak is not the only defect in the dam. A World Bank team has also detected leakage from some drainage holes in the dam's foundation even with a low water level. Erosion of the foundation is also suspected. The state Public Accounts Committee (PAC) visited the site recently and found several lapses in construction. The PAC said in its report that the

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leak was basically due to "defects in the masonry." The PAC referred the alleged misappropriation of cement to the Vigilance Department for investigation. Large quantities of cement disproportionate to the requirements were being issued to the contractor, it noted. As Krishnan Kutty, the firebrand Janata MLA, said: "Nearly Rs 80 crore have been spent on Kallada since Gangadharan became the irrigation minister three years ago. The seepage is due to the spurious concrete mix and the police have seized lorry-loads of cement smuggled out of the dam site in the past."

Irrigation Minister Gangadharan told INDIA TODAY: "The seepage seen in Hallida is quite common in masonry dams but with grouting and gunting it can be effectively controlled." Mani has proposed a probe by a member of the Central Water and Power Authority and experts from the state's Engineering Research Station.

But with the projects so far behind schedule, that is hardly going to help matters much. If there is any truth to the allegations, then it will take a lot more than "grouting and gunting" to salvage the mess.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

KERALA

Merger Blues

IN THE last three years there have been many great reunions between political parties in Kerala. First it was the A.K. Antony faction of the Congress(S) which merged with the Congress(I) just after the fall of the E.K. Nayanar ministry. Months later the feuding K.M. Mani and K.C. Joseph group of the Kerala Congress came together, but the most significant reunion took place last fortnight when the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and the All India Muslim League (AIML) merged, as expected (INDIA TODAY, August 15), under the banner of the IUML.

A resolution unanimously adopted at the Calicut meeting said that the parties had come together to work for the protection of the best interests of the community and the country in the context of the strong threats and challenges raised against the independence of the Muslim minority. There is little doubt about the strength of the feeling of oneness in the party. For the state's Muslims, this is a heady and memorable moment but the merger promises to pose problems for Chief Minister K. Karunakaran.

For Sulaiman Sait, MP and president of the IUML who has been working behind the scenes for the past few years to patch up differences between the two parties, the merger has been a dream come true. Ironically, the eventual catalyst that brought the IUML and AIML together on one platform was an outside agency. It was the Supreme Court decision allowing maintenance to divorced Muslim women, and the CPI(M)'s decision to lash out at the Muslim divorce laws and the Shariat which literally drove the AIML out of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and into the embrace of the IUML. Exulted Sait: "The unity of the leagues has taken place by the grace of Allah. It has made us stronger than ever before. Nobody can split us again." Said Kunjalikutty, a young IUML MLA: "Never before has the party been so united. The merger will definitely make it the most powerful party in the state."

Such sentiments have caused worry among other parties in the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF). The IUML now has 18 MLA's, next only to the Congress(I)'s and more than the Kerala Congress' 15. But the Kerala Congress and the IUML both have three representatives in the ministry and the IUML has already given notice that it wants one more. Karunakaran has ruled out a cabinet reshuffle but Sait said ominously: "We need not go to anybody with a begging bowl. We are strong enough to get our just demands."

There could be other complications round the corner for Karunakaran. The former AIML leaders consider him their bitterest foe because they think it was he, who was then the home minister in the Achutha Menon ministry, who had sent them to jail. Besides, there are pinpricks in the relationship between the IUML and the Congress(I) as well. In Malappuram district, clashes between the Congress(I) and IUML sympathisers are almost a daily occurrence. Recently, in Tirur, IUML leaders forced Home Minister Vayalar Ravi (Congress-I) to transfer a sub-inspector who was supporting Congress(I) workers and harassing IUML men.

More alarming, however, are the continuing violent clashes between the CPI(M) and IUML supporters in the Malabar area. The CPI(M) has been holding seminars on the Shariat and going hammer and tongs at the inequities in the Muslim divorce laws. In Parappanangadi in Malappuram district tension prevails following an attack by IUML supporters on a CPI(M) meeting called to explain its stand on the Shariat. In Calicut, the Marxist-led Democratic Women's Association has been organising processions by Muslim women against the Shariat in which, for the first time, even wives of Marxist leaders have also joined. The association has also completed a door-to-door signature campaign among Muslim women urging measures to protect them from the alleged abuses of the Shariat. The Students' Islamic Movement of India has countered with its own processions of women in defence of the Shariat.

Karunakaran and Sait: uneasy partners

The bold stand taken by the CPI(M) has the Congress(I) worried. Till now Karunakaran has maintained a studied silence on the subject but a section of partymen, led by the Calicut district party President, N.P. Moideen, has been putting pressure on the leadership to also come out openly against the Shariat. But state Youth Congress(I) President, Karthikeyan, a Karunakaran protege, feels that the Shariat is a "personal, religious matter for the Muslims". Karunakaran knows that his ministry could fall in a few hours if he says anything against the Shariat. As Sait warned: "We will not allow anybody to play with Muslim personal laws."

It is understandable then if Karunakaran regards the merger with mixed feelings. While the merger has widened the gap between the UDF and the LDF from a tantalising three in the 141-member House to a more comfortable 11 it has hardly lessened the perils in the tightrope walking that Karunakaran has been doing for the last three years. Nothing is ever simple in Kerala's politics.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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PUNJAB & SIND BANK

Loans to the Dead

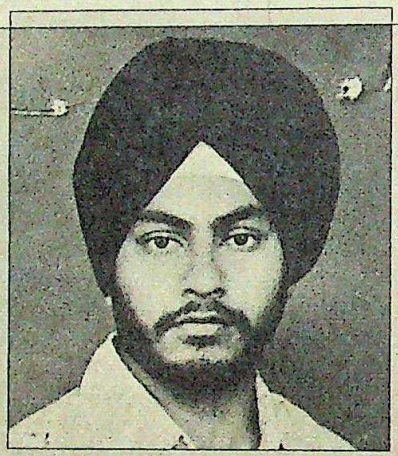
IT'S NOT an unusual cocktail: a public sector bank, a seemingly respectable bank manager, a potpourri of illiterate villagers—all in a backward rural district. The recipe says the net result should be accelerated economic development. What's been happening instead in Piparia Dhani, some 200 km from Lucknow in Lakhimpur Kheri district, is racketeering on a large scale.

The bank in question is the Punjab and Sind Bank (PSB) whose manager, Daljit Singh Bedi, has been charged with misappropriation of public funds, mistrust and criminal conspiracy. To add a touch of spice, the alleged fraud has to do with such exotica as the prime minister's 20-point programme and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) which seeks to direct concessional funding to poor farmers at low interest to enable them to obtain agricultural implements and equipment. The sums involved, Rs 86 lakh, are not impressive, but if the allegations are correct, the modus operandi certainly is.

After all, not many bank managers have been accused of sanctioning loans to the dead. The records of Bedi's bank show that Chhote Shah, Subedar, Gulab Shah and Maqbool Shah, all of Gardaha village, were dead when they were each sanctioned a loan of Rs 9,800 in April 1984 to buy diesel engines. What is more, their 'applications' were accepted even though they were unsigned and the bank issued cheques to a Vibhore Agencies of Mohemmedi village for having supplied the engines. The game was up when notices for repayment of the loans were served on the relatives of the deceased. Understandably, they protested. And the authorities began to look into Bedi's operations.

As investigations later revealed, much of the fraud has to do with less easily detected methods: large sums allegedly loaned to individuals and paid to selected agencies for goods such as agricultural implements and fertilisers purportedly delivered to the individuals. With concessional loans to the poor seen to be an essential part of the development process, it was likely that nobody was going to cross-examine such liberal lending not, that is, until notices for repayment started arriving at the doorsteps of a growing number of befuddled villagers.

Incredibly, several weeks after the authorities found out about the fraud, some farmers continue to be pestered by the bank to repay loans they had never been granted. Partially blind and ailing Jhau, a 70-year-old Harijan of Piparia Dhani, was sanctioned a loan of Rs 9,700—on paper. But Jhau says he applied for no loan and received no imple-



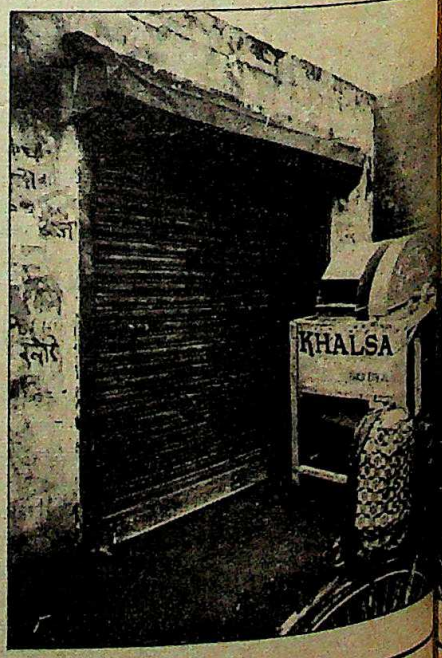
Bedi, PSB manager, has been charged with misappropriation of public funds and criminal conspiracy.

ments. What he did receive, however, was a legal notice asking for a refund.

Dhare, 45, a Harijan farmer of Gardha village was last month served with a legal notice by PSB's Piparia Dhani branch to deposit Rs 9,650 along with interest or face eviction from his land. A bare ten kilometres away, Lalloo, 50, is hiding from the PSB's officials seeking repayment of Rs 9,600 which he never got. His neighbour Sultan Khan, who owns just one acre, is in a similar predicament with the bank's advocate directing him to return the money he is said to have borrowed to buy a water pump engine. Unable to find a suitable lawyer who could defend their case and faced with no response to their petitions to the bank, the three sought the help of the police. Said Lalloo, "We can't allow ourselves to be cheated like this. Even if we sell all our land and household goods, we will not be able to repay the loan fully."

Acting on complaints such as this, the police arrested Bedi on February 29, 1985 for cheating and mistrust (Section 420 of the IPC) but the PSB management till last fortnight had not bothered to serve any charge-sheet. In his bail application Bedi, however, asserted that he did not violate any procedures and that he could not be "saddled with any responsibility if the dealer did not supply pumping sets or if no boring was done." But Bedi—who was not available for comment— seems to have godfathers above. He ignored no fewer than six transfer orders in as many months. Early last February, a replacement was ordered out to Piparia Dhani but Bedi took leave, gaining enough time to have the replacement shunted elsewhere. The area office did made some half-hearted attempt to relieve Bedi but all those deputed to take charge returned to the headquarters on the plea that "they are not in a position to take charge." Said a bank official of Lakhimpur, "Bedi's orders were not meant for implementation at all because he was related to a senior bank official." According to the Bank sources Bedi is related to PSB's General Manager Harbhajan Singh who passed several transfer orders. In fact, a deputy general manager protested in writing that Bedi's continuation in Piparia was due to the laxity at the top. He wrote in his letter that "not posting any permanent incumbent" has led to Bedi's continuation as manager though "he has played havoc with the bank funds."

More encouraging was the Union Finance Ministry which ordered the bank



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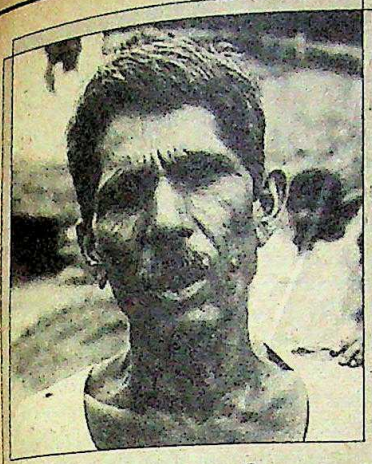
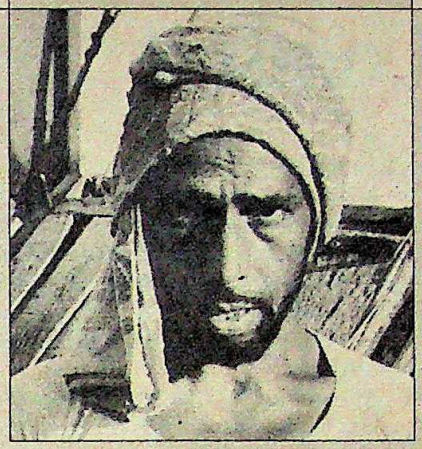
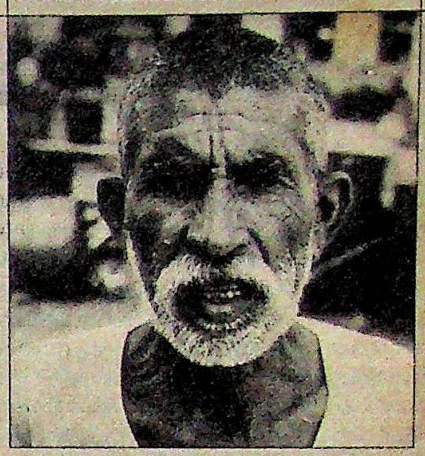


Dhare, a Harijan farmer was served with a legal notice by the bank to pay back a loan he never took or face eviction from his land.



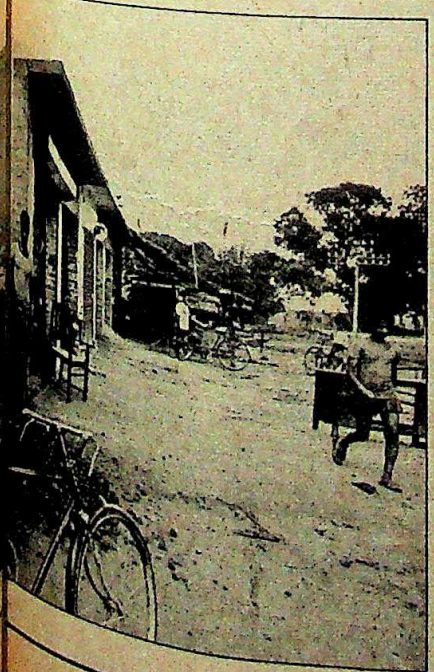
Sultan Khan, who owns one acre, was directed by the bank to return the money he is said to have borrowed to buy a water pump.



Lalloo is hiding from bank officials seeking repayment of Rs 9,600 which he never got. He has now sought the help of the state police.

to submit a detailed report on the branch's activities in January 1985. A Lucknow-based Assistant General Manager, S.C.Vohra, was directed to inspect the branch personally. On March 22, 1985, Vohra sent a detailed 13 page report about the loan distributions made by Bedi under the 20-point programme which includes the IRDP meant for weaker sections. Said the report: "Something very important was noticed from this investigation. The whole matter of advances from this branch revolved around seven-to-eight accounts which are held by dealers in agricultural implements. The transactions in these accounts reveal the whole involvement of the dealers in the supply of goods to farmers which are either bogus, substandard or short supplied."

Tandon Khad Bhandar closed after taking a loan: bogus fronts



The report also confirmed that more than 70 per cent of the 1,000-odd borrowers listed by the bank were either non-existent or had not taken the loans. Not unexpectedly, Bedi is accused of having flouted IRDP rules which say that the bank can release payments only after the district authorities certify that the implements have been delivered; this was not done in majority of the cases. He also failed to take prior permission from the regional headquarters and authorised more advances than justified by his deposits.

Between December 1982 and January 1985, the Piparia Dhani branch's loans shot up to Rs 86.61 lakh from Rs 8.12 lakh while deposits languished at Rs 25 lakh. The money was being credited to farmers as four per cent loans, but was actually paid into the accounts of seven dealers for implements allegedly supplied. In fact, the dealers withdrew the money quickly, and the borrowers never received their equipment. And three of the dealers quickly shut shop after taking the money out of the bank. The implication is obvious: that the dealerships were floated to withdraw money sanctioned as loan from the bank.

As it happens, three of the dealers were joint owners of a firm in partnership with Bedi's wife. The firm, Shahjahanpur Auto Sales (SAS), which sells motor cycles in Shahjahanpur, was allowed to open a bank account in Piparia Dhani in violation of banking rules which forbid bank officials' wives from operating current accounts in their husbands' branches. An investigation of Bedi's wife's account showed that the dealers were transferring money from their individual or corporate accounts into her's. In fact, SAS's account shows a large number of cash entries of huge amounts and investigators are trying to see if there is a link between the withdrawal of money by the dealers and the date of deposits in her account.

Acting on orders from above, the new manager of the branch, Paramjit Singh, in April sought to contact all the 1,000 borrowers listed in the records. By the end of July he had succeeded in reaching only 110, most of whom hadn't a clue about their supposed loans. Reported Vohra: "Unless each and every borrower is personally contacted, it shall not be possible to ascertain how many of the accounts are correct and actually existing because there are so many such cases in whose name the loans have been sanctioned but who do not actually exist." Clearly a tall order--but one that points ominously to the kind of skulduggery that might be going on under the guise of helping the poor. —PRABHU CHAWLA with S.PREMI in Piparia Dhani

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NARCOTICS

Cutting the Conduit

"AT FIRST we were ringside observers, now we are in the ring." This remark by a senior anti-narcotics official accurately illustrates India's predicament as it finds itself drawn inexorably into the vortex of the international narcotics trade. With the country already a major transit point for the international drug pipeline, Indian authorities are now stirring into action. In a whirl of activity which began with the June meetings between US and Indian officials during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Washington visit, the Government has at last decided to take immediate and long term action to make it harder for drug traffickers to ply their trade in India. Among the steps being taken are:

► The setting up of multi-agency task forces in Bombay and Delhi with officials drawn from the CBI, Customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the local police, to combat drug trafficking.

► The setting up of a Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) on the lines of the Intelligence Bureau to collect intelligence about and supervise strike action against all kinds of economic offences including drug trafficking.

► Introduction and passage in the current session of Parliament of the Narcotics and Psychotropic Drugs (Prevention) Bill which enhances the punishment for drug related offences and gives greater powers to Customs and Revenue Intelligence authorities.

► Amending the Essential Commodities Act to regulate the production and sale of acetic anhydride, a basic chemical used to convert morphine base into white heroin powder. Banned in all neighbouring countries, but freely available in India, large quantities of this chemical are smuggled across the border to heroin processing laboratories in neighbouring Burma.

► Joint action with the Burmese Government to interdict cross border heroin traffic along the Burmese boundary with Mizoram and Manipur.

► Joint action with the US Drug Enforcement Agency and the State Department's office of International Narcotics Matters (INM), to train and aid Indian agencies involved in drug busting.

All this activity has been prodded by two developments. One is the realisation that in a short time span, India had progressed from being only a transit point for West-bound Pakistani heroin to a minor producer. Recent intelligence reports point to a large increase in the volume of cross-border traffic in opium and heroin and the suspicion that the profits are used to finance insurgencies in the north eastern states. Second, considerable pressure has been applied by the United States to take action to prevent the use of Delhi and Bombay as major staging points for heroin from Pakistan.

During his Washington visit, when Rajiv pressed for US action to curb the activities of US and Canada-based terrorists, the US side, while agreeing with India's request, suggested that India should do something in return to stem the flood of Pakistani heroin flowing to the United States through India. The US Administration reportedly made it clear that it was as concerned and worried about the heroin flow as India was about the activities of US based terrorists.

Things moved fast after the prime minister returned to Delhi. His principal aide, Arun Singh, discussed the problem with the US ambassador, his deputy chief of mission and the Delhi operative of the

BSF patrol with its record haul of 325 kg of heroin in Rajasthan: cracking down

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US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). Pointing out that the number of operatives combating drug trafficking in India was woefully inadequate, the Americans offered training and equipment, and compensation to farmers to give up poppy cultivation, and even suggested that the Indian Government take a leaf out of their book which combines the resources of the DEA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), local city police, Customs, and Immigration. Asked by Arun Singh to submit proposals, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) favoured setting up a new agency, but the Government intends to experiment with two task forces, one each in Delhi and Bombay.

Other connected aspects of the new drug-busting campaign are the move to tighten the laws on use, possession and peddling of dangerous drugs. The Finance Ministry has drafted a comprehensive bill called the Narcotics and Psychotropic Drugs (Prevention) Bill which eliminates the jurisdictional conflict beween the Centre and the states on investigation and prosecution of drug offences. A Finance Ministry official said drafting the bill was a massive task because the concurrence of the states had to be obtained. Though its specific provisions will be unveiled only in Parliament, it is certain that the punishment for drug related offences will be enhanced considerably so as to make it "a real deterrent" to traffickers.

The minister of state for finance admitted as much in Parliament last fortnight in reply to film star Amitabh Bachchan who revealed that drug coated milk lollies sold commonly in Bombay were turning the city's schoolchildren into addicts. Even for such grievous offences, the maximum sentence under the existing law is three years. In the United States a first time offender can get up to 15 years, and the sentence doubles with the subsequent offence.

THE IDEA of setting up the CEIB is to provide a central coordinating authority for all action against economic offenders. "At the moment there is no directional control or guidance by the Centre in cases having inter-state or international ramifications," said a Finance Ministry official. Action is also underway to amend the Essential Commodities Act to ban open sale of acetic anhydride following reports that between January 1983 and May 1984, the Burmese authorities had seized 4,878 litres of the chemical, enough to purify as many kilos of heroin. Possession of acetic anhydride in Burma, Thailand and other countries is considered as serious an offence as possession of heroin.

Curbs on the sale of the chemical will be imposed in West Bengal and the seven north-eastern states from where smuggling is rampant and facilitated by the existence of insurgent organisations. Intelligence reports suggest that acetic anhydride is smuggled into Burma in large quantities through Morey in Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram to Tamu and Tiddim in Burma and taken to the heroin labs on the Thailand and Chinese border. Finished heroin from these labs is then transported back to Imphal and Aizawl from where it goes to Kathmandu, Calcutta and Delhi for onward shipment to the West. Intelligence reports suggest that the MNF charges a 25 per cent 'tax' on the price of the heroin smuggled back in. The Finance Ministry is corresponding with the Burmese Government about joint action to curb this traffic. The Finance Ministry has extended an invitation to the Burmese authorities for discussions on stemming this traffic.

Within the country, the setting up of task forces should help because the CBI, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) personnel currently handling anti-narcotics work are too few, too dispersed and often work at cross purposes. The CBI reports to the Home Ministry which is concerned mainly with law and order.

Heroin processing lab discovered in Garoth: money-spinner

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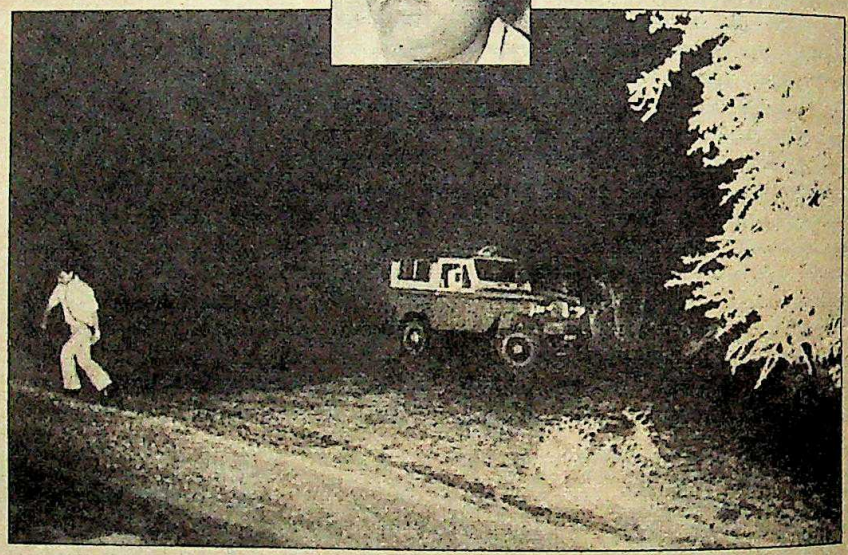
The Finance Ministry controls the DRI and CBN and is bothered mainly about revenue dilution and tax evasion. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare which should really be concerned about the widening ramifications of the drug business is not involved in any way. The CBI narcotics wing argues that India's involvement is going far beyond being just a transit country. This is not appreciated by the CBN as it implies that the CBN's supervision of opium poppy cultivation is slack and that a lot of the opium actually meant for delivery to government-owned morphine factories is getting diverted to clandestine heroin manufacture.

The recent discovery of a two-year-old heroin processing laboratory at Garoth in Madhya Pradesh's poppy growing district of Mandsaur proves the point. This is the third discovered in recent times; the other two were in Lucknow and Varanasi. A DEA official who had set up the decoy buyers said the laboratory was more sophisticated than anything he had seen in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, and almost as modern as some of Thailand's heroin labs. The heroin seized from Garoth was sent off to the US for analysis and was found to be 92 per cent pure.

Run allegedly by Tasnim Ahmed Qureshi, 35, a popular ayurvedic doctor in the area, it came into being when Qureshi recognised the enormous profit to be made from refining opium into heroin. Two refining specialists from Varanasi and Ghazipur, where the Government has a facility to refine opium into morphine base, helped to set it up and in due course Qureshi became adept at doing it himself. Interestingly, one of his earliest partners was a 'petty smuggler' of Garoth whose brother was a CBN inspector.

Qureshi was arrested after a dramatic night-time encounter on the road to Udaipur where he was to deliver 5 kg of refined opium to a decoy foreign buyer. A police party led by Jaspal Singh, the head of the CBI narcotics wing rammed into Qureshi's jonga and overpowered him along with an accomplice. The acomplice turned out to be a clerk in the office of the Garoth magistrate, who released the two on bail a few days later.

If this nexus between the grower and the labs is disturbing, the other nexus, with growers across the border is hardly more reassuring. It lies behind the large scale smuggling of opium and heroin from Pakistan to India. One seizure near Barmer in Rajasthan in the third week of July by a Border Security Force (BSF) camel patrol yielded 325 kg of pure heroin, the largest ever seizure in India worth over Rs 16 crore. This was being so brazenly brought across on camel back that the authorities believe they may have stumbled onto a major smuggling route used often in the past. "Nobody is going to risk such a large quantity unless they are pretty sure it will get across," said an official involved in anti-narcotics operations. The heroin smugglers were armed and well equipped. Even after the BSF patrol shot six camels dead and captured three, the drug runners still had enough camels left to escape to Pakistan.



Qureshi (inset); the night-time encounter with the CBI which led to his arrest

Earlier, most clandestine trans-border traffic was across the Punjab border. Villagers who cultivate land right upto the boundary can easily hide opium and heroin in the fields and cross the border with it at night. Increased vigilance on the Punjab border forced smugglers to shift their operations to the long and porous sandy border dividing Rajasthan from the Pakistan province of Sind. This is obvious from the figures. From 1982 to 1984 Rajasthan did not figure in the list of heroin seizures and then suddenly, in the first seven months of 1985, the BSF intercepted over 330 kg in two separate raids. But with the border outposts more than 8 km apart, the Rajasthan border is more difficult to police than the Punjab border where border pickets are only 3.5 km apart. The BSF therefore is thinking of asking the Government for helicopters for aerial reconnaisance. Just as the coast guard's fast patrol launches have made smuggling by sea more difficult, the BSF which patrols the land border could do with some helicopters and some fast jeeps fitted with wireless which the Americans have offered to provide, along with training. Without these aids, it will remain an unequal battle. Smugglers, with their high liquidity and resources, purchase the latest equipment and stay one step ahead of the authorities on both sides of the border. Apart from mobility, the BSF whose peacetime role on the western border is limited to anti-smuggling has asked for permission to add ten batallions each in Rajasthan and Punjab.

Although it isn't clear that offers of US help will be taken up, the potency of the narcotics threat seems to have inaugurated a new sphere of cooperation between US and Indian drug enforcement agencies. There's a new sense of urgency on the Indian side. It is estimated that last year alone as much as 3 tonnes of Pakistani heroin passed through the Indian conduit. It sells on the streets of New York or Miami for one million dollars a kg—a traffic of $3 billion. Profit margins on such volumes are no mean incentive to keep the conduits going. And, as one official says: "It's high time the flow of heroin through India was stopped. It does not take much time for a country to switch from drug peddling to drug consumption". And once narcotics enters the blood of a nation, it is virtually impossible to get it out.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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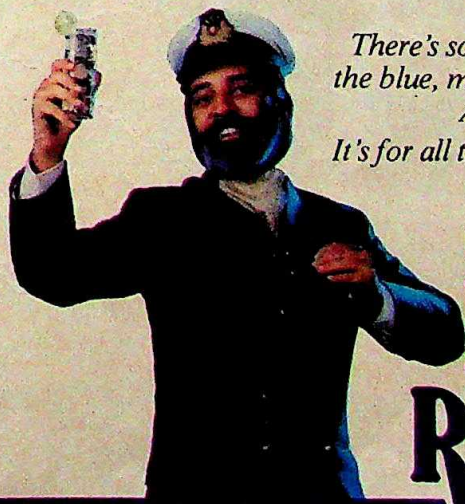

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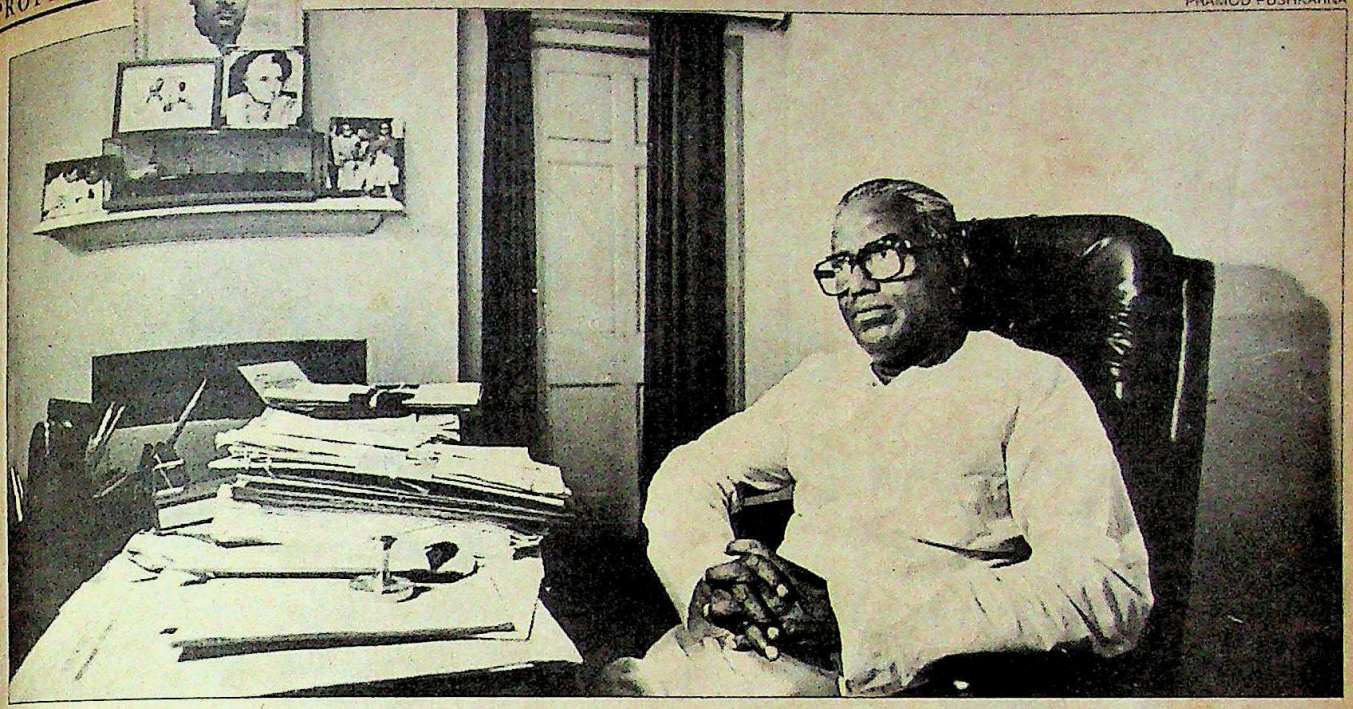
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Shiv Shanker in his study: lone ranger

P. SHIV SHANKER

The Odd Job Man

A SHORT distance from the Race Course Road residence of Rajiv Gandhi, and a stone's throw from Indira Gandhi's 1 Safdarjang Road home lives a Congress (I) leader whose importance far exceeds the suffix to his name, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. His deeds rarely attract attention in the media, and he almost never hogs the headlines, but a Union minister in the know of things says: "Today, P. Shiv Shanker is possibly the most powerful man after the Prime Minister, the two Aruns (Singh and Nehru) and M.L.Fotedar."

The minister does not exaggerate. Unobtrusively, as is his wont, Punjala Shiv Shanker, who turned 57 on August 10, has been associated with almost every major political happening in the last three months. He was a member of the Congress(I) teams sent to supervise the changeover in Maharashtra and Gujarat; he sat in with the members of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs as they thrashed out the Punjab accord with Sant Longowal; and he took a preliminary look at the opposition's memorandum against Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal before it was decided to set up a one-man commission to look into it. His missions have not just been confined to the nation's boundaries; he has been playing an important role in Rajiv's attempt to improve relations with India's neighbours. Following the late June bomb blasts in Kathmandu, he visited Nepal as the prime minister's special envoy last month. And last fortnight he paid a surprisingly well-publicised visit to Bangladesh to convey Rajiv's desire to work out another agreement on sharing the Ganga waters.

His role in all these initiatives, for which he was deputed by Rajiv Gandhi personally, has not always been decisive. In the Punjab accord, for instance, he was identified as one of the hardliners who wanted the Akalis to concede more than they were willing to. Eventually, Rajiv ignored his advice. But in the selection of the Gujarat chief minister to replace Madhavsinh Solanki, Shiv Shanker's acceptance of Solanki's hypothesis that a leader from the backward classes should be preferred went a long way in deciding the issue in favour of Amarsinh Chaudhary in preference to assembly speaker Natwarlal Shah.

Shiv Shankar's change of political fortunes has, in fact, been truly amazing. Eight months ago nobody would have been surprised if his political star had plummeted after his defeat in the general elections. A leading lawyer from Hyderabad, he came in touch with Mrs Gandhi only in 1977, and generated enough confidence in her to become one of her most senior and trusted ministers. But when he failed last December to retain the Medak seat it was expected that he would follow other minister-losers like Mallikarjun and Venkatasubbiah into political oblivion. But the capital watchers missed a crucial signal. In January, when he was not even an MP, he was allotted his present bungalow at 5, Safdarjang Lane. And in April when a Rajya Sabha seat fell vacant in Gujarat, Rajiv preferred to disappoint Solanki supporter Prabodh Raval, the former Gujarat home minister, and chose Shiv Shanker.

He was now out of the shadows. And his name has been prominent in all the speculation about a cabinet reshuffle. The logic was simple: if he was not to be made a minister, why make him an MP? The speculation has proved premature but following his forays as the prime minister's special envoy there is little doubt that Shiv Shanker is Rajiv's man for odd (but important) jobs, which is somewhat surprising considering that the backgrounds of Shiv Shanker and Rajiv's aides could not have been more dissimilar.

The former, with rare exceptions, are from affluent families with public school or foreign university backgrounds. Shiv Shanker was one of nine children of a paan leaf seller of Mamidipally, on the outskirts of Hyderabad. Shiv Shanker remembers that while they did not starve there was never enough to eat. He is a self-made man. He did his B.A. by giving tuitions and his law degree by working as

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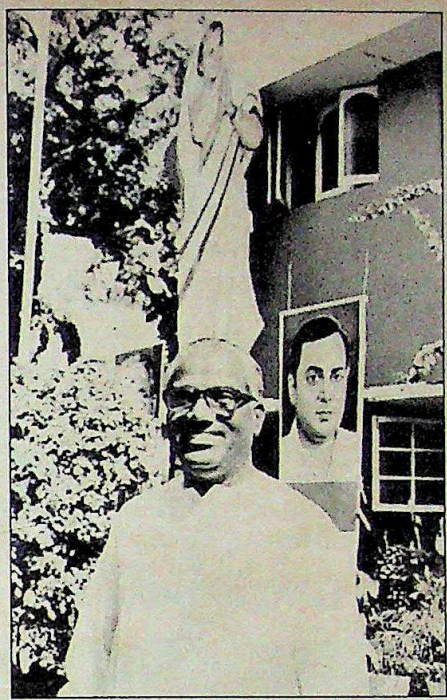
a clerk in the municipal corporation. And he has always been clear about his goals. It broke his heart in 1975 to quit as a judge in the Andhra Pradesh High Court but when he realised that he would be the chief justice for a few months only, he did not hesitate to quit. The bench's loss was the bar's and later, the Gandhi family's gain.

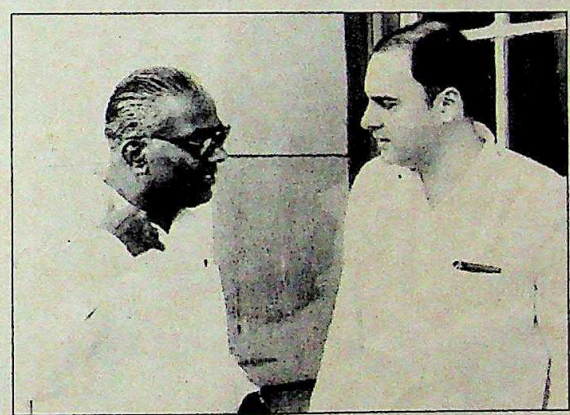
Why does Rajiv Gandhi find him so useful? For one, he is extremely hard-working. Recalled one civil servant who had worked with him: "In a cabinet not known for men of brilliance or perseverance, Shiv Shanker impressed with his tremendous ability to assimilate prose. You could give him any amount of official papers: he would take the trouble of going through them and getting to the root of the issue." The result was that he often did the work of other ministers. In 1983 when the Central Government set itself on the path of collision with Farooq Abdullah, Shiv Shanker used to frame home minister P.C.Sethi's acid-laden letters to Farooq. Recalled another civil servant who had also worked closely with Shiv Shanker: "There were times when you could find the cabinet secretary, the home secretary and some other senior officials in his office, taking dictation from him."

As can be expected from a lawyer of his accomplishment, he is a skilled negotiator. Bureaucrats still recall the perseverance with which he got the chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to agree to the 1981 accord on the Ravi-Beas waters. "He tackled them one by one and he just wore them down," recalls this aide. "Shiv Shanker is a workaholic."

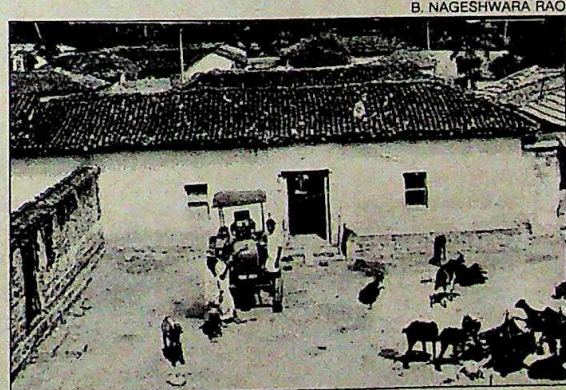
Shiv Shanker also brings a loyalty to any task assigned by the Gandhis that is uncluttered by many doubts. Recalled one minister who was privy to the goings-on in the inner circles before Mrs Gandhi made him the law minister: "We wanted a law minister who would have disposed off Sanjay's cases expeditiously. Our plan worked. Shiv Shanker saw to it that this was done in less than two months." Also, unlike many other ministers, he never let bureaucrats lead him by the nose. Recalled one aide: "He does not trust official's notings. He would always read the papers himself. He never gave trust so he never got it also".

To his superiors, this has made Shiv Shanker invaluable. "If I were Rajiv Gandhi, I would use him exactly the way Rajiv is using him," states a civil servant.





B. NAGESHWARA RAO



In front of Hyderabad house; with Rajiv; and his ancestral home

Another bureaucrat adds: "Shiv Shanker is like a special assistant to the Gandhi family, utterly devoted and multi-talented." But his lack of commitment to a higher cause has also disillusioned many who came into close touch with him. Union Minister of State for Law, Hans Raj Bharadwaj, who introduced him to Mrs Gandhi, was once like a brother to him but now he is known to be very unhappy because he thinks Shiv Shanker could have reformed the judicial system, but chose not to. A bureaucrat who has watched him from close quarters says: "He talks a lot about his commitment to the class of people he comes from but if you were to ask him what he has done for the poor he will not have much to show."

For all his accomplishments, or perhaps because of them, he is not the most popular of men. "It is difficult to get somebody to say a good word for him," says a former colleague. Rare has been the bureaucrat who has got along with him; and many have usually complained about Shiv Shanker's suspicious nature. As one civil servant says: "He suspects the motive of everybody. He does not trust the notings that officials make on files. Since he does not place trust in anybody he does not beget trust."

His rapport with Rajiv, which transcends the normal channels, has also made him vulnerable in an ethos where jealousy is never far behind such proximity. And he knows this. As he studiously tackles government files in his small study lined with pictures of him with Mrs Gandhi, Rajiv and Sanjay, he is conscious that any spotlight on him at this stage, when a Cabinet reshuffle is imminent, can only harm him. His plus point has been that he has avoided being in the limelight. He knows enough about the perils of power: when Mrs Gandhi took the Law portfolio away from him he was not even informed in advance.

Shanker claims to be content in living on an assignment-to-assignment basis. As he says: "My politics is confined to service of the family." But matters are rarely so simple for somebody as talented and as ambitious as he is. He claims to be a technocrat and not a run-of-the-mill politician but bureaucrats recall that as the minister for petroleum and energy he was proud to have four secretaries to the Government reporting to him. The favour-seekers amid the bureaucrats still go to see him even though he is just one of the 560-odd Congress(I) MP's in the capital. In reality he is much else but time alone will tell whether he will remain a lone ranger. Perhaps, given his limitations as a leader it is best that way.

—AJAY KUMAR with AMARNATH K. MENON in Hyderabad

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DOORDARSHAN

The Rajani Phenomenon

IT ALL started innocuously enough early this year when the gold rush for television serials on Doordarshan was just beginning. Bombay film director Basu Chatterji (*Sara Akash, Rajnigandha, Chotisi Baat, Swami*) had an idea for one, even though he'd never clapped his eyes on a television camera in his life. The idea centered around the character of a woman troubleshooter, the kind of female who barges into all kinds of situations where men or angels normally fear to tread. It wasn't an Indian *Charlie's Angels* nor one of those embarrassingly inane situation comedies of the *I Love Lucy* variety. The idea was to create a wholly Indian character not merely coping with routinely Indian problems but fighting them and somehow resolving them. It came to him, a half-amazed Chatterji now admits, by observing his own wife and teenage daughter, both independent, strong-willed women who usually end up getting their own way.

But this month, as the serial ended its first instalment of 13 episodes, Chatterji's home-grown troubleshooter *Rajani* had come a long way from being an alter ego of the women in his family. She had become a household word among the country's estimated 10 million viewers. As a galvaniser of direct action, Rajani, the undaunted middle-class housewife, fighting the daily injustices of urban life, was transformed into both crusader and vanquisher, a sort of knight-in-shining-armour.

Rajani's weekly, Sunday morning battles are tiny but not trivial. The first hint of controversy came in an episode three weeks ago when she discovered that like countless consumers she would have to wait for days to obtain a cooking gas cylinder while those willing to pay an illegal premium could obtain one promptly. Unbeaten, she had the cooking gas agency hauled over the coals by reporting the incident to the police and getting the agent arrested. Fictionalised though the incident was, it was obviously close enough to reality to arouse reaction. Immediately the Bombay-based All India LPG Distributors Federation protested to Doordarshan that their trade had been unjustly maligned. But even as they demanded an apology from the TV network, Rajani sprang back into action the following week in another episode. This time she sought to check harassment by a taxi driver who first refused to take her on a short fare and, when pressurised by a policeman to do so, feigned engine trouble. Determined to beat the cabbie, Rajani headed for the nearest police station. While thousands of viewers in metros rooted for Rajani for winning the commonest no-win situation, next morning 500 irate taxi drivers marched to Doordarshan offices in Bombay demanding an apology for portraying cabbies as "bad characters".

Priya Tendulkar: troubleshooter

RAGHU RAI

But the two episodes of *Rajani*, coming one after another, had touched a raw nerve in the public psyche. "It triggered off a reaction beyond my wildest dreams," confessed the serial's sedate, white-haired director Basu Chatterji, who has spent his career making middle-of-the-road feature films that have, more often than not, sunk in the box-office quagmire. Last fortnight, it was clear that among sponsored programmes, *Rajaini* had outstripped all its competitors in popularity, even the durable family drama *Hum Log*. One TV rating chart in Bombay showed a viewership of about 94 per cent for the programme in July, a substantial increase from its rating of 75 per cent when it started. And even the minister for information & broadcasting had to come on record with a reassurance that *Rajani* would not be discontinued. "With *Rajani*, public service television had finally arrived," claimed an enthusiastic Sam Balsara, general manager, Mudra Communications, the production company that floated the serial. "*Rajani* is not just a phenomenon, it's now become a movement."

The claims of the programme's originators were not unjustified. The protests from institutions *Rajani* challenged were instantly and clamorously eclipsed by an avalanche of public approbation: Doordarshan's offices were flooded with telephone calls from supporting viewers, and overnight, pressure groups sprouted to cheer Rajani on from escapade to escapade. Whether it was Rajani exposing phoney astrologers or mobilising schoolteachers for a better deal or ticking off an office staff for misusing telephones, she got her way at the end of the 22-minute prime time slot, so that even TV critics were impressed. Said TV columnist Amita Malik: "*Rajani* as a serial would not have clicked if it did not have a veneer of social criticism. It is no great shakes, artistically or content-wise, and the acting is decidedly wooden. But it is the critical aspect of *Rajani* that is ringing a bell." In short, Rajani the unraveller of daily hassles,

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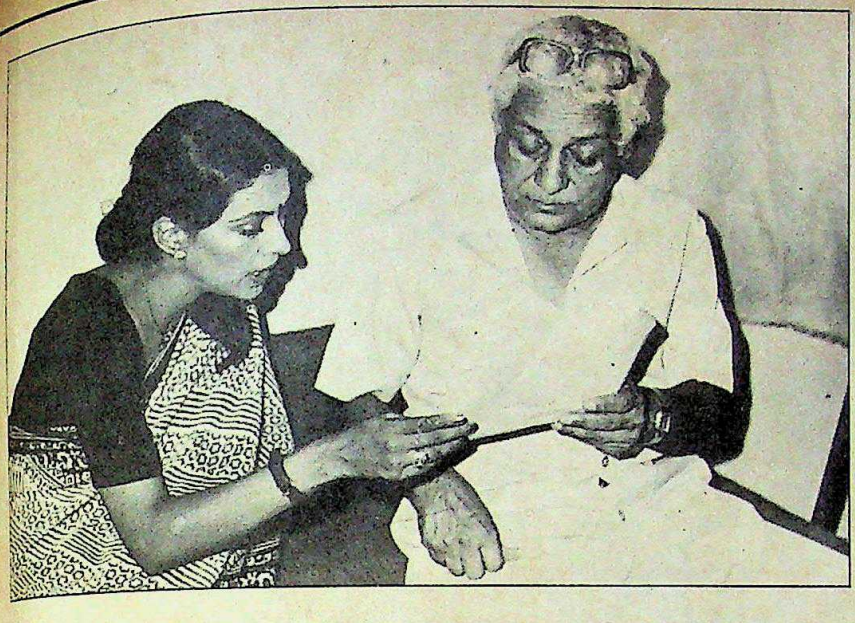

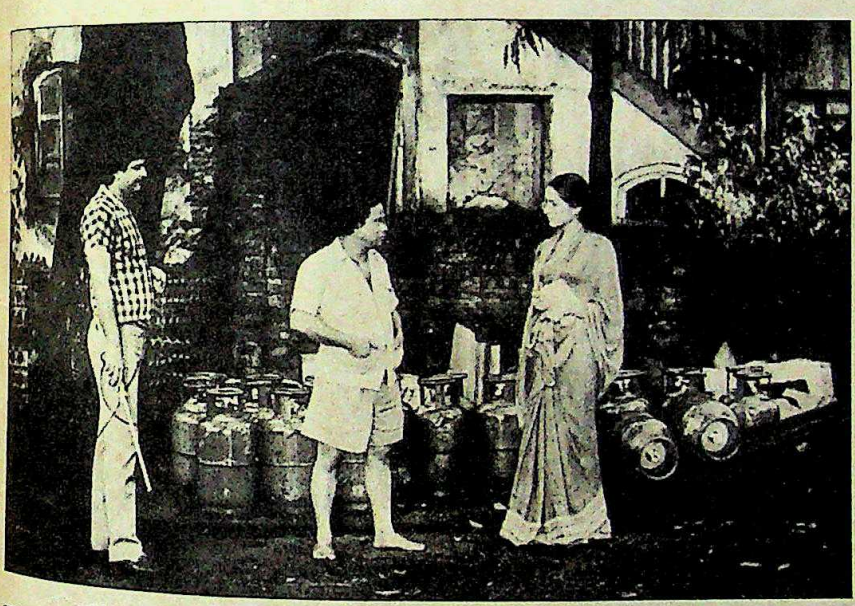

civic morality is also a relentless winner. Everyone loved her.

"Rajani is very annoyed that the telephone 298088 is not working for so long," read a recent advertisement in a Calcutta newspaper; indeed, for the city's harrowed citizenry, she seemed briefly to have acquired the stature of an avenging Durga. "If only we had someone like her in real life," lamented 33-year-old Calcutta schoolteacher Swapna Mukherjee. "I'm praying that some young woman will be inspired by her and take up cudgels on our behalf against gas dealers and taxi drivers." K.S.Kulkarni, a well-known consumer activist in Hyderabad and general secretary of the Akhil Bhartiya Grahak Panchayat, pointed out that *Rajani*'s success was due to the absence of any unified consumer protection movement, one reason why it has not led to any collective action outside Bombay. "But the fact that Rajani is challenging institutions on an officially-controlled medium like Doordarshan has kindled a lot of interest in the serial," he said.

In Ahmedabad, Ramesh Joshi, a businessman dealing in typewriters, related how he watched amazed last fortnight as an angry 'Rajani-like' housewife heckled an autorickshaw driver on Nehru Bridge because he was demanding more money than his meter indicated. Says Joshi: "The programme's obviously giving many the courage to fight daily humiliations." In Bombay, the Consumer Guidance Society of India, a voluntary organisation which has for years struggled with its 1,400 members valiantly, and sometimes vainly, to provide redress to the hapless consumer, seized the opportunity at once to deplore the LPG dealers' protest, mobilise college students to write in letters to papers and build up public opinion in favour of *Rajani*. "We did our little bit, of course," explained Pushpa Motwany, chairperson of the society, "but it wasn't us that brought *Rajani's* importance to light, it is the frustrations of the public that has made her a heroine. She has become the new Joan of Arc."

Close on the heels of the consumer society's effort came a snap opinion poll carried out by another voluntary public service group known as Hindustani Andolan. The group sent out the two following questions to 5,000 people in Bombay asking for replies in writing:' Do you think the programme *Rajani* describing the plight of gas consumers in obtaining gas supplies and the harassment of

Rajani with director Chatterji (top); and with gas supplier; and taxi-driver

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taxi-users by cabbies portrays the true state of affairs?' And 'Do you agree with the demand of the taximen's union that Doordarshan should tender an apology to them for showing this programme?'

Within 48 hours of mailing the questionnaire, says Madhu Mehta, national convenor of the Andolan, he received 612 answers; in a week the number of responses was a staggering 6,000; people in certain localities had collected up to 200 signatures in favour of *Rajani*; and his doorbell at home never stopped ringing on Sunday with people trooping in to uphold the *Rajani* campaign. Next morning the press took up the story, frontpaging Rajani's doings in detail and Amul dairy products splattered town with hoardings showing a butter-licking Rajani and a fleeing taxi with the query: 'What's yellow on top and all for *Rajani*?' Even A.L. Quadros, the implacable secretary of the Bombay Taximen's Union who had led the march against *Rajani* had been momentarily silenced, when business came down by ten per cent after the programme. It was best to have Rajani on the taxi-drivers' side, he reckoned, and was keen that she expose the taximan's plight in a specially-written episode at some later stage.

"Rajani is so inspiring. I feel motivated all the time to do something similar."

BHARATI THAKAR
labour leader, Ahmedabad

Imitation being the best form of flattery, the advertising and film world rapidly caught on: Bombay's film industry papers reported the advent of a film called *Inspector Rajani* and advertising and market research agencies were avidly discussing introducing Rajani-type characters to reinforce consumer sales. Says Nirmal Goswami, writer and director of Ulka Advertising: "*Rajani* is succeeding for the reason *Woman's World* failed. The women on that programme were total strangers to the bulk of the female audience. *Rajani* is handling the genuine problems of the urban jungle, especially one like Bombay where nothing works without pay-off and gratification." Sociologist Dr Meena Kaushik who heads Quest, the qualitative research wing of MARG (Marketing and Research Group), lucidly analysed what she termed the 'Rajani effect': "Rajani represents the new woman, the new female stereotype who combines the traditional values of the housewife with the more aggressive, championing traits of a working woman," she said. In their research into the 'Rajani effect', Kaushik and her colleague Meera Vasudevan found that reaction to Rajani among women viewers was sharply polarised: they either loved her or hated her but never reacted unequivocally. "She is superwoman for some

PRIYA TENDULKAR

A Star is Born

FOR A 25-year-old, Priya Tendulkar has packed a lot into her life: she attended art school for two years, worked in a printing press, in a bank, as a restaurant hostess in a five-star hotel and as an Air India stewardess. Now she is an actress, not because of any burning desire or commitment but because, like most things in her life, the opportunity fell into her lap accidentally. "All I ever wanted to be was a great painter," says the second of playwright Vijay Tendulkar's three daughters who stumbled into the *Rajani* role after actress Padmini Kolhapure turned it down due to prior film commitments. "Basu Chatterji met me for a few minutes at the only film party I ever attended, and offered me the part, maybe because I have such a common-looking face. I had a done a few *masala* Marathi films. I thought this would be a change."

The biggest change *Rajani* has brought in Priya's life (other than the hundreds of weekly letters that pour in including marriage proposals) is that Hindi film producers are queuing up at her door: she has some nine films in hand, "middle-budget ventures with strong characters", but as for *Rajani*, she says her role in it is quite incidental and that she makes no suggestions, just goes along and delivers the lines. "But TV has made me realise how far I lived from reality, and how explosively powerful this medium is."

Tendulkar: middle-class messiah

HEMAND PITHWA

Presently, she is one of the busiest if not the most versatile actresses in Bombay, working in theatre, television and films simultaneously. That makes for an 18-hour day, often taken up by travelling to mofussil towns in repertory performances of her father's plays, *Anji*, *Kamla* and *Kanyadaan*. She makes no bones about the fact that she's doing films for the money. "As a child I saw my father struggling in a job all day and writing his plays all night. I don't want to do that. I want to be financially secure when I go back to my painting and writing."

A self-confessed 'Daddy's girl' who regards him as her best friend, she has always been unpredictable, headstrong but without ambition. Her younger sister Tanuja says that all Priya's jobs have been so unexpected that no one at home is really surprised at her becoming an overnight star with *Rajani*. "We still don't know where to get autographed photographs of her. There's such a demand." As for Priya herself, she says that since school she has somehow managed to pull through life because she's basically sincere. "The only difference is that as a child I used to get caught for not doing what I was told. Now I don't."

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because she victoriously re-enacts those small incidents of their lives where they have failed. And for others she is a pushing virago forcing them to take a stand, arousing fears of rejection if they are not like her," says Vasudevan.

Reactions to the programme among women viewers are, in fact, split along such a line. Bharati Thakar, an Ahmedabad labour leader, admits that ever since she saw a couple of the programme's episodes she can't stop thinking about *Rajani*. "It's so inspiring," she gushes. "I feel motivated all the time to do something similar."

But there are an equal number of viewers who express scepticism. In the south, for example, few understand Hindi and those that do tend to regard *Rajani* as yet another Sunday morning entertainment emanating from the Hindi-speaking north. There are others who find the programme naive and unrelated to the larger corruptions of the system, poorly produced and absurdly romantic. In other words, Rajani's actions may be terrific to watch but are impossible to emulate. Says Dr Shalini Bhogale, reader in sociology at Hyderabad's Osmania University: "*Rajani* is an adult fantasy, simplistic and implausible. Activism isn't spurred by television. Awareness is distinct from arousal. How many husbands are their like Rajani's? And Swapna Mukherjee, the Calcutta schoolteacher who prays for the emergence of real-life Rajanis, concedes that it would be a bit impracticable to become one. "I'd love to be like Rajani but life isn't like they show it. If my gas delivery boy threatened to delay supply unless I paid him five rupees, I'd rather shell out the money than raise Cain."

While the gap between life on TV and real life seemed unbridgeable at one level, there are also those who feel strongly about the nature of the problems Rajani tackles and the institutions she takes on. Om Sharma, a widely admired humour columnist in Rajasthan, is bitingly critical of the programme's slant: "The whole thing is a conspiracy of the haves against the have-nots," he says. "I am not trying to excuse corruption at any level but, have you noticed, that Rajani exposes corruption at the lower levels, the implication being that those at the top are clean. Rajani always succeeds because the higher authority she approaches for redress is always responsive. In reality it is not." Adds N.L. Chowla, member, media advisory committee to the Union Government: "After all, *Rajani* is just as wishy-washy as the other serials. And like other serials, it is geared to the upper middle class whereas we keep on making tall claims about TV reaching 70 per cent of the population."

"It is the frustrations of the public that have made Rajani a heroine. She has become the new Joan of Arc."

PUSHPA MOTWANY
chairperson, Consumer Guidance Society of India

"The fact that Rajani is challenging institutions on an officially-controlled medium like Doordarshan has kindled a lot of interest."

K.S. KULKARNI
consumer activist, Hyderabad

Rajani's director, in fact, is in a quandary about exactly such deficiencies. The nature of the serial itself, with *Rajani* solving a problem in each episode, presents difficulties. "The first decision is what sort of things should *Rajani* take up, moral issues, civic problems or social attitudes," says Basu Chatterji. "Secondly, there is the problem of giving each episode the right tone so as to balance humour with serious concern, and make it authentic without oversimplifying." Last week-end's episode had Rajani lambasting newspaper horoscopes, but the programme was widely considered a bore, its patchy production values aggravated by a rambling scenario, unlikely situations and unlikelier solutions. The reason for this is the tremendous physical pressure under which all TV serials are made (INDIA TODAY, July 15, 1985) with shortages of studios, equipment and scripts. Things became so fraught on *Rajani's* production schedule last month that director Chatterjee was writing bits of dialogue on paper on his way to the studio while actress Priya Tendulkar was strained enough by the speed of the serial's production to lose 7 kg during the filming of the first 13 episodes (*see box*).

Still, television being all things to all men, it is not surprising that a simplistic, crudely produced serial which did not set out to be a consciousness-raising exercise has actually done it. Social and political observers are also quick to point out that the reason for the programme's runaway success is that, as basic social and institutional codes break down due to corruption, there are fewer channels of redress left for the common man. "Everybody's personal problem or agony becomes associated with *Rajani*," says social scientist Meena Kaushik.

But she is also a motivator of protest, however transient. Nirmala, a 48-year-old housewife in lethargic, corruption-ridden Bhubaneswar says that one day she became so moved by *Rajani's* doings that "I asked my children to protest against the school authorities. They go on charging higher fees without much teaching work. The children said no one could protest in school. I was mad. I said, someone has to be like Rajani and set right wrongs. But later, of course, I simply laughed at my anger."

The serial's cathartic impact may not, after all, be a superficial, fleeting emotion switched off along with the television set. If programmes like *Rajani* have arrived, then so has meaningful, socially-relevant television that breaks away from its bondage to Government handouts and B-grade Hindi film entertainment. Doordarshan Director-General Harish Khanna admits that "*Rajani* is being talked because it's based on real problems, not ethereal or speculative ones. I can't say how long it will continue, but I'm sure the model will be continued for a long time to come, leading maybe to other serials along the same line." As behavioural scientist Meera Vasudevan of Quest pointed out, it is not important whether *Rajani* will stay on or not but characters like her are here to stay and ring in change.

—SUNIL SETHI with bureau reports

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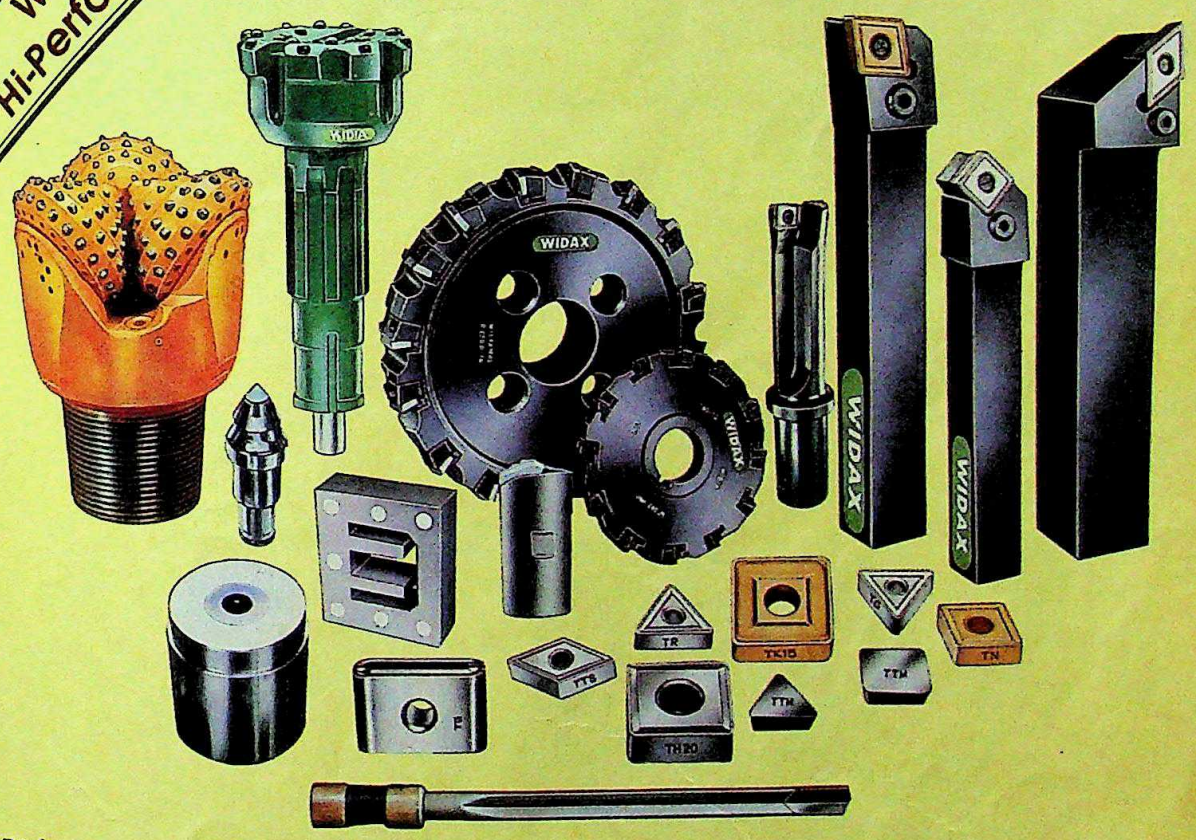

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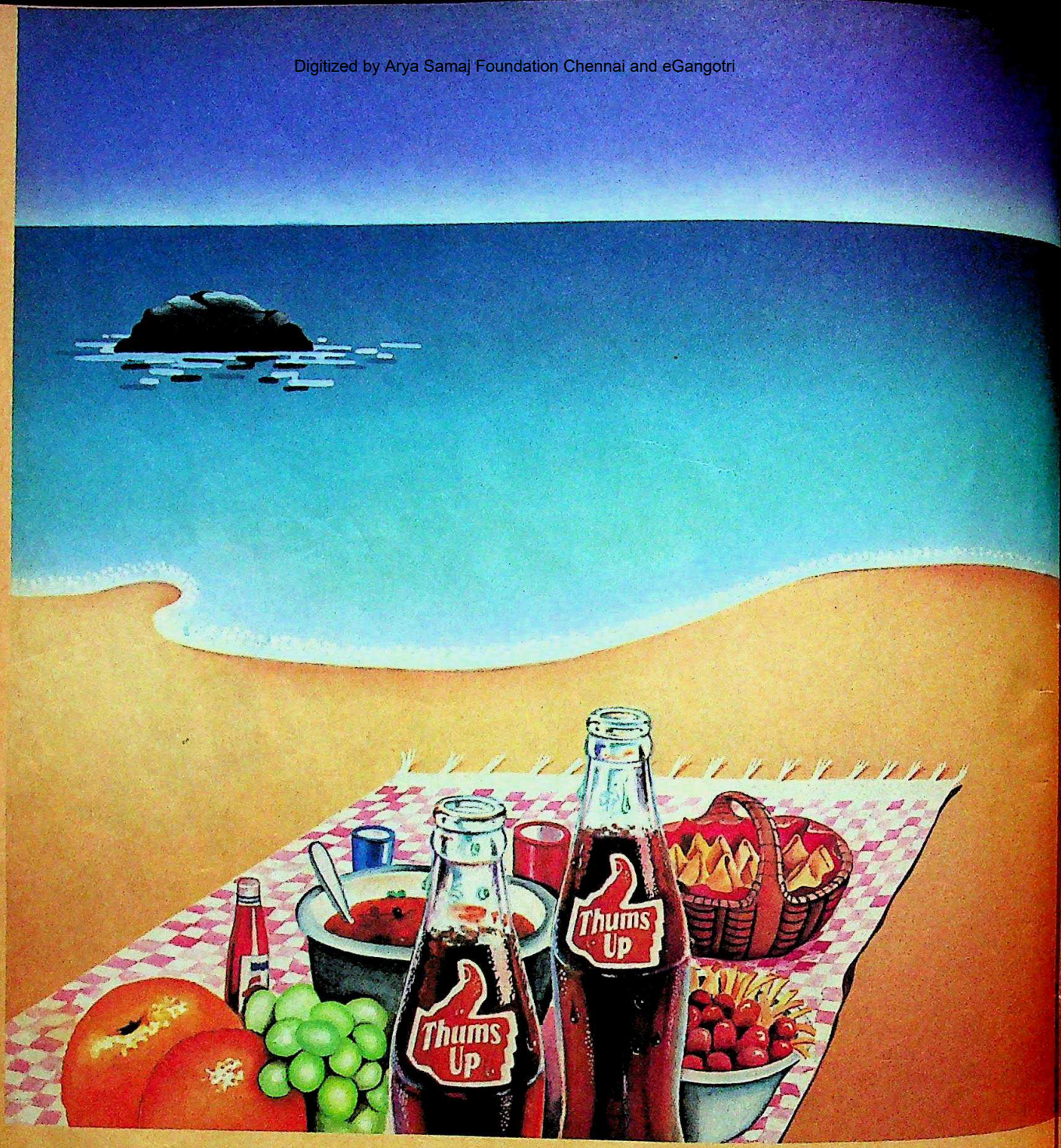

Food, friends and Thums Up.

Artificially flavoured. Contains no fruit juice or fruit pulp.

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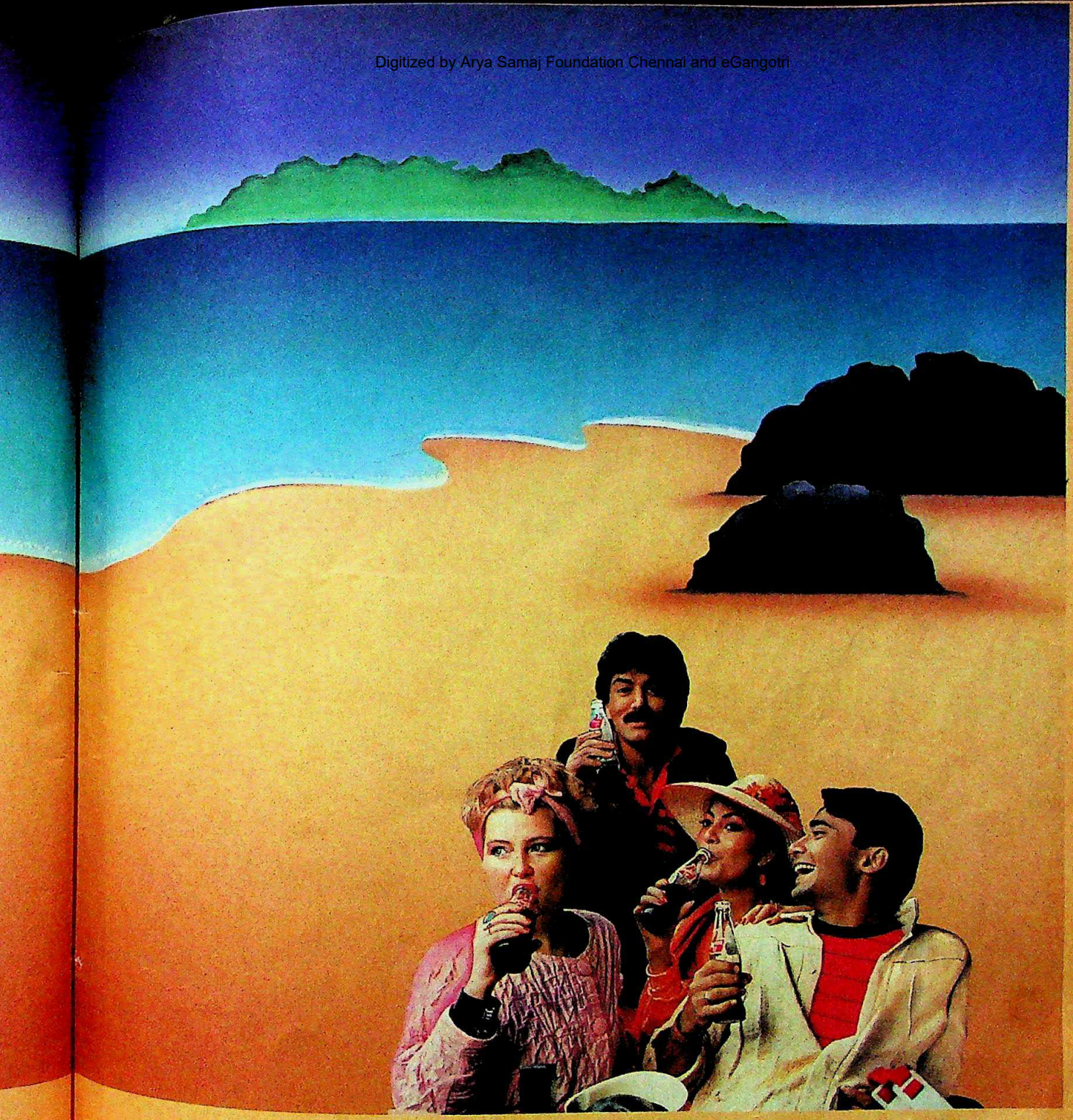

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That's the power of advanced 2-stroke technology.

The surge of power in a sleek, virile body.
The trigger response of 4-speed transmission.
The swift pick-up from 0 to 60 kph in just 9 seconds.
You get it all with the Ind-Suzuki AX 100.
Effortlessly, confidently, securely.
Pulsating, Thrilling. Exciting.
That's the sensation of Suzuki.
Come, feel its dynamic features.

- 100 cc 2-stroke engine output 8.25 bhp at 6500 rpm.
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- Fuel efficiency: 65 km/litre.

Unmatched performance and several exclusive features, put the Ind-Suzuki AX 100 in a class all its own.

It incorporates a sophisticated instrument panel with indicating and warning lights; rear view mirrors; turn signal indicators; steering, helmet and fuel tank locks.

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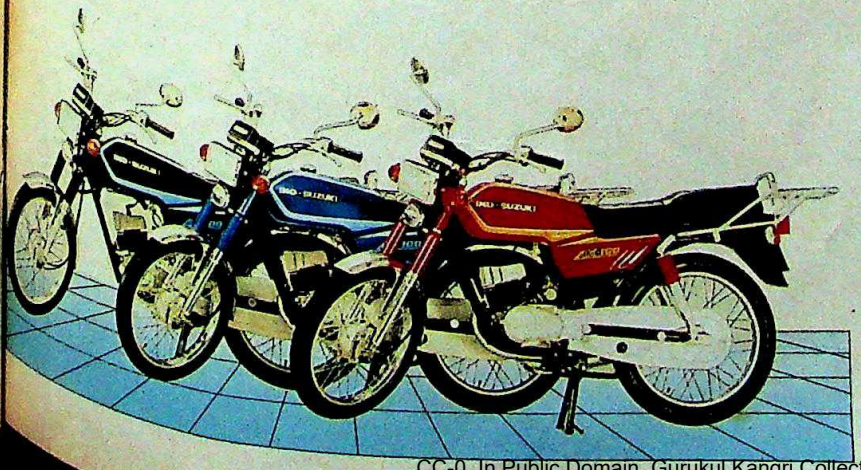

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MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

THE NEW B

VIJAYANTHIMALA BALI, screen siren in the '60s, and a leading exponent of Bharatanatyam, has demonstrated a new virtuosity by making five speeches in the Lok Sabha on subjects that range from rural education to terrorism. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, a Madras advocate and fiery labour leader, today participates in deliberations on the future of the electronics industry. Superstar Amitabh Bachchan hasn't yet given up acting, but he is now more concerned with being a conduit between the film industry and government than with what appears on the silver screen. Former hockey olympian Aslam Sher Khan has retired from the field but now spends his time dribbling around vested interests that keep Indian sports moribund. One time police officer Laldu-homa has turned his back on looking after the security of VIPs in Delhi and is now the government's front man in its sensitive negotiations with rebel leader Laldenga. S. Krishnakumar, the Kerala IAS officer who till recently ran a public sector concern, is now studying the larger problems of the government's core industries.

What unites individuals as diverse as these is not merely the fact that they are freshers in the Lok Sabha, eight months into their first foray into legislative politics. Nor even the fact that they were handpicked by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to form the vanguard of his new-look Congress(I), among some 86-odd first time MP's without any legislative experience who stormed their way into the lower House in the wake of Rajiv's astonishing 401-seat victory. As the Eighth Lok Sabha finishes its third—the monsoon—session this fortnight, more than anything else, perhaps, the party is distinguished by a common goal: the making of a different breed of parliamentarians.

Says newcomer Mukul Wasnik, the youngest ever MP who filed his nomination papers eight days after he reached the qualifying age of 25: "We are not here to represent any lobby, we are here to solve problems and we will go to any person who can help us do this." Remarks such as this indicate a new fighting mood, a spirit of enterprise finally giving substance to the generally amorphous role of members of parliament.

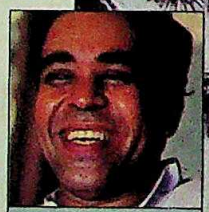
The problems are still there: absenteeism, soporific debates, and wasted time. But there is also the germ of a new sense of purposefulness. The budget session, for instance, was marked by the transaction of an impressive volume of business in which the freshers left their indelible mark.

But much more than this is the manifestation of change in the way the new breed of MP's is going about its business. Traditionally, MP's have ranged from the garrulous to the silent sleepers to those who—like Sanjay's legions who came to the Lok Sabha in 1980—generated more noise than business. There were always the great parliamentarians, men like Nath Pai, Ram Manohar Lohia and Jyotirmoy Bosu, who set standards that few have since matched. Each Lok Sabha has had a dozen or so on either side who gave its debates substance and its conduct dignity and meaning. But the greenhorns of the past all too often sat in the sidelines, barely participating in the proceedings, seldom raising the standards of debate.

This time round, the new MP's, according to a long-time Parliament reporter, are "basically very good, very promising. There are some, in fact, who

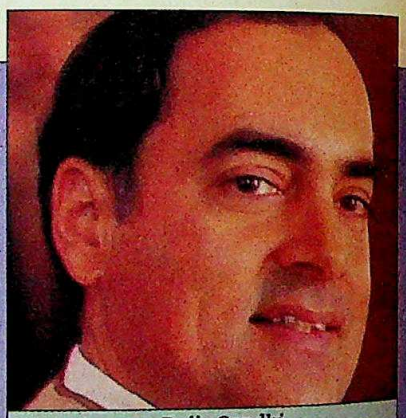
Khan

Vijayanthimala


Kumaramangalam

Wasnik

Bachchan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speak like opposition MP's. They are not party rebels but they put across points of view that are at variance with the official viewpoint." The late Lalit Maken was a prime example of this, a one-man crusader on issues that were important to him. Krishnakumar from Kerala described the Government's agriculture policy as a total failure. The list of those who have been critical of the Government is growing by the day. But they still lack a working knowledge of the rules, how to become effective parliamentarians though that can only improve in time.

Another veteran parliament watcher says that the new breed seems refreshingly free from ideological hang-ups, and unlike the older MP's who come into the well of the Lok Sabha and tend to wander about, chatting here and there, the younger members demonstrate a business-like demeanour which makes a refreshing change. "The younger MP's bow courteously Japanese style, to the speaker when they come in or leave the chamber," he says.

One striking feature common to large platoons of Rajiv's army of beginners is their economic independence, having been launched into parliamentary politics on the safe base of either a profession of private business. They are the opposite of the trademark Indian politician, dhoti-clad, clumsy and prone to living by his wits. Nor are they clones of the Sanjay brigade who muscled onto the centre-stage of the Seventh Lok Sabha by using lung-power and weighty patronage. The new breed of Congress(I) MP's—either in their smartly-cut kurta- pyjamas or more formally attired in Nehru jackets, manners always impeccable, honed at public schools in many cases—are a group apart in India's body politic.

Every Parliament has had it share of newcomers, but they tended to be cast in the traditional mould with some background of politics either by virtue of birth or upbringing or profession. It was Sanjay who heralded the first change, during the 1980 elections, when he was instrumental in admitting over 50 absolute greenhorns into Parliament. Eyebrows were raised even then, but Sanjay's experiment paled into insignificance after the 1984 election when no fewer than one-third of the party's MP's were new faces, including the 88 first time legislators who had—in the words of Harikrishna Shastri, secretary of the CPPI—"never even seen the inside of a panchayat".

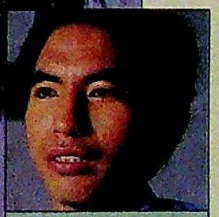
The film stars among them form only the thin but glamorous icing on the cake of the professional class that dominates the Rajiv troupe. Some 35 of them came to politics from the corporate ranks or from the government bureaucracy. Still others were, till recently, professional lawyers, doctors, chartered accountants, and engineers. Another 25-odd MP's are feudal chiefs-turned-democrats, scions of ex-monarchs and rising entrepreneurs who form a compact if elite group within the Congress(I) freshers club. Obviously they command, together with some of their more successful colleagues from the professional group, resources that can seldom be matched by MP's of the garden variety. If this was an advantage in their elections, it now promises to serve a wider purpose, in their parliamentary work supplementing the meagre wages provided by Government.

Besides these, the freshers

The Congress(I)'s army of classical dancers, professional managers, trade union leaders, sportsmen...is distinguished by a common goal that their earlier incarnations didn't even hint at: the making of a different breed of parliamentarians.

Bannerjee

Sherwani


Lalduhoma

Sharma

Krishnakumar

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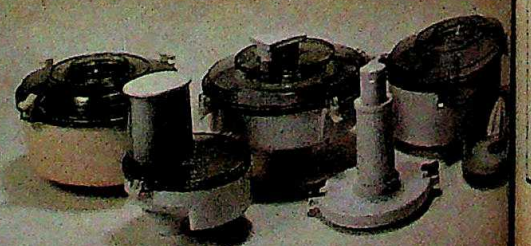

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include about 15 "intellectuals" which, in the Indian context, can of course mean anything between a village schoolteacher and an atomic physicist. But many of Rajiv's new finds are indeed teachers of distinction while one of them, Keyur Bhushan, elected from Raipur in Madhya Pradesh, is a recognised Hindi poet. In addition, there are nearly a dozen trade unionists, some of whom had in fact been active in trade union organisations other than the Congress(I)'s pocket organisation—the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). As a group, their baptism in politics has taken place through militancy and an exposure to the intricacies of industry.

Will the newcomers spell a new era for India's parliamentary culture, bringing both depth and relevance to the business of law-making? Says G.K. Moopanar, general secretary of the All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I): "New ideas call for new people. Rajivji has made a beginning towards changes that are far-reaching. The new MP's have not betrayed his confidence."

But the view of the party leadership about the newcomers is ultimately based on close monitoring of their work both within and outside the Parliament. Big brother began his watch from the very inaugural session of the Parliament when, addressing a meeting of the CPP(I), Rajiv directed the newcomers to meticulously submit to the party inter-session reports on progress of work in the constituencies. The exhortation was followed by the despatch of ponderous loads of questionnaire which the beginners were asked to carry back to their constituencies and get answered. On these data, as also on the performance on the floor of the House, rested the rating of the new MP. As Vijayanthimala put it disarmingly: "It is so good to know that somebody is trying to correct you all the time. In dance as well as in politics you tend to take a wrong step if nobody is watching you." The newcomers were among the regulars at the party's orientation course held in January to help set them up as knowledgeable and effective parliamentarians.

Audibility in the Parliament is of course rationed according to the rules of business. But some of the new MP's lucky to have wielded the microphone so far have been headline-grabbers. Kumaramangalam's speech on the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka has been listened to even by the veterans from the Opposition with rapt attention. Last fortnight, as Bachchan was delivering his maiden speech on the anti-narcotics bill, Madhu Dandavate, the redoubtable Janata member, spontaneously lauded him, calling out in the full hearing of the House: "He is always eloquent."

Life in the Parliament, and the capital, has obviously been a new experience for the majority of the new MP's. For the more resourceful among them, the shifting has been relatively free of hitches. But there are many who have been moving around like innocents abroad, striving to feel the ground under their feet in a new environment, rendered particularly tense by the threat from the terrorists. The recent slaying of Lalit Maken, perhaps one of the brightest MP's of the new breed, has cast its shadow on the new tenants of the *sarkari* flats in the MP districts of North Avenue, South Avenue, Meena Bagh or Lodi Estate—heightened only further by the measured footsteps of the black-uniformed security commandos pacing up and down the quiet, residential avenues. Visitors to some of them are obliged to undergo careful frisking before being admitted.

However, a still more constant occupational hazard for the new MP's has been the unrelenting pressure from their constituencies. Rising levels of expectations of the electorate from its MP's is a relatively new phenomenon, beginning with the massive anti-poverty programmes of the '80s. Men and women from the constituency, particularly the poorer among them, naturally flock to their MP's even if the particular MP hasn't had a long innings in public life. "This is a new experience for many of us," says Krishna Kumar, who actually had to cut back on the expenses for his children's tuition to be able to extend hospitality to "constituency people" swarming into his Delhi home. The North Avenue flat of Mamata Bannerjee is an open house where visitors from Calcutta come with their families and, using her house as base, go to Haridwar and Rishikesh.

For the new MP's in the Congress(I)—cultivated and refined in their outlooks—these are the first tentative contacts with the wide world outside, the world of squalor, poverty and despair. They are learning the hard way. But, as the experience of some of them shows, they are already beginning to make their mark. To show how they are coping, INDIA TODAY profiles some of those who have most successfully made the transition, and are beginning to make an impact.

Aslam Sher Khan, 33
hockey player
constituency: Betul

> **"I don't think I am the arguing, debating type, but you can score the goal in politics not only by hitting hard but by distributing and passing."**

ASLAM SHER KHAN, 33, is taciturn, shy and, as he had always been on the field, crafty. A former full-back in the Indian hockey team at the Munich Olympics in 1972, the Montreal Olympics in 1976 and the captain of the victorious Indian team at the World Cup in 1975, Khan obviously is more comfortable with the stick than the microphone. In fact, he is still waiting for his turn to make his maiden speech in the Lok Sabha. Nor does he have a clearly defined role as a member of the consultative committee attached to the Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry. "I've never really had much interest in such things," he admits.

But he has nonetheless been playing with remarkable alacrity his chosen role as the government's future sledge-hammer directed at the autonomous sports bodies. However, he had a tough time recently at the election of the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) in Bangalore where the Congress(I)-sponsored candidate, K.S. Dhillon, was defeated by the wily and resourceful M.A.M. Ramaswamy. But Khan is now ready with a proposal, submitted to the prime minister, for government take-over of all the sports bodies excluding the Cricket Control Board of India. "The bane of Indian sports is the chieftain-spirit prevalent in the sports bodies," he says.

Khan's constituency, Betul, has a large share (40 per cent) of tribal popula-

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tion living in the uplands where water shortage is chronic. So, immediately after his election, Khan began to persuade the authorities at the state capital of Bhopal as well as in Delhi to approve new irrigation schemes. His efforts met with success when two irrigation schemes were started in his constituency with World Bank funding. Thanks to his status as an MP, a low-power television transmitter is coming up at Betul while a 400-line automatic exchange has already been set up. "I don't think I am much of the arguing, debating type", he says, "but you can score the goal in politics not only by hitting hard but by distributing and passing."

Vijayanthimala Bali, 50
dancer
constituency: Madras South

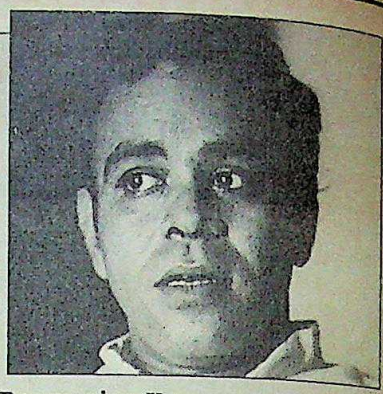
> **The important thing that acting and dancing teach a person is the sense of perfect timing. This is also the essence of politics.**

VIJAYANTHIMALA, with her deeply rouged cheeks and her carefully hidden reading glasses, has delivered five speeches so far on subjects as wide-ranging as rural development and the anti-terrorist bill. Currently a vivacious 50, she zips through the Central Hall of the Parliament many times each day with the exuberance of the village belle that she played in *Ganga Jamuna*. "The important thing that acting and dancing teach a person," she says sitting in her makeshift home at a suite in the India International Centre, "is the sense of perfect timing, of doing things at a measured pace. This in a curious way is also the essence of politics."

Such pearls of wisdom cascade spontaneously down the lips of the charming MP from the Madras South Lok Sabha constituency, but Vijayanthimala is seldom limited to wisecracks. Between the budget and the monsoon sessions of the Parliament, she and her omnipresent doctor husband undertook trips round four states—Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and her native Tamil Nadu—to raise core groups of educated women who would in turn motivate other women to propagate the cause of family planning. In between, she flew down to Delhi, met Mohsina Kidwai, the minister in charge of health and family welfare, and bombarded her with a pithy note which said that the "inverted red triangle" was indeed an archaic and esoteric symbol which meant nothing to village women.

Vijayanthimala is a member of the consultative committee on public grievances, personnel training and art and is the chairperson of the standing committee attached to it. On these forums, she has been stridently championing the cause—among other things—of saving the priceless Indian antiques from getting smuggled out of the country. But her "priority A", as she puts it, "is to do something about family planning, to take the campaign to every doorstep in the villages." She has effectively taken the campaign to her own constituency at least where over 500 women have been drafted to provide counselling to families. "We have begun to talk to the male members, because it is impossible to motivate people for family welfare unless you have got the menfolk on your side. Counselling through women alone is an ancient concept. It must change," she says.

However, Vijayanthimala is not one of those finnicky MP's who would rather stay silent than speak on subjects that do not quite conform to their special aptitudes. So she spoke on the anti-defection bill as her name came up by the draw of lots at the business advisory committee. She also spoke on the anti-narcotics bill last fortnight, besides bringing in a large number of special mentions and over a dozen call-attentions. And how seriously she took her job was manifest in the heaps of files, memoranda, books and letters—mixed up with an occasional book on painting and dances—littered at every conceivable, and inconceivable, corner of her two-room suite. "There is pleasure in working hard", the dancer says with tremendous feeling, "in dance, you slog to get a particular *mudra* right; in politics, if you work hard, you are bound to see the results influencing the lots of a large number of people."



Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, 33
trade union activist
constituency: Salem

> **A good parliamentarian, I think, is a Samurai at heart.**

For RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM, 33, president of the All-India NSUI between 1973 and 1975 and a general secretary of the All-India Youth Congress in 1975-76, the smiling and jovial exterior is only the cover for a tough trade union activist who was the president of 84 labour unions when Rajiv Gandhi chose him as the Congress(I) candidate from Salem, the industrial town near Madras. The steel rolling plant at Salem was the brainchild of his father, the late Mohan Kumaramangalam, when he was the Union steel minister between 1971 and 1973. Soon after the senior Kumaramangalam's death in an air crash in Delhi, however, the Salem plant was dumped and, by 1975, the Union Government drove the last nail into its coffin by saying that it would not be viable to upgrade the rolling plant into a proper smelting unit. But, by then, the plant had already hired 12,000 staff and acquired 3,000 acres of land. For the next 10 years, it sat squat in the middle of the town like an irremovable white elephant.

Kumaramangalam's first move as an MP was to approach the Planning Commission with a Rs 600-crore plan to upgrade the Salem plant. But the commission said it had no money. Kumaramangalam's spontaneous next manoeuvre was to meet M.G. Ramachandran, the Tamil Nadu chief minister, and to formulate the elaborate plan for a joint sector

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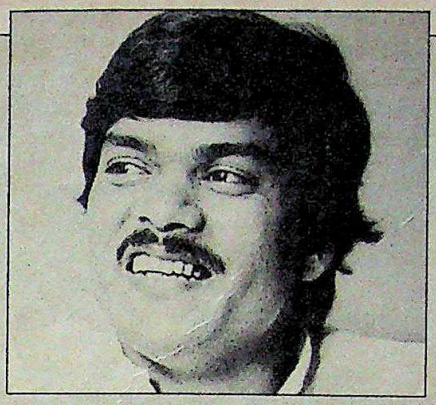
steel plant with equity participation from the Centre, the state Government and the private sector. The joint sector plan is now only awaiting a green signal from the Centre.

Intelligent, alert and bubbling with enthusiasm, Kumaramangalam has the mercurial trait of his father *sans* his dogma and his frenetic suspicion of the private sector. Two years ago, as president of the labour union at the Wimco plant, he sided with the management to end the protracted labour strife and help the company head off a financial crisis caused by onslaught from the unorganised match factories thriving on irregular labour practices and exploitation of child labour. "Labour can survive only when industry survives," he says.

Like other new members of parliament, Kumaramangalam is learning the hard way that being a people's representative can be taxing on the purse strings. Overwhelmed by visitors from his constituency, he soon found that his daily allowance of Rs 75 was vanishing in just providing refreshments and accommodation to his constituents. But he is learning the ropes: recently he managed to get himself allotted a flat for visitors, a facility that is permitted to MP's but for which there is considerable competition for there are only about 80 such apartments available. But finding cash is not really a problem for Kumaramangalam. Hopping into his newly-acquired second Maruti car, he said with a majestic wave of his hand: "I'm of course lucky in the sense that when I am short of funds I can just fly down to Madras High Court, appear for a couple of days, and get back with enough money to keep the pot boiling for a few days more."

A member of the consultative committee on electronics, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam has been constantly hammering away the necessity for preventing India from "going the Singapore way" and for "shunning screw-driver technology". He has spoken on the ethnic problem at Sri Lanka, on the need to amend the State Financial Corporation Act, and on the urgency to convert handlooms into small powerlooms and to put an end to the practice of subsidising inefficiently run looms. "Small is not always beautiful," he quips. But he is indeed a parliamentarian of the classical mould to whom the parries and thrusts on the floor are more important than deliberations in closed committee halls and ministerial chambers. "A good parliamentarian, I think, is a Samurai at heart," he says with a mischievous glint in his eyes.



Mukul Wasnik, 26
student leader
constituency: Buldana

> **We are not here to represent any lobby, we are here to solve problems, and we will go to any person who can help us do this.**

MUKUL WASNIK, 26, who is the present president of the NSUI, is an MBA of Nagpur University who was studying for his law degree and writing his doctoral thesis when the call came. Wasnik, who represents Buldana in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, is already regarded as a forceful speaker with a viewpoint of his own. Speaking on the demands of the Education Ministry, Wasnik startled the grey eminences on the treasury benches when he fervently attacked a suggestion from the Government that elections for the students' unions should be done away with. "Elections are an absolute must because they shape the personality of students," he asserts. Even though the Education Ministry reportedly does not approve of his views, most opposition MP's are in agreement with him. In fact, members on the opposition benches clapped all the way during his speech.

As a member of the consultative committee on sports and youth affairs, he is credited with tossing up a string of pithy questions. For instance, he worked out the budget for certain state-organised sports programmes at the block level and the figures turned out to be around Rs 200. "Which sports programme can you hold at a cost of just Rs 200?" he queries. Wasnik is also an ardent supporter of the view that there should be specialised schools right from the fourth standard, and is preparing a note on the subject which is to be circulated among other members of the consultative committee. He speaks a language which is heavy with the hangover of his business management classroom, talking of members of his constituency-level organisation as "personnel" and referring to the business of giving them tasks as "optimum utilisation". But he is a relentless does having already secured from the Maharashtra Government approval for a Rs 1 crore drinking water scheme in his constituency. He is going ahead with a plan to start several vocational centres in the area. "I can't concentrate on all things at a time", he says, "therefore, I want to concentrate on the problems of students." After all, Wasnik is one of the few MP's who are students themselves. And he has a right too to speak on sports.

Amitabh Bachchan, 44
actor
constituency: Allahabad

> **The dome of the Parliament is as awe-inspiring as the lens of the camera, a shade more exacting because nobody says 'cut' if you've made a wrong move.**

AMITABH BACHCHAN, 44, has struck an unusually low key in the Lok Sabha. But he has put into full use the advantage of being allotted a well-located bungalow on Motilal Nehru Marg where he has already built up a formidable personal secretariat through which he stays in touch with what he describes as his "two constituencies"—Allahabad, and the film industry.

The matinee idol is never in want of worshippers even in his new incarnation. Sheetal, his private secretary, handles over a hundred telephone calls a day

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while his praetorian guards posted at the gate of the bungalow frisk as many people seeking an audience with Bachchan. The only difference from his days in the show-business is the fact that most of his new callers are not star-struck teenagers but middle class and poor people from Allahabad who had come all the way with their petitions—for jobs, bank loans, or irrigation facilities on their fields.

Four of his six secretaries are detailed for his "Allahabad work", which means processing individual applications, chasing letters written to Uttar Pradesh ministers and departmental officials, and replying to the public. The team has been set up not a moment too soon. Busy with completing the films he is committed to, Bachchan was conspicuous in his constituency by his absence—leading some enterprising electors sympathetic to a rival Congress(I) camp to file a complaint with the police reporting a 'missing MP'! But if that was in the nature of a joke- with a sharp cutting edge—the fact is that Bachchan visited Allahabad for a mere 12 days between his election and last month. He seems to have learned his lesson: "Now that I've moved to Delhi, I plan to be a week-end tripper to Allahabad," he says.

But his chief preoccupation in the past few months has been to "lobby from within" for a rational government approach towards the problems of the mass media—films and television in particular as a member of the consultative committee attached to the Information & Broadcasting Ministry. At the first meeting of the committee, he cornered the Minister of State, V.N.Gadgil, with the argument that the amended Copyright Act aimed at putting an end to video piracy could not be effective unless its enforcement was entrusted to the Centre instead of allowing the state governments to go about it in their present feeble manner. Earlier, at a meeting of the Congress(I) standing committee attached to the I&B Ministry, he took up the economic causes of the film industry and secured a promise from Gadgil that the industry's proposals regarding tax rationalisation would be re-examined. This is a sore point for film producers who have for years been agitating against "turn-over excise"—zero-excise up to the first 12 prints of a film, and steeply climbing rates for subsequent prints. "The Government must not punish popularity. More prints mean more people will see it, and the level of taxation should gradually lessen instead of going up," he argues. No wonder that film producers queue up to meet him at the beginning of every session. In fact, to facilitate matters for them, he is keeping an aide permanently posted in Bombay.

But how does he view his changed role? Does it not vex him to wait for days on end only to get one special mention or a single call-attention approved? Was a membership of the Parliament after all worth all the bother of switching career, changing residence, getting branded as a man of the establishment? "Oh yes", Bachchan says, "the dome of the Parliament is just as awe-inspiring as the lens of the camera that is rolling. The Parliament is only a shade more exacting because nobody here will say 'cut' if you've made a wrong move."

Mamata Bannerjee, 27
political activist
constituency: Jadavpur

> **The Lok Sabha is a fighting arena; it is no place for exchange of pleasantries.**

Another surprise selection of the Congress(I) leadership, 27-year-old MAMATA BANNERJEE, is in the same age-bracket as Wasnik but shows a degree of pugnaciousness which one normally associates only with the boxing ring. After all, she did vanquish the Marxist leader Somnath Chatterjee in his own den, Jadavpur. "Yes, the Lok Sabha is a fighting arena; it is no place for exchange of pleasantries," says this dark and loquacious queen of special mentions—45 so far on matters ranging from industry and education to refugee rehabilitation, civil aviation, law and order, even defence. However, she really excels in her role as the one-woman battering ram of the ruling party against the second largest opposition bloc in the Lok Sabha—the CPM)—which is in power in her home state, West Bengal. Interrupting the Marxist members during their speeches, heckling them with the ire of an enraged prize-fighter, forcibly dragging West Bengal state issues on the floor of the Lok Sabha—Bannerjee is already quite high up on the list of the CPI(M) parliamentary party's bad fairies and is a godsend for Union ministers besieged with demands from the Marxist members belonging to West Bengal.

As a speaker, she has more lung-power than arguments. As an MP from the Jadavpur constituency, beleaguered with uneconomic glass, textile and engineering units, her role may call for more tact and caution than what she is known to possess. That may be the reason why she is getting more or less typed in her bulldozer role. But she is least likely to mellow down. "Somebody has to scream and scream all these five years to draw the attention of the nation to the Marxist misrule in West Bengal. You cannot do that by being nice."

Salim Sherwani, 32
industrialist
constituency: Badaun

> **I am in Parliament not to take anything away from it but to give to it the best of my ability.**

SALIM SHERWANI, 32, had little to complain about before he become an MP: as the owner of Geep batteries, a sugar mill and a string of luxury hotels, his business enterprises notched up a turnover of Rs 40 crore with 5,000 staff in employment. Had he wanted, Sherwani could have

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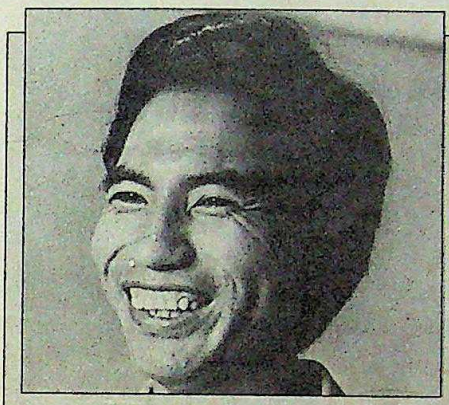
been riding high as a businessman, lording over one of the fastest growing industrial groups in Uttar Pradesh—had it not been for an inherited passion for politics. His father, former Congress MP N.R. Sherwani, died last year.

A first class graduate in economics from Aligarh Muslim University, Sherwani was given the offer from Rajiv last year to contest from Badaun, a Muslim-dominated constituency in western Uttar Pradesh. Sherwani gratefully accepted the offer. His visage reflecting every inch his aristocratic lineage, Sherwani however brings into the Lok Sabha the underlying concerns of his fellow industrialists: with taxes and government procedures. He is a member of the consultative committee attached to the Finance Ministry. In this capacity, he is now busy drafting a comprehensive note on the growing phenomenon of sickness of industrial units in which he has pulled no punches to put the Government on the dock. "The worst feature of our fiscal policy is that it puts the indigenous industry on the same competitive level with the multinational corporations. We cannot have unfettered competition between the local sector and the foreign sector," Sherwani says.

He is in the Lok Sabha, he says in the lofty manner of his new colleagues, "not to take anything away from it but to give to it the best of my ability". In fact he is still living in his hotel at Sunder Nagar, a posh Delhi colony, while his official residence at South Avenue is being "done up". But his present environment is totally changed from what it was till recently, that of a corporate boss sanitised against political turmoil outside. Seekers of jobs and bank loans from his constituency, particularly those belonging to the minority communities, chase him even to his hotel. "I've begun enjoying it in a way. I don't really have to worry about business. It has been put on auto-pilot. I look only at the monthly financial reports," he says.

Sherwani faithfully visits his constituency at least twice a month. Skirting the Congress(I) organisation, he has set up his own offices managed by professional people at all assembly segments in his constituency. While routine matters go through them, he grapples with the more important of the problems, dealing either with the authorities in Lucknow or in Delhi. Posted on the wall of his office in Badaun is a large map of the constituency, with water supply, irrigation, power and other projects marked neatly by pin-flags. He does not hedge his views on economic development, particularly of Badaun, which, he says, has been marred by "a subsidy culture". MP's normally would lobby for more subsidy. But Sherwani has both the means and the spirit to rile at it in the true Benthamite spirit, saying: "I don't want subsidy for my people. I want more infrastructure to grow so that they can stand on their own legs." His recent move: he offloaded from his hands all recommendatory power to provide bank loans to the needy but scrutinised instead the entire list of loanees to check against unjustifiable loans.



Lalduhoma, 34
former IPS officer
constituency: Mizoram

> **The Parliament gives one a choice between working in the public eye and working silently. Ideally one should combine both.**

LALDUHOMA, before joining the Indian Police Service (IPS) had been the private secretary to Chal Chhunga, the first chief minister of the Union Territory of Mizoram, which he now represents. He was a member of the VIP security cell till January 1984 when Mrs Gandhi called him into her office one day and asked him if he would like to resign his job and join the Congress(I). Lalduhoma, 34, said yes, and was immediately sent to London to talk to rebel leader Laldenga in exile and negotiate his return to New Delhi. He knew Laldenga intimately as he had been the officer entrusterd with his security earlier in the capital.

The quiet diplomacy paid off and Laldenga agreed to return to India for further parleys on the future of his troubled state. Even now, Lalduhoma is the main conduit between the Centre and the charismatic Mizo leader, and their negotiations have entered the final stage.

A member of the estimates committee as well as the consultative committee attached to the Agriculture Ministry, Lalduhoma is a relentless pursuer of the cause that *jhum* (slash and burn) cultivation, which is distressingly common to the entire north-eastern hill states, must be abolished in the region. He has been cajoling the Centre, for some time, now to initiate several alternative employment schemes, "so that villagers don't have to burn up entire hillsides—spoiling land, ecology, everything". He insists that *jhum* is "a state of economy" and can be countered only by finding alternative and remunerative employment. Following his persistent petitioning of the Railway Ministry, the Union Government has now granted a Rs 27-crore project that will connect Silchar, the last outpost in the plains before the Mizo hills begin, with Bairabi, the first railhead in Mizoram.

Anand Sharma, 31
youth activist
member, Rajya Sabha

> **The Rajya Sabha is really the arena for the blithe spirit of public debate. This is the place from where one can project one's true national concerns.**

ANAND SHARMA, 31, is a babe in the wood of the Rajya Sabha, the House of the Elders. His nomination last year, reportedly secured at the direct intervention of Rajiv when he was the party general secretary, got eyebrows arching upwards. Apart from the fact of his youth, the criticism that weighed against him was that he had been defeated in the assembly elections at his home state, Himachal Pradesh, a year earlier. But, on

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entering the Rajya Sabha. Sharma has silenced his critics by his power of logic and expression and by the depth of research which enlivens almost all of his speeches. Tall, extremely handsome and bearded, Sharma is–as Rajya Sabha veteran M.C.Bhandare put it–"the human Chinese wall, the ultimate defender". His maiden speech during discussion of the Finance Bill last year established his class. He was irrepressible in his defence of the Rs 180,000-crore Seventh Five Year Plan at a time when powerful coteries both within and outside the Government were advocating its pruning down.

A holder of a post-graduate degree in English Literature and a spellbinding orator, Sharma enjoys his stay at the Rajya Sabha where he is free from the worries that election from any constituency would inevitably bring. "The Rajya Sabha is really the arena for the blithe spirit of public debate. This is the place from where one can project one's true national concerns, not limited by local, regional or parochial considerations," he says.

However, Sharma, who was appointed this year president of the All India Youth Congress(I), has his goal clearly set. In his six years as a member of the Upper House, Anand Sharma wants to pursue only one "clear goal"–that of standardising school, college and university education throughout the country. Even last year, he brought a private member's bill which sought to extend the Central schools to all districts of the country. In an information-studded and well delivered speech on the education policy during the budget session this year, he made out a case for not only more and more Central schools but for Central colleges in all districts to be affiliated to Central universities. He pleaded for same books and same curriculum to be followed across the country and more standard books on national history. "The only way to integrate this huge country", he says, "is to standardise education. I am sure it will be a government policy by the time my term in the Rajya Sabha ends".

Sharma, in every way, turns upside down the conventional brash image of the Youth Congress(I)–the organisation which he heads. His Spartan office on the Janpath is just as cleanly maintained as his work-desk, with books and files neatly stacked and a sticker that reads: IT'S NICE TO BE HUMBLE. "The parliament teaches one, among other things, to be humble," he says.

Krishnakumar, 42
former IAS officer
constituency: Quilon

> **"I had my role as an IAS officer often verging on the political. So nothing is really amiss now if I double as a bureaucrat, sometimes."**

KRISHNAKUMAR, 42, is many things rolled into one. Having resigned from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1980, he is the only retired member of the IAS in the eighth Lok Sabha. He is also the only public sector manager to have stepped into the new Lok Sabha in 1984; his last job was to head Hindustan Latex Limited, the Kerala-based enterprise that makes coloured condoms and other contraceptives. Krishnakumar's own background is also colourful. He is the grandson of the diwan of the former princely state of Travancore where Quilon, his constituency, is located. He is also a first class graduate in mechanical engineering who had done a two-year stint on the Indian Railways.

Though a member of the consultative committee for science and technology, Krishnakumar's heart lies in the management of the public sector and he is keen to bring forth on the floor of the House "my experience of the days at Latex". He refuses to accept that the roles of bureaucrats and politicians are divided into water-tight compartments. "I had my role as an IAS officer often verging on the political. So nothing is really amiss now if I double as a bureaucrat, sometimes." Krishnakumar is burning his midnight oil to write out, for the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, a blueprint for raising efficiency of the core industries in the public sector. General secretary of the Kerala unit of the Friends' of the Soviet Union, a pink-hued subgroup on the fringes of the Congress(I), he has strong ideological stands on economic issues. "The public sector was created by Panditji as the fountainhead of progress in India. It must have functional autonomy but must be accountable to the public at every stage."

But, beyond his general concerns, Krishnakumar remains deeply rooted to his home state where he served from his probationary days till he rose to become the state industries secretary. He claims to be the only Congress(I) MP from Kerala to have opened a full-fledged constituency office and has, uniquely, divided it up into sub-offices not according to the geographic area but in terms of the occupations and economic standings of the people. "I think it makes sense", says he, "to divide according to the classification of the people whom you are required to serve. You surely don't serve the land and the rivers." A workaholic who browses at the Parliament library for hours on end, he has been up on his feet with 58 questions, including starred, unstarred and supplementaries, in the past few sessions. He spoke on fisheries ("any Keralite is fishery-conscious"), industrial finance, price rise, population control and transport. "Unlike other states", he says with considerable pride, "the electorate in Kerala is highly demanding."

It is doubtful if these ten beginners of the ruling party will be able, either by the weight of their personality or by sheer hard work, to make their presence felt in the Eighth Lok Sabha, due to remain in place right into the 1990s. The present Lok Sabha, as it is obvious, has begun with ar infirmity, having reduced the Opposition to an insignificant one-fifth of the House. Moreover, being ruling party members, these men and women cannot quite hope to make the grade along the more sensational and aggressive route of anti-establishment crusading. But, even for MP's of the ruling party, there are ways of getting into reckoning by coming up with original ideas, by serving the constituencies and the people at large with a spirit of egalitarianism that is not partisan, a concern which is not tainted by obvious self-interest. The extent to which the Congress(I) freshers can carry out these ideals will determine, to a large extent, the rationale of Rajiv's playing Russian roulette with aspirants while choosing candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in December last year.

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THE HERALD REVIEW

Written Off

"....We have found it unviable to run a magazine which informs rather than entertains. Perhaps the mandarins at Doordarshan are right about what the public wants: not education. But it has been an education for us to watch the world go by and record its movement. This then is no tearful farewell, much less a suicide note."

—Editorial in *Herald Review*

THERE was no tearful farewell and the weekly *Herald Review* sank out of view unheralded last fortnight. The 49th and last issue marked the end of a magazine that had begun life less than a year ago. What went wrong? C.P. Chandrasekhar, executive editor, appears a bit foxed at the failure. "It was meant to be a serious magazine by virtue of the subjects it dealt with," he says. "But somehow, we couldn't get ourselves across to the section of readership we were aiming at: people who read the economic dailies."

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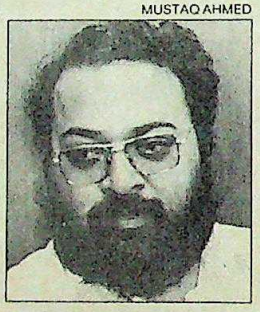

Hari Kumar (left) and (right) Chandrashekhar: inevitable decision

Looking back, the only remarkable thing about the publication was that it hailed from a well-known group—the Mysore Printers, of *Deccan Herald* fame. Established in 1948, the group brings out the daily *Deccan Herald* (circulation: 145,000), the Kannada daily *Prajavani* (185,000), and Kannada magazines *Sudha* (150,000) and *Mayura* (90,000). However, an English tabloid—*Evening Herald*—has been floundering ever since it appeared about two years ago with circulation down to less than 4,000 copies.

According to 33-year-old K.N. Hari Kumar, executive director of the company and editor-in-chief of the magazine whose family owns the organisation, business and economy were initially taken as the *Herald Review's* main area of focus. But by the time the magazine actually emerged on the news-stands, it was decided that the primary coverage would include politics—"so intertwined with economics"—too.

The inaugural issue of September 2, 1984, on N.T. Rama Rao's ouster did well, selling about 25,000 copies. But that was it. The *Review* went into a slide immediately afterwards—except for the occasional issue, like the one on Mrs Gandhi's assassination—and by January 1985, circulation was down to between 6,000 and 8,000 copies. "People were willing to read an issue," says Hari Kumar, "but we couldn't persuade them to buy it a second or third time."

Faced with criticism of the magazine being "too heavy", a little more prominence was given to articles on films and the arts but that failed too and by May sales were down to an inconsequential 2,000 copies. This brought a last ditch attempt to save the *Review*, primarily through design changes. But except for a brief respite nothing really happened. In fact, a market survey report in April 1985 had warned that the *Review* was a "dead loss" and that closure was the only way out. The inevitable decision was finally taken in late July.

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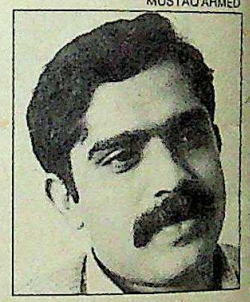

Said a thoughtful Hari Kumar: "One lesson perhaps is that while a reader may read a serious economic daily, he or she is not as willing to read a serious magazine. We made it a point of dealing with issues, not personalities—that also possibly went against us. Finally, we fell in between two stools. The general public didn't take to it because they found it too heavy, and our target readership possibly turned it down because it looked like a popular magazine." An insider, however, argues that reporting was sometimes slack and there was no attempt ensure readability of articles that dealt with serious subjects.

The group will have to think hard before it tries to go national again.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Bangalore

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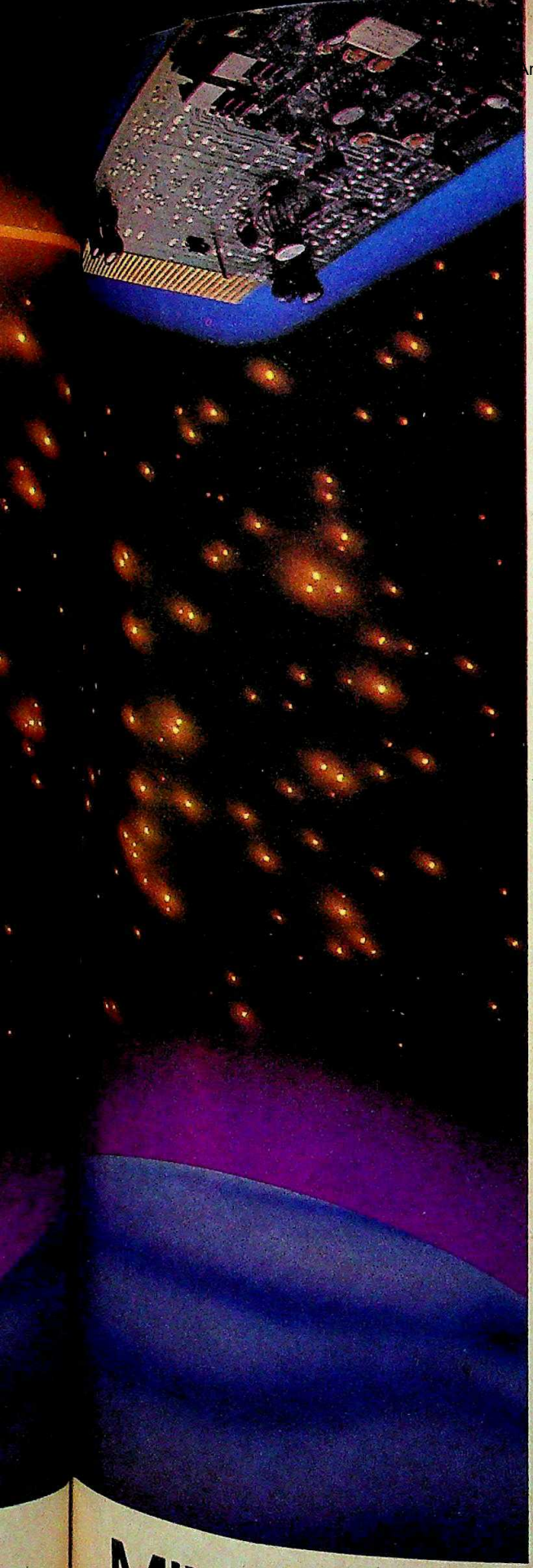

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SRI LANKA

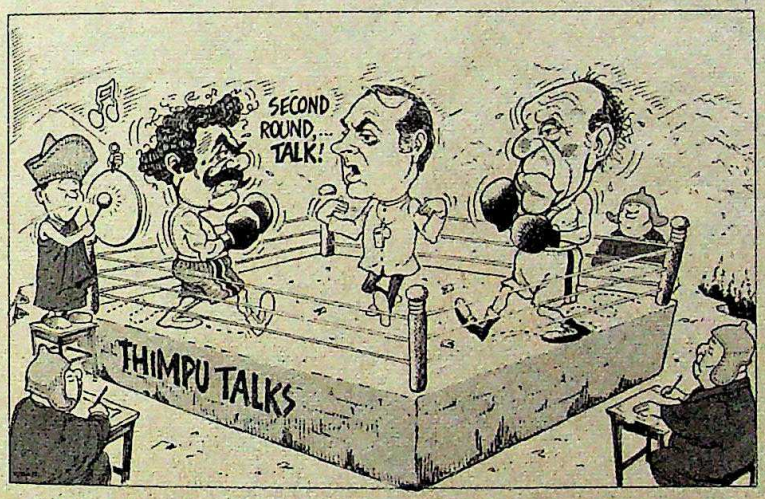
The Fight for Peace

SUDDENLY last fortnight, Thimpu seemed far more remote than it did when representatives of the Sri Lanka Government and their Tamil adversaries met there last month to thrash out a possible solution to the long-simmering crisis. Even as the two sides geared for their second meeting in Bhutan's fairy tale capital last week, it was depressingly evident that the anticipated settlement had come under severe strain and that India's determined efforts to play honest broker were fast running aground. In Colombo, where premier Rajiv Gandhi's first exercise in regional crisis-management was intitially embraced warmly by supporters of the Jayewardene Government as well as opposition circles and the entire diplomatic community, the mood is now one of all-too-familiar scepticism, even among those who gravely agree that Thimpu is Sri Lanka's "last chance" to return to less violent and uncertain times.

Even the mutually agreed ceasefire starting June 18 which held firm for the first fortnight has been frayed badly at the edges since then. Both sides have traded charges of ceasefire violations, but at least on the ground it is the Tamil militants who have been more active than the armed forces and the killings still continue.

Opinion within the ruling United National Party is that it is only the more ideologically-inclined People's Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOT) led by Uma Maheswaran that identified itself with the moderate, parliamentarist Tamil United Liberation Front in its positive response to Indian persuasion on the question of negotiations. Consequently, a large slice of Sinhalese opinion seems convinced that the separatist rebels are planning to move men and materials out of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil groups in Madras are similarly convinced that the Sri Lankans are using the ceasefire as breathing space to stockpile more sophisticated weaponry for a last ditch, do-or-die assault.

The Tamils have adequate cause for their concern. There is the recent visit of a Pakistani military mission and its inevitable follow-up late last month when 200 young Sinhalese and 30 "group leaders" left to receive military training in Pakistan. The group forms the nucleus of the recently announced National Auxiliary Force. Then there are the visits of Athulathmudali to South Korea and Lt General Tissa Weeratunge to China. Above all, there is the recent purchase of new weapons, especially the six Marchetti training aircraft converted into ground attack planes. Jayewardene has also received cabinet approval last fortnight for the new 10,000-strong Auxiliary Force and he has also warned his ministers that development work may be curtailed to support defence spending.



Last week, another spanner was flung into the works when a group of Sinhala-Buddhist hardliners formed a national front to "protect the rights and interests of the majority community at this crucial juncture in its history". The group has ratified a resolution asking the Government not to proceed with the Thimpu talks till conditions conducive to negotiations were created. The timing of the announcement was significant in that it coincided with the visit of India's peripatetic Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari to Colombo for talks with President Jayewardene aimed at narrowing down the differences between the two negotiating sides. Significantly, former premier Mrs Bandaranike is a prominent member of the front as is her son, opposition leader Anura Bandaranaike. Presiding over a ceremony to mark Mrs Bandaranaike's 25th year in office, the Mahanyake of Asgiriya, the formidable spokesman of the Mahan Sangha (ranking Buddhist clergy) launched a scathing attack on the Government which, he said, had produced "Sinhalese refugees" in the land of the Sinhalese. Mrs Bandaranaike and the Mahanayake both insisted that any accord must receive a direct mandate through a referendum or a general election.

In Madras, as in Colombo, there is little optimism and much suspicion regarding the next round in Thimpu. Militant spokesmen say that they are returning with the same set of principles they brought up at Thimpu-I for recognition of the Tamil's distinct nationality and traditional homeland and will wait to see what the Sri Lankans have to offer. The Sri Lankan delegation, once again led by the President's brother, Hector Jayewardene, indicated last week that their objective is to get the Tamils to agree to the unit of devolution, which is the District Councils, and then negotiate further on how much or little power the councils will wield. They also say that the Sinhala-Buddhist front was inevitable and they will stand by whatever is agreed on at Thimpu and convince the hardliners to alter their intransigence.

But in the run-up to Thimpu-2, the prospects for a negotiated peace seemed dangerously fragile at best. Forced to operate between the conflicting pressures of an embittered and hostile domestic constituency and an impatient external community consisting of India, the US and western donors, Jayewardene is forced to make haste slowly and cautiously. He is also in no position to accede to India's demand to raise Sri Lankan participation in the talks to a "political level" or meet Indian expectations of a "substantial and meaningful devolution of power". With little room for either side to maneouvre, the chances of a successful conclusion at Thimpu seem to be as thin as the rarified mountain air in the Himalayan kingdom's capital.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

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NCERT

Invites applications for filling up the following academic posts for the CLASS Project started by the Government of India immediately on purely temporary basis.

1. Professor — 1 post: *Qualifications.* (a) An eminent scholar with published work of high quality actively engaged in research in the areas of Computer Science/Computer Education/Software Design. Ten years of teaching and/research work Experience of guiding research at doctorate level. OR an outstanding scholar with established reputation who has made significant contribution to knowledge in the above areas. (b) Those who have put in ten years service in research/development/ teaching in the Council of which at least five years should be in the capacity of Reader in the above areas can also apply.

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Provided that if the selection committee is of the view that the research work of a candidate as evident either from his thesis or from his published work is of very high standard it may relax any of the qualifications prescribed in (b) above

Provided further if a candidate possessing a Doctorate degree or equivalent research work is not available or is not considered suitable, a person possessing a good academic record (weightage being given to M.Phil or equivalent degree or research work of quality) may be appointed provided he has done research work for atleast two years or has practical experience in a research and development organisation on the condition that he will have to obtain a Doctorate degree or give evidence of research of high standard within eight years of his appointment, failing which he will not be able to earn future increments until he fulfills these requirements.

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4. To evolve programes with the Indian script generation facilities;
5. To coordinate activities related to systems design of computer based learning packages;
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Scale of Pay and Age Limit as on 1 7 1985

Professor Rs. 1500-60-1800-100-2000-125/2 2500. Below 45 years

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Application forms can be obtained from the following address by enclosing an unstamped envelope (23 cms x 10 cms) giving name of Post, Serial Number and Advertisement Number. The outer cover should be marked 'Request for application form' Separate applications should be submitted for each post

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Completed application forms alongwith attested copies of certificates etc., and a crossed Indian Postal Order for Rs. 8/ (Rupees two for SC/ST candidates) in favour of the Secretary, NCERT should reach him by **10th September, 1985.** (Advertisement No. 116).

विद्यया ऽमृतमश्नुते

एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

Secretary
National Council of Education Research & Training (NCERT)
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi-110016 (India)

PRESSMAN

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HITACHI HIGH

THE THAPARS are getting ready to take control of Public Display Devices (PDD), a joint sector unit linked to the now problem-ridden Agra group. PDD has on the anvil a project to manufacture colour television picture tubes, using a second-hand plant from Finland. The Thapars plan to bring Hitachi of Japan into the project, either by getting Hitachi to provide new technology or by persuading the Japanese company to vet the quality of the product that will be turned out using the Finnish plant. In addition, the Thapars plan to launch some other projects in collaboration with Hitachi, with the Indian and Japanese groups having reached a broad understanding on future collaboration to tap the Indian market in a variety of fields. Meanwhile, Hitachi is also involved in a bid by the private sector Weston Electroniks to get the Government's permission for manufacturing colour television picture tubes in the country. If both projects materialise, Hitachi will have established a daunting presence in the Indian TV picture tubes market.

PLUGGING THE HOLES

THE NEW long-term fiscal to policy being worked out by the Government is likely to involve reducing the basic rate of tax on company incomes. Simultaneously, however, many of the tax loopholes that are presently built into the system may be done away with, leading to a simplified tax structure. The Government is in favour of this shift because, while the nominal rate of tax on company profits is quite high, many companies in reality get away with low levels of actual tax by using the escape windows. One of the exemptions proposed to be done away with is the investment allowance. As a result, several rapidly-growing companies that have depended heavily on this allowance to finance their expansion are now pleading with the Government against any change in the basic policy on corporate taxation.

EXPANSIVE ESCORTS

THE ESCORTS group is planning new ventures in automobiles and in new agri-businesses. The group is talking to Citroen of France about the possibility of manufacturing cars in India. A final decision depends on government permission. Meanwhile, the group plans to go into the production of hybrid maize and other seeds, in collaboration with two US giants in the business: Dekalb and Calgary Seeds. This project will be located in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where research centres will initially be set up for the basic groundwork. Commercial production will come only after a way is found to get around the land ceiling laws that come in the way of large, commercial farms.

MOTOROLA MOVES

THE US electronics giant Motorola may establish a presence in India soon. The company plans to begin the assembly of computers in India, partly for the export market, and is in the process of negotiating an arrangement with the public sector Semi-Conductor Complex Ltd (SCL) for manufacturing microprocessor chips in the country. SCL is already manufacturing microprocessor chips in collaboration with Rockwell, also of the US, so the Motorola microprocessors will be a second line of manufacture. This new chip is expected to feed the telecommunication market that is expected to open up with the advent of the electronic age in communications.

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES

INDIA now has four companies in Fortune Magazine's list of the 500 largest corporations outside the US, up from three companies last year. The new entrant is Bharat Heavy Electricals, ranking 395th. Two companies have slipped in the rankings: SAIL and Indian Oil. Moving the other way, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission has improved from 191st to 152nd. The ground lost by two of the four companies is accounted for by the rupee's weakness against the dollar. But there is no easy explanation for SAIL being the second largest loser among the 500, with a deficit in 1984 of $ 2.08 lakh. Meanwhile, the State Bank of India remains the lone Indian representative among the 100 largest banks outside the US, but its rank too has slipped, from 59th to 60th.

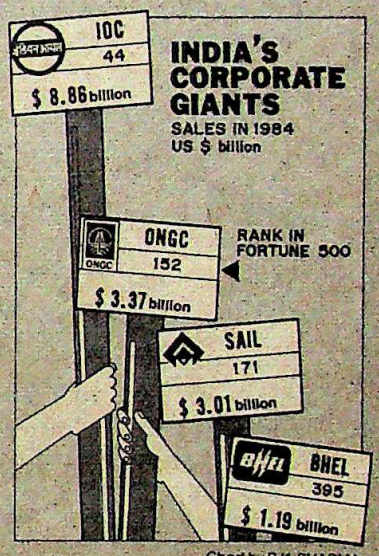

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

MUSCLE FLEXING

DHIRUBHAI Ambani of Reliance Textile Industries is looking at a number of new projects that will establish his company firmly in the petro-chemicals field. Ambani has already got a letter of intent from the Government for manufacturing acrylic fibre, and is now aiming at two more letters of intent for the manufacture of poly-vinyl chloride (PVC) and high-density polyethylene (HDPE). These units are intended to be set up in Gujarat, and are preparatory to Ambani staking a claim for a gas or naphtha cracker unit that the state Government is keen on. Ambani is also talking to the Government about the possibility of joining hands for setting up the Mangalore refinery, which has been put on ice by the Government for lack of investible resources. Reliance has the financial muscle needed to become a partner in such a large venture. But if the company gets these projects, it may give up its claim to the Salempur Rs 500 crore aromatics project.

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"Ganga, tera paani amrit..."

A song, most definitely, of yesterday. Because today's 'Gangajal' contains sewage, garbage, dangerous industrial wastes, pesticides, dead bodies, bloated carcasses... certainly no 'amrit' this!

The defiling of the Ganga

"Just by bathing in the Ganga does one get immediately purified", says the Brahmapadapurana. Today we've reversed the saying. A dip in the Ganga and you run the risk of cholera, viral hepatitis, amoebic dysentery, bacillary dysentery, polio, typhoid, paratyphoid... you name it! No wonder, cleaning the Ganga has become a giant national challenge.

The Ganga Action Plan

The Centre has drawn up the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) with a ten-member Central Ganga Authority (CGA) whose Chairman is the Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi. However, a job of such magnitude cannot be handled by any single body. It needs a concerted effort on the part of governments, municipalities, PWDs, industrialists, and all the people who live on the river's banks in the seven States through which it flows. With nationwide attention being focussed on the problem, already there is a change of attitude. For the first time people are beginning to believe that the Ganga can actually be cleaned.

HGE — equipped for the job

But who will do the actual cleaning-up job? Time for HGE (Hydraulic and General Engineers Ltd.) to take a bow. Of course, no single body can handle such a mammoth operation. But HGE is equipped to play a part in meeting this national challenge. HGE is a subsidiary of Batliboi, leaders in large-scale systems engineering projects. HGE itself is a leader in sewage treatment, trusted by municipalities and PWDs the country over. Jobs completed include large Sewage Treatment Projects for the Madras Metropolitan and Maharashtra Water Supply and Sewerage Boards, Municipal Corporations in Delhi and Bombay.

In Industrial Effluent Treatment, HGE is the only company with turnkey capabilities — right from concept to commissioning. Its ever-growing list of clients includes Maruti Udyog, Gwalior Rayon, Harihar Polyfibres, Corn Products, RCF, National Newsprint and Paper Mills, Parle Products, Bharat Petroleum, Century Spinning, Century Pulp and Paper Mills and several pharmaceutical plants, dairies and sugar mills.

HGE's after-sales service is a by-word in dependability. Very important because the Ganga bank towns already 'boast' of many Sewage Treatment Plants that are shut down due to lack of service or maintenance.

Yes, if cleaning the Ganga has become a national challenge today, HGE is equipped to play a part in meeting this challenge.

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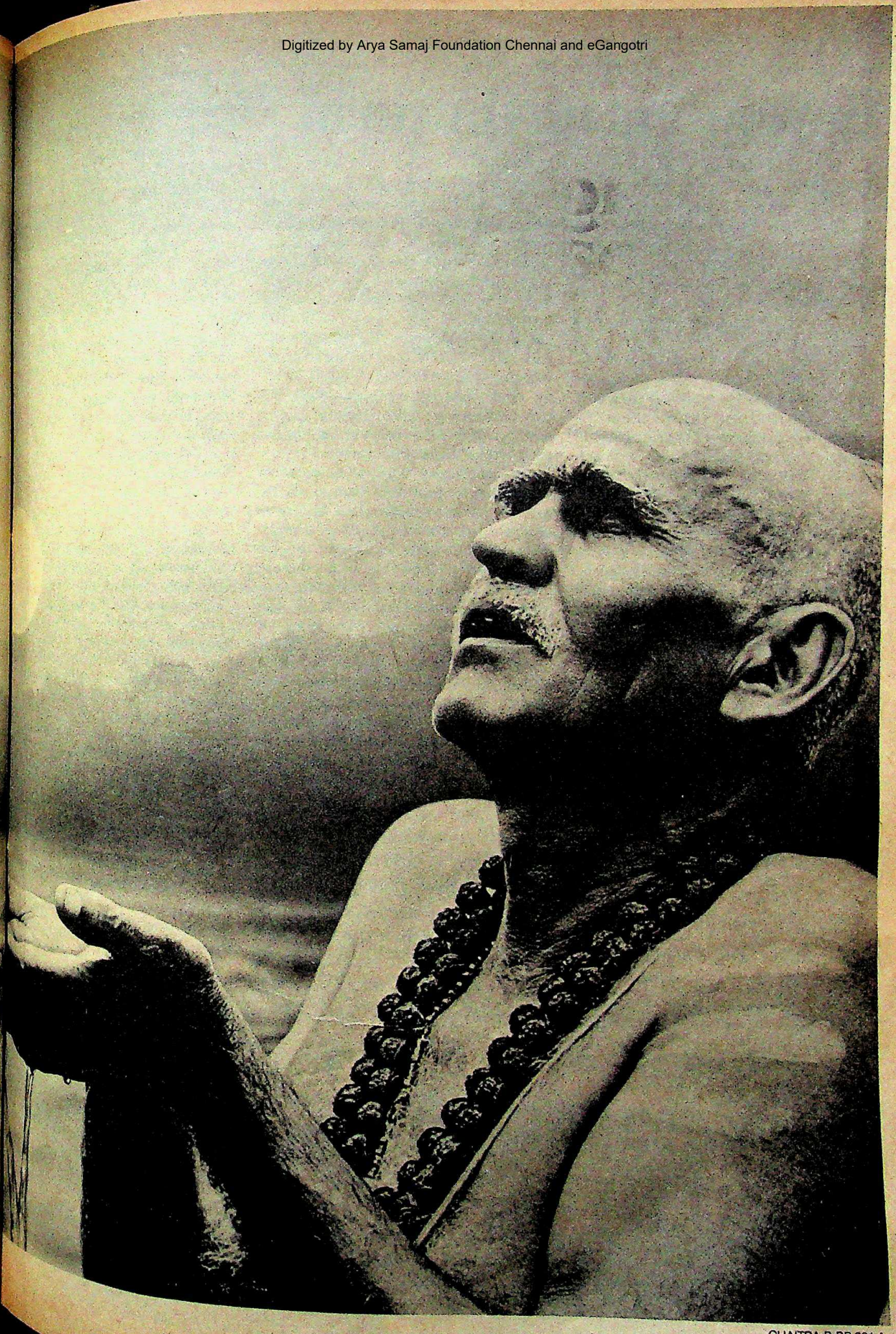

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AUTOMOBILES

Revolution on the Road

EIGHT makes of cars, a dozen of two-wheelers; half a dozen of light commercial vehicles and trucks: if all goes well, that should be the crowded scene on Indian roads a few years from now, marking a sea-change from barely a decade ago, when India had to make do with three ageing models of cars and five of two-wheelers.

Suddenly, the new is shouldering aside the old in the streets. The thousands of Marutis, already thumbing their low slung noses at lumbering Ambassadors, are the best emblems of the technological change that is gearing up in a rusty automobile industry. Sleeker, streamlined bodies, lighter, more powerful engines, energy-saving front wheel-drive transmissions, power-assisted steering, automatic-geared two-wheelers, glossier paint: these are a few of the favourite things of western consumers which will soon be available to their Indian counterparts. For a country where all these goodies were to be had only on 'phoren' cars, it is verily a new technological awakening. Says J.M. Vakil, managing director of Premier Automobiles: "We are witnessing the first steps in our drive to catch up with the rest of the world."

The new generation of cars available to Indians means more of everything:

► Economy: the new engines, while delivering more power, achieve this with less fuel. Premier's 118 NE hybrid gives 2 km more per litre than the Padmini, which was upgraded a few months ago, Maruti gives 18 km upwards, and the Citroen model that Escorts hopes to introduce will give more than 20 km.

► Power: The new Mahindra & Mahindra jeep, fitted with a Peugeot engine, can climb a hill twice as steep as the old one could in the same gear. And all the new light trucks have a payload to deadweight ratio of 2:1, almost twice the current industry standard.

► Safety: The Eicher-Mitsubishi vehicle will have dual brakes that are designed to be fail-safe.

► Style: Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company's (TELCO) Honda Accord and the Standard Rover are among the better-styled cars in their class.

At few places is the contrast between old and new so stark as in Premier's factories. At its 38-year-old plant at Kurla, which turns out about 100 Padminis daily, the body shells are pushed around by workers on creaky carts and quite a few of the component sub-assemblies are made without using jigs to hold the assemblies in place: a practice that does not make for accuracy. In contrast, at the company's Rs 34 crore Kalyan plant, the bodies and sub-assemblies will travel around on belting and chains, and all the major assemblies will be put together on jigs (by a worker strength 60 per cent of that in Kurla). Explains K.V. Kini, vice-president (projects): "This factory and the car represent a big step forward for us."

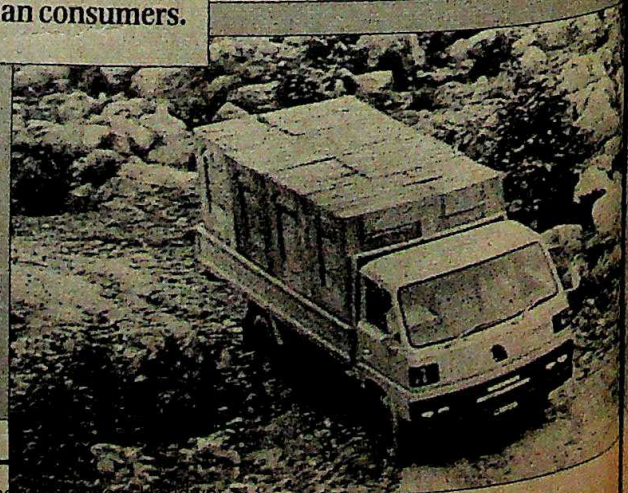
The irony is of course that the 118 NE represents decade-old technology, using the body of the phased out Fiat 124 from Europe and the Nissan A12 engine. In contrast, therefore, TELCO is planning to build the latest model of the Honda Accord introduced in Japan only a few months ago, and a company executive says: "The others are going to start with second-hand stuff. We'll get the best and the latest". But even the "second hand stuff" represents quantum jumps in technology and quality, with other manufacturers choosing more dated models than the Accord because of reliability, lower cost and a host of other reasons. Thus, Mahindra & Mahindra is thinking of making the Peugeot 505 with a diesel engine, Escorts wants to make one lakh tiny Citroens that will be priced on the road at Rs 47,000, and to match TELCO's Accord Standard Products is introducing the top-of-the-range Rover.

In two-wheelers, the scene is as encouraging for the consumer. Kinetic Honda's scooter, a very good-looking Japanese design, is likely to give the Bajaj Auto juggernaut (which makes a scooter a minute) a run for its money. The scooter has several features which Bajaj's models don't: an automatic gear variator is at the top of the list, followed by an automatic fuel tap and choke, a fuel gauge, direct current electrics so that the lights and the horn do not fade when the engine is idling, and push button start. "The Japanese are today the undisputed leaders in scooter technology," asserts Kinetic Honda Managing Director Arun Firodia.

Others agree. Says H.P. Nanda, chairman of Escorts: "There is no comparison between the old motorcycles we make and the new Yamaha model that we will start producing later this year." The existing Rajdoot 175 cc engine develops less than 9 horsepower while the new 100 cc Yamaha engine can give more than 11

Sleeker bodies, more powerful engines, front wheel drive transmissions, power-assisted steering, automatic-geared two-wheelers: these are a few of the things which will soon be available to Indian consumers.

The standard 2,000 (below) and Eicher Canter: style and substance



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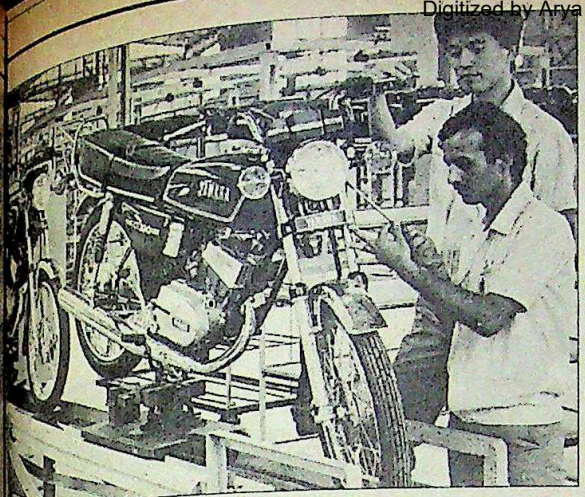
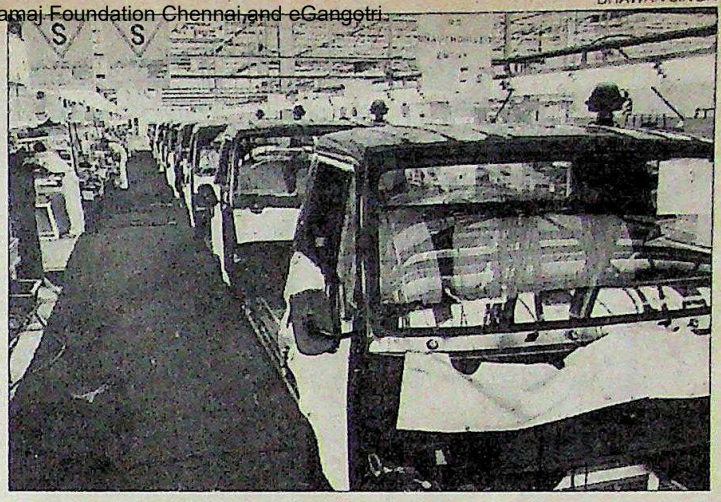
BHAWAN SINGH





Assembly lines gearing up: new production methods

horsepower. It is also 25 per cent lighter than the old one. Part of the improvements are due to major developments in metallurgy: the cylinder head fins in the old motorcycle, for example, are of cast iron, while the new ones are of lighter aluminium.

The consumer is certainly excited by the new vehicles and increased choice. Recently, the Industry Ministry commissioned an independent study of the car market in 1990, and found that without new models, sales of cars in that year would remain roughly the same as now, at about 60,000. With new models, however, the demand would rise to 1,21,000 a year. The 118 NE already has bookings of over a lakh before the factory has even begun regular production.

There is, of course, an unexpected roadblock in the way of an industry revving up for the race to a golden horizon. Last fortnight, the Government decided to put the brakes on the headlong rush for new, foreign technological tie-ups by automobile manufacturers, and ordered a review of the foreign exchange implications of the new developments. But this is unlikely to come in the way of the changes already under way. All the manufacturers of light commercial vehicles and two-wheelers have already got their collaborations approved by the Government, and many car manufacturers have too. Some of the later entrants in the race, like Escorts with its Citroen proposal, may have to clear fresh hurdles before they can join the race.

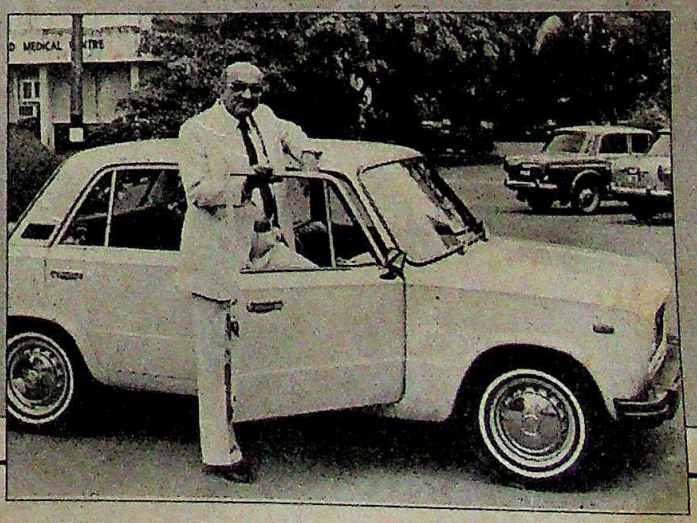
HOW GEARED up is the Indian automobile industry to absorb and assimilate the new technologies? The Allwyn-Nissan vehicle, has failed to pass the Government's fuel efficiency test. Less unhappily at Bajaj Auto, they are working with lower and still lower tolerances. In the machine tool shed the tolerance level is 50 microns (one millimetre = 1,000 microns); in another section the working tolerances for parts drops to 10 microns, and in the newest portion of the shed the tolerance level is as low as two microns. Says Vijay Bhargava, general manager (projects): "If we have to produce quality products, we have to work at great levels of accuracy."

Other companies too are headed in similar directions. N. Venkatramani, managing director of India Pistons, says: "The weight of our new pistons has been cut by half. All frills have been cut out, and the dimensional requirements are much lower, so that we have to do better tolerancing and strengthen the materials even further." The company is importing new machinery and machine tools and developing new casting techniques. Meanwhile, Subodh Bhargava, president of Eicher Motors, points out that "no trucks on the road today offer much in terms of driver comfort and ease of vehicle-handling, so that driver-fatigue causes many accidents. Our new vehicle will mark a big and revolutionary step forward on this front."

The big question is how successfully the Indian companies will master the new technologies involved. So all eyes at the moment are on Bajaj Auto's neighbour in Pune, TELCO, considered the ablest at adapting new technology to Indian needs. Its collaboration with Daimler Benz lasted 15 years, and for about the same period it has on its own been converting the engine from pre-combustion to direct injection with a 10 per cent im-

Firodia with the Kinetic Honda; and Premier's Kini with the Fiat 118 NE

JAGANNATH DUBASHI



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provement in fuel efficiency, introducing a synchromesh gearbox to cut out double de-clutching, and developing a larger clutch and a larger axle to suit Indian road and usage conditions. With such a record, TELCO executives claim that they can start up the Honda Accord plant in two years, making a fair number of the major components.

To that end, TELCO has already imported one of the latest computer numerically controlled machines: Even as TELCO concentrates on what it calls the manufacturability of the car, others are eagerly looking at Japanese production techniques and shop-floor layouts. Maruti and its one-code-for-all-employees discipline has brought about a sea change in the industry, and DCM-Toyota has also gone wholeheartedly Japanese. It has adopted:

► The Kaizen system, where worker suggestions for improving productivity are considered and accepted. Some of the good ones have even been picked up for use by Toyota in their plants world-wide.

► The Kanban system of production, where a series of signboards above the assembly line, at the end of one stage of work and before the next, signal hold-ups, the need to slow down or speed up because of a downstream logjam or supply shortage. The system regulates output in each stage to the precise level required, so that there is no building up of in-process inventory and clutter. Even ancillary units have to supply in a manner that keeps inventory in the assembly shed down to one day's production: equivalent to the Japanese zero-inventory system.

► The Kidoka system of self-inspection, based on the belief that quality is not inspected but built in. Workers maintain their own charts on the rejection and defect rate, on daily targets and so on, so that they become conscious of the goals to be met.

Elsewhere, Sundaram Abex has just got the Government's clearance for a new eight-year collaboration agreement with the Abex group for the manufacture of asbestos-free brake linings and resin-bonded metallic disc brake pads for the first time in the country. Says the company's Chairman K.Mahesh: "The advantage in doing away with asbestos altogether is that you reduce pollution a great deal. And the use of the new brake pads improves the lifespan of the brake lining by 40 per cent, although the linings will cost 60 per cent more. This is one of several examples that point to higher costs in switching to higher technology and new products (some of the new cars, for instance, will be sold for Rs 1.75 lakh), but Vivek Bharat Ram, executive director of DCM-Toyota, says: "Why should you supply cheap components to the Indian consumer and then ask him to keep replacing it every few months? The effort now is to give him something that will keep going for much longer, even if the initial cost is slightly higher." In any case, the new trucks will offer significant economies in terms of operating cost per tonne/kilometre of fuel consumed.

MARUTI

Costly Lessons

WHEN Brigadier Raj Gurbax Singh got behind the wheel of his Maruti last fortnight in the capital, little did he realise that before the day was out his car would bump into a dog. "The damn dog didn't even get hurt," he told his insurance agent as he submitted the bill for damages to the car: a fantastic Rs 6,000.

Elsewhere in the capital another Maruti driver rammed at an angle into some pipes on the roadside. The bill was more than the price of a new Maruti although the engine and gearbox were undamaged, and the insurance company refused to pay the full amount, leaving him some Rs 15,000 out of pocket.

And in Jaipur, a motorcycle rammed the door of a Maruti components supplier's car. Faced with having to pay Rs 4,500 for a new door, the dismayed owner asked Maruti Udyog for a custom-built car without four doors—and a price discount of Rs 18,000.

As thousands of the 38,000 Maruti car owners nationwide are discovering to their chagrin, getting their cars on the road again after an accident can hit their pockets hard. Last fortnight, one newspaper reported that Maruti car owners have to shell out as much as over Rs 350 for the plastic case of a tail light, which costs the owner of an Ambassador or Fiat a piffling Rs 10 or Rs 15. And those who eventually wind up footing the bills for all this mayhem on the roads—the insurance companies—are hopping mad. Said K.K. Gupta, branch manager of Oriental Insurance, darkly: "Buying a Maruti car is inviting an accident. Our budgeting for this year has been ruined because of the Maruti accidents." Sushil Kumar, senior divisional manager of Oriental Insurance in Delhi, adds that of the 625 claims car owners shot in till July-end, 600 were for Maruti owners. Oriental has shelled out Rs 18 lakh this year to Maruti drivers.

Officials of the state-owned Maruti Udyog readily concede the problem. Managing Director R.C. Bhargava says: "Because these are high performance cars which people are not used to driving, there have been a large number of Maruti accidents." As for the exorbitant prices of spare parts, he says that in the Japanese scheme of things, profits come from spares and not original equipment supply. Spares are priced 20 to 175 per cent more than original car components. But Maruti is asking Suzuki to reduce these premia.

As a sideshow to this brouhaha, last fortnight Maruti owners were loudly sounding off about shortages of parts like locks and plastic hand rests and the poor servicing facilities on tap. Said Vijay Handa, who drives both a Maruti car and van: "You have to wait in a queue for 20 days for your car to be serviced." That complaint may be soon attended to (Maruti Udyog plans on opening a workshop in the capital), but it looks as if the money that Maruti owners save on petrol bills will continue to be spent on over-priced spares.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

BHAWAN SINGH

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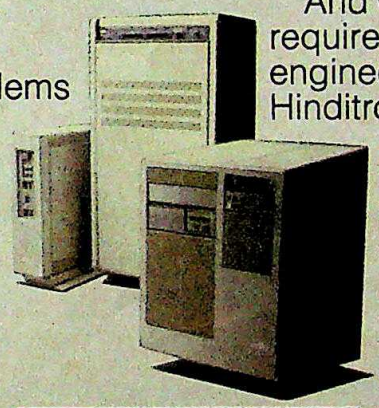

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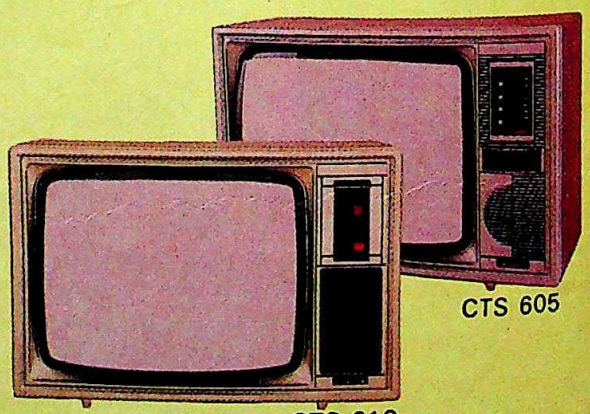

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"In the old climate of stagnation, not many component manufacturers would have been brave enough to risk their necks with fresh investment."

PRAN TALWAR,
ACMA president

Everything, however, is not hunky-dory at the beginning of the great Indian automobile shake-up. The weaknesses of the industry are glaring and probably the most glaring is the ancillaries. Premier complains of the uneven quality of ball bearings, Mahindra & Mahindra recounts how it can't get good pistons from one of the largest manufacturers for their new Peugeot diesel engine (like all new engines, it is faster—doing 4,500 revolutions per minute (rpm) against the old jeep engine's 3,000 rpm. Another piston manufacturer has asked them to increase the tolerance limits.

A two wheeler manufacturer says that foundries in India are so obsolete that the rejection rate for castings goes up to an enormous 15 per cent during the monsoon season. And Lohia Machines, which is trying to set up its ancillary base in Uttar Pradesh, has more headaches. The scooter stand, just a bent steel tube, is sometimes an inch or two short, so that the scooter is unstable. When questioned, the supplier retorted that this should hardly matter when potholes on the roads are three inches deep. Also, most rubber parts crumbled in an ozone solution in five hours instead of the stipulated 48, and bulbs tested for 100 hours don't last even 20. Says B. de Souza, executive vice-president (manufacturing): "You can't get even a simple door lock of the right quality."

The tussle between the automobile and the ancillary maunufacturers has developed into a full-scale war. A document prepared by the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) some time ago listed 52 components which vehicle manufacturers said were not made in India yet. These include carburettors and electronic ignition systems, precision forgings and castings, pneumatic suspensions for trucks, magnetos and shock absorbers in two and three-wheelers and even sealed-beam head lamps and halogen bulbs. ACMA replies to this list with a longer one where it appears that the capability either exists or will exist in most areas in a few short years. Pran Talwar, ACMA's president, points out that there was no need for ancillary units to upgrade their technology when for years the vehicle manufacturers had been puttered along with decades-old engineering. "In a climate of stagnation, not many component manufacturers would have been brave enough to risk their necks."

The components sector is slated to invest nearly Rs 1,000 crore in the course of the next five years, and company after company is tying up with Japanese or European counterparts to get the latest in technology. Bharat Gears is setting up a Rs 10 crore project for steering gear assemblies in association with Koyo of Japan and is developing gears for Maruti. Says Managing Director Surinder Kapur: "The blame for the stagnation must lie with the manufacturers also. For years we haven't been asked for the kinds of volumes that would have made investment profitable."

ALSO, the component suppliers still do not get the kind of production volumes required for low-cost production. As one of them put it: "We are asked to make a few thousand parts for each of several companies that make vehicles in different shapes and sizes. Allwyn-Nissan requires one kind of component, Matador another, Standard Motors a third, and DCM-Toyota a fourth. Yet not one of them has volumes large enough to make the component supplier's life easy."

Relations between the Indian and Japanese partners are also not all that they should be. There has been plenty of friction between Suzuki and the suppliers of components for the Maruti, for instance. Ancillary units also complain: "The Japanese vehicle manufacturers and their Indian counterparts don't give us proper drawings, which in any case are almost always in Japanese, so that we can't even read them. And they don't seem interested in our being able to understand their drawings." K.Mahesh, chairman of Sundaram Abex, adds: "The Japanese companies want to take the components to Japan for testing. They don't want the testing to be done in India. We don't think this is the right way for them to go about it." Other units complain of parts being rejected by the Japanese on flimsy grounds, allegedly because the Japanese want to keep supplying their own components for as long as possible.

"The Japanese companies want to take the components to Japan for testing. They don't want the testing to be done in India. We don't think that is the way to go about it."

K. MAHESH,
chairman of Sundaram Abex

When and how well these kinds of problems will be overcome remains to be seen. With the Japanese sitting in many companies and handing out decisions on which parts are of acceptable quality and which are not, the process of indigenising the new models might take longer than expected. And given the fractured nature of the market, with small orders for individual truck suppliers, the economies of scale may not be available even in the future. Most industrialists in the business talk in terms of Indian costs staying at one-and-a-half to twice the Japanese levels, so that exports can remain by and large a pipe dream. Also, if compromises are eventually made on quality, the consumer may not finally get the kind of quality that the association of prized foreign brand names implies.

The challenge matches up to the opportunity. But the transition has started, and will continue. Says Vakil of Premier: "In a few years there will be more models, more power, more fuel economy. It will be a buyer's market, not a seller's market." Adds Rahul Bajaj: "The shake-up is welcome since it will lead to more efficient and quality-conscious production methods. Clearly, Indian automobile manufacturers have an exciting but not entirely painless drive ahead of them

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI with bureau reports

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SWADESHI POLYTEX

Change of Guard

HE LEANS back in the plush, leather-bound sofa in the corporate office of the company he fought so bitterly to control, and says with a sigh of contentment: "God has been kind to us." Rajaram Jaipuria, newly crowned king of Swadeshi Polytex, certainly has every reason to be satisfied. Almost a decade after he launched his bid to wrest control of the company from his foster brother, Sitaram, and after several stormy shareholders' meetings, innumerable courtroom battles, endless behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and the untimely death two months ago of Sitaram, Rajaram is finally in the driver's seat of the Rs 73 crore company.

The votes polled at a shareholders' meeting two months ago had taken interminably long to tabulate. But when the results were announced last fortnight, Rajaram and his cohorts got close to 50 per cent of the votes, while Sitaram and his candidates bagged some 42 per cent. With that, the latter's nominees to the company board were taken by Rajaram and his nominees.

This dramatic change of guard had all the ingredients of a corporate coup, with allies turning into foes and former foes becoming new-found friends. And even as the new board moved quickly to appoint a three-man standing committee that would monitor the company's working, drama developed on other fronts: five of the company's eight vice-presidents and two of the four junior vice-presidents were getting ready to write out their resignation letters.

While the battle that led to this succession of entries and exits was fought between Rajaram and Sitaram, the key to the outcome lay with the two 'seconds': the financial institutions (with a 16 per cent shareholding) and Mahendra Swarup, managing director of Paharpur Cooling Towers, who with his companies and associates controlled 15 per cent.

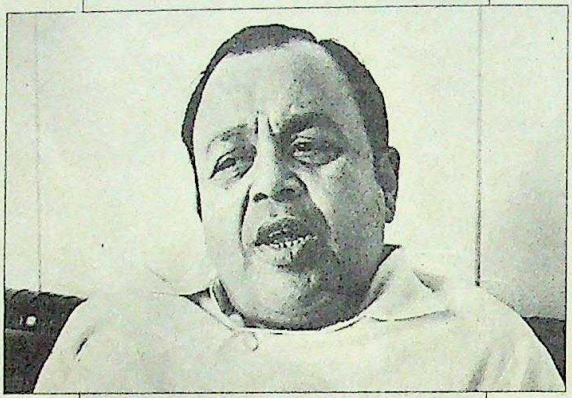
Till last year, both the institutions and Swarup had backed Sitaram, which left little hope for Rajaram since he controlled only 34 per cent of the shares, most of them in the name of his company, Swadeshi Cotton Mills. Then, last September, the institutions decided to switch support to Rajaram—a controversial move that has never been adequately explained. That decision became even more curious when, at the shareholders' meeting in May, the institutions switched their support back to Sitaram. The only reason that insiders attribute for this rather odd behaviour is the change of government in New Delhi.

But while the institutions were walking back into Sitaram's corner of the ring, Rajaram produced the neat trick that finally saw him emerge the winner. He struck a management-sharing deal with Swarup, and their combined voting power of 49 per cent proved unbeatable. Sitaram, in contrast, is believed to have controlled only 9 per cent of the company's shares. So even though 12,000 small shareholders pitched in on his side with their 17 per cent shareholding, and the financial institutions chipped in with a further 16 per cent, he ended up in the loser's corner with no more than 42 per cent of the total votes.

There are indications that Swarup, who had been steadily increasing his shareholding in the strife-torn company, initially approached Sitaram for a management-sharing deal in return for his continued shareholding support, which Sitaram rebuffed. Swarup then approached Rajaram, who, however, denies that any deal was struck: "Swarup took a calculated view of the situation and decided that his well-being was more assured by supporting me." But Swarup himself tells it differently: "We were sleeping investors. Seeing the infighting and noticing that Swadeshi Polytex shares were quoted much lower than shares of competing firms, we decided to get into the act to protect our investment."

Around last April, a month before the crucial shareholders' meeting, Swarup says that he came to an understanding with Rajaram, promising the votes in return for four places on the 12-member board: the same number as Rajaram himself has (the remaining

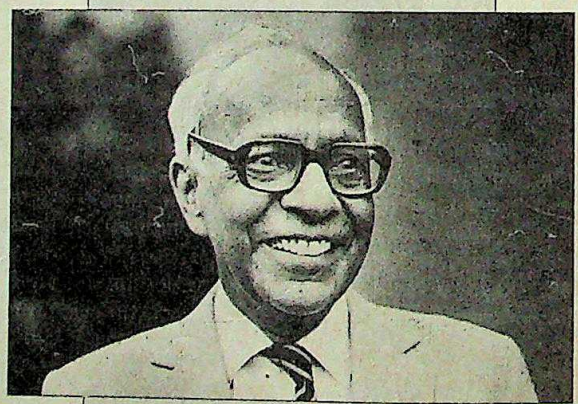
HARI OM GULATI



"Swarup took a calculated view of the situation and decided that his well-being was more assured by supporting me."

RAJARAM JAIPURIA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"Seeing the infighting and noticing that Swadeshi Polytex shares were quoted much lower than shares of competing firms, we decided to get into the act to protect our investment."

MAHENDRA SWARUP

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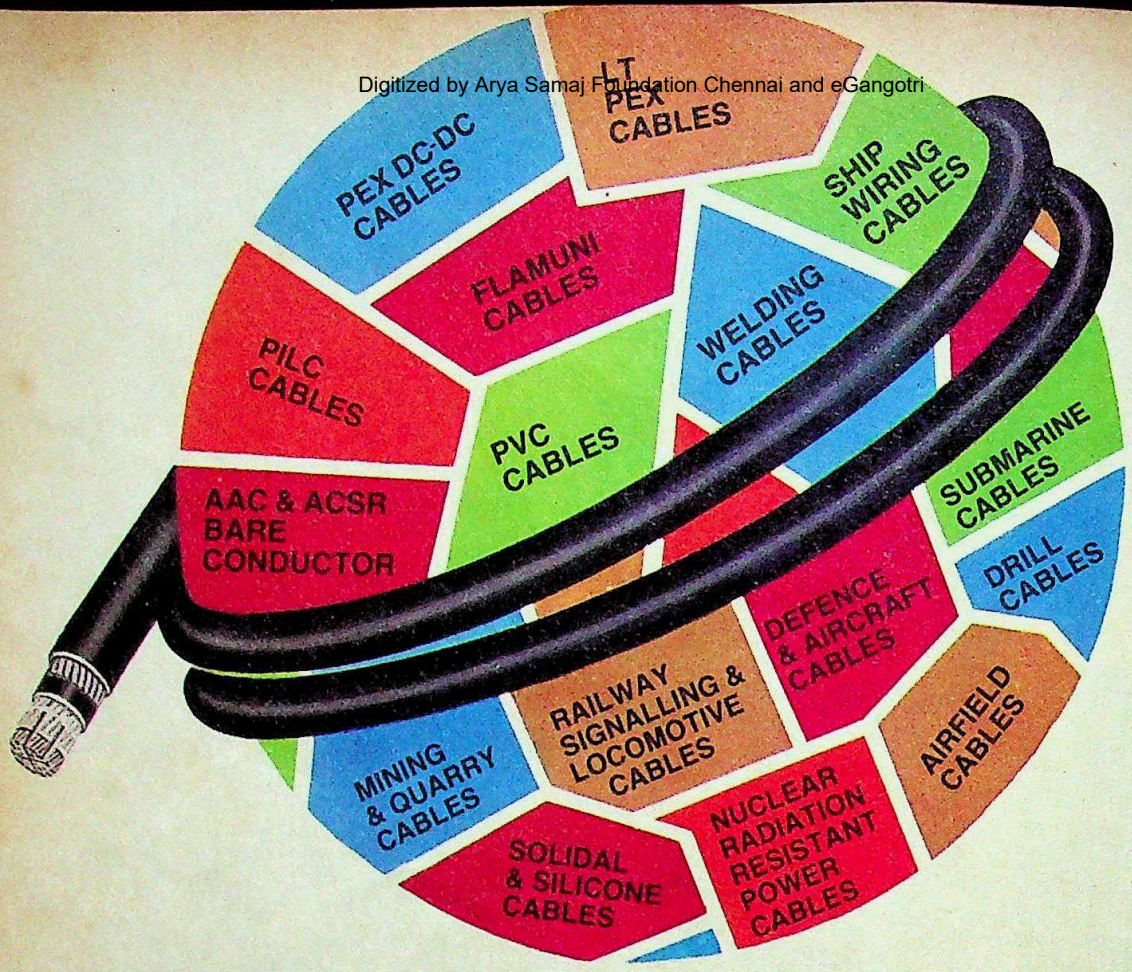

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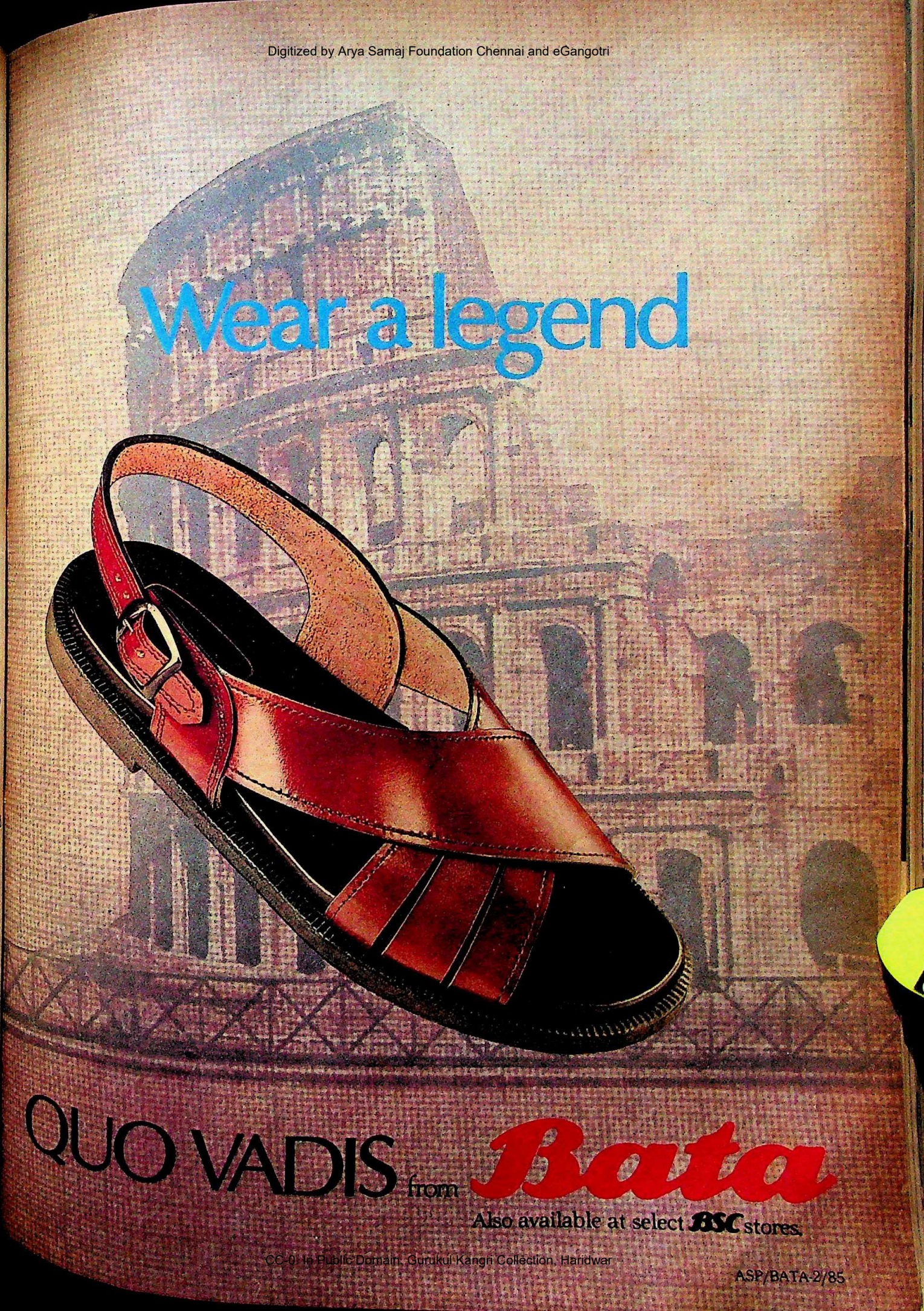

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four are with the financial institutions). The understanding also stipulated that neither party would try to upstage the other through a takeover bid, and that Swarup would not increase his shareholding in Swadeshi Polytex beyond the 34 per cent figure at which Rajaram has promised he would freeze his own shareholding.

With Sitaram Jaipuria having died of a heart attack two months ago, the real loser in this bitter game of corporate musical chairs is his son, 31-year-old Ashok Jaipuria. Ashok started his working life in Swadeshi, then left to start his own firm, Cosmo Films, and returned to the board briefly, only to be ousted now. He says he will "wait and watch" further developments, and points out that Rajaram's management record in Swadeshi Cotton Mills (whose textile mills are now run by the Government) does not promise an extremely rosy future for Swadeshi Polytex.

In fact, Ashok and his father Sitaram had tried to neutralise Rajaram's power in the company completely by getting the UP Government to acquire ownership of the shares in Swadeshi Polytex that are owned by Swadeshi Cotton Mills—on the ground that these shares had been pledged to the Uttar Pradesh Government and were under receivership. Since most of Rajaram's stake in Swadeshi Polytex is through these shares, such a move would have removed him from the scene quite effectively, but the Uttar Pradesh Government failed to oblige—a reluctance to act that Ashok finds mystifying since the dividends on the shares continue to go to Rajaram.

Ashok also points out that the company's Rs 21 crore project for doubling the production capacity of polyester yarn from 6,100 tonnes has been held up because of legal proceedings initiated by Rajaram, and says that this has meant heavy losses to the company in terms of unclaimed tax allowances and profits foregone. But the new members of the company board argue that the project, now estimated to cost Rs 24 crore, will be implemented this year, and Rajaram promises that "Profits will be at least 50 per cent higher than last year's level."

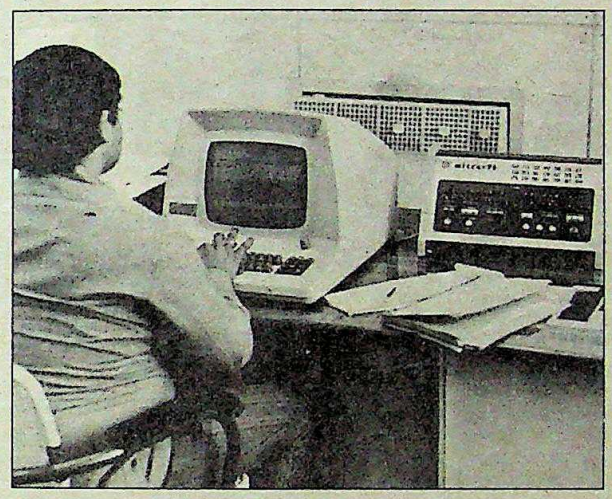
The immediate future will tell which of these two scenarios is the right one. But one thing is certain: if Rajaram fails to deliver the goods, there could be more boardroom drama in Swadeshi Polytex in the months ahead.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

SFT

Missing Links

IT WAS hailed as the antidote to the sloth in Indian telecommunications, a computer-based system that would see telegrams speeding from one corner of the land to the other, unrestrained by human hands. Far from hurrying things up, the store and forward telegraph (SFT) system, a computerised grid that the Department of Telecommunications began to install in 1982, has blown a fuse. Several fuses, in fact, to judge from the reaction of exasperated telegraph operators and traffic officers who are up in arms against the system and demanding the introduction of more sophisticated and versatile equipment.



The SFT system: outmoded

Why? Because SFT failed to live up to its promise. Its operators complain that it breaks down almost every other day. Each month more than 5,000 telegraphic messages are lost and no fewer than 70 per cent of the messages handled each day get incorrectly routed.

None of this should, of course, have happened. Made by the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL), each SFT system can store thousands of words in its memory, sift telegrams by priority, route them to their destinations and shoot them out at ten times the speed of a teleprinter operator. With all this capability packed into it, the network should have been a boon to a system that copes with some 75 million telegrams a year. Since the first SFT link up between Hyderabad and Madras three years ago, it now spans about 250 outlying stations through 23 independent but linked SFT's. But it's already outmoded.

By today's standards, it has a primitive microprocessor, and its data base and memory are not adequate to handle the rapid step-up in traffic, particularly at peak flow. It can handle 300 telegrams per hour against 8,000 of most modern equipment, and can feed into 15 teleprinters compared with 1,000 that is now possible. Former general manager of the Tamil Nadu telecom circle and one of those responsible for originally bringing out the SFT, U.D.N. Rao, concedes the point. Says he: "The popularity of the SFT is posing new problems. There are traffic bottlenecks in the metros and we will inevitably have to use systems with a larger handling capacity."

The fly in this ointment is that, while everyone agrees that a better system is needed, the communications ministry and the Delhi-based Telecommunications Research Centre (TRC) sharply differ on whether it should be home-made or imported. Argues TRC Additional Director J.L. Gupta: "It will take about 18 months to develop a system with the requisite facilities and this has to be considered before deciding on supporting an indigenous effort or going in for import." ECIL officials, however, point out that they have already supplied systems of higher capability to the Defence Ministry and the Overseas Communications Service.

Meanwhile, with this two-year row unresolved, the communications ministry has given a letter of intent for 40 more SFT systems to ECIL, which is the whipping boy in all this and now stands accused of supplying ineffective systems. But ECIL officials are quick to riposte that the Government wanted a low-cost system quickly—the present SFT's cost Rs 6-10 lakh—and the company could have provided a better system at a cost of Rs 1 crore cheaper than Rs 2.5 crore to Rs 3 crore for imported systems, had it so wanted. Says P. Appajirao, ECIL's technical manager, computer group: "We went by a need-based approach. The ministry wanted a low-cost system as anything involving over Rs 1 crore required cabinet approval and may have meant more time." And, as long as a decision isn't made, time is what telegrams will continue to take.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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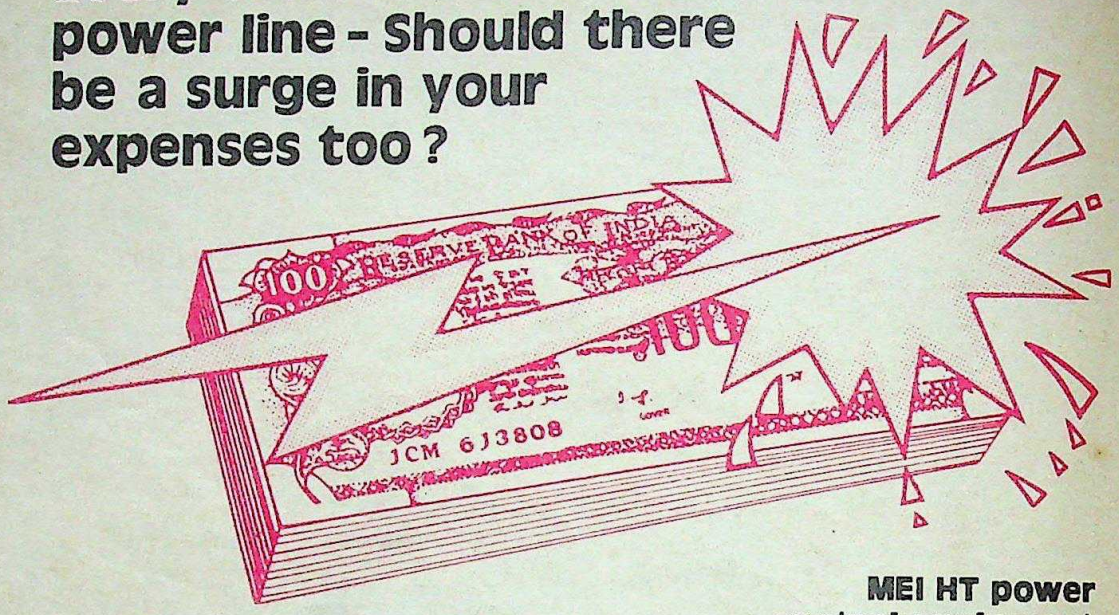

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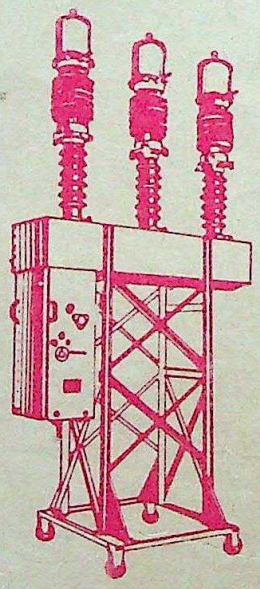

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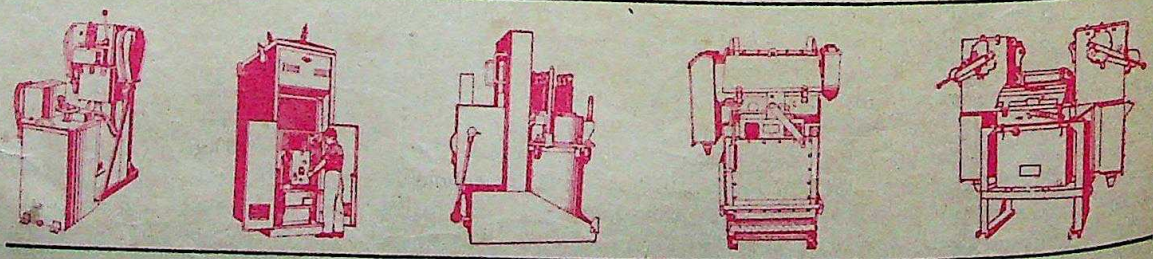

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DETERGENTS

Clean Winner

"Nirma, Nirma, Nirma, washing powder Nirma"

The jingle of words. The jingle of coins. And Karsandas Khodidas Patel, 42, is laughing all the way to the bank. As well he might, because households all over India are buying up the washing powder he makes, named after his daughter, all 1,80,000 tonnes of it. And still Karsanbhai claims that he is falling short of demand by 10 per cent. For the chemist who started out 16 years ago from a 12 sq yard room in Khokra near Ahmedabad, producing just 24 tonnes of the powder that year, it is a dream come true. Today, he is far and away the country's biggest producer of washing powders.

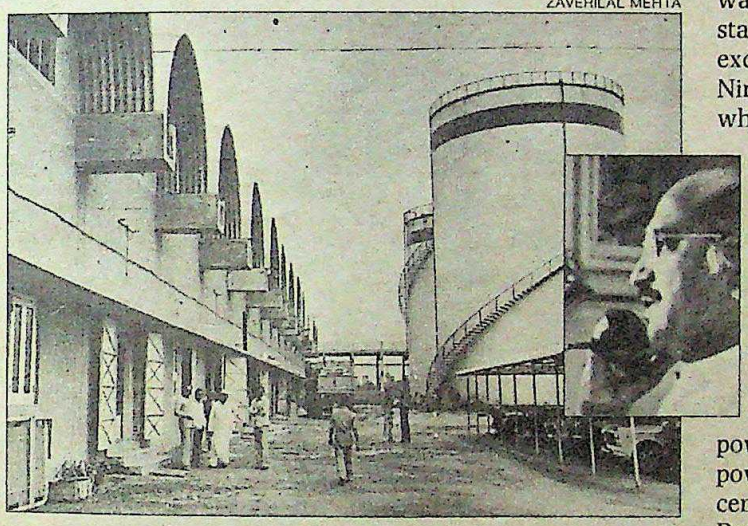
Last fortnight, the Government took note of Patel's triumph in the classic manner by slapping a 15 per cent excise duty on small-scale detergent manufacturers from this month, a move expected to net the Central Government Rs 37.8 crore. It is difficult to imagine Nirma, which commands a turnover of Rs 100 crore, as being small-scale, but the fact remains that Patel churns out his product without the use of electric power, using the services of 2,000 people (mostly poor tribals) at his four factories at Vatva spread over 47,000 sq yards, keeping overheads low.

The excise duty has once again brought to life the controversy whether the organised sector, led by the giant Hindustan Lever Ltd, makers of Surf and Sunlight detergent powders, had sought to cut the small-scale sector down to size. Patel argues that the organised sector, growing at about 15 per cent annually, cannot stomach the success of his powder, which has leaped at an annual rate of 40 per cent. "Nonsense," says Shunu Sen, Lever's vice-president, marketing. "Surf and Nirma don't fall in the same category. One is a scientifically formulated detergent powder meant exclusively for clothes. The other belongs to a segment of the detergent powder industry which is a basic washing powder."

But the fact remains that Nirma's astounding success has given Lever cause for concern. Its Surf which sold 24,000 tonnes in 1984 and is said to command two-thirds of the market for the organised sector detergents, is growing at a rate which Sen says "is not less than the growth rate of the sector, or 15 per cent." However, Surf at Rs 22 a kg costs three times as much as Nirma. Realising this, Lever in recent months has introduced Lalitaji on television to emphasise the fact that Surf gives more value for money. Sen says that the campaign is "biting".

More concrete measures to counteract Nirma were taken two years ago, by introducing Sunlight powder, costing Rs 14 a kg, which has so far not been much of a success—it sold 24,000 tonnes last year. Sen admits that "we are still trying to find a niche for it." Part of Lever's dilemma is that Sunlight might cut into Surf's sales. However, Patel himself sees Sunlight as a possible competitor in the years to come.

ZAVERILAL MEHTA



The Nirma factory at Vatva and (inset) Patel: gearing up

In the next few years, there is no doubt that competition is going to be fiercer than it already is. Three years ago Nirma and Lever got into a scrap over alleged underhand tactics used by Lever to undermine Nirma with the housewife. This time round, Nirma officials charge Lever with spreading the word, in Punjab for instance, that Nirma is harmful for the skin because it uses too much caustic soda although Nirma uses only soda ash. Patel says: "A psychological block among consumers is being created that Nirma is required in much more quantities to clean the same amount of clothes. Just a spoonful is enough." He points to the tests done by the Chem Med Analytical Laboratories, Bombay, which showed that skin irritation caused by Nirma was much less than that caused by Surf!

Lever executives pooh-pooh this, emphasising repeatedly that Surf and Nirma just do not cater to the same market. Sen claims that Lever research shows that housewives in more than half the households covered in one survey, far from preferring Surf to Nirma or vice versa, ended up buying both kinds of powders; the one for the best clothes and the other for general washing up. He asserts vehemently that Surf is a far superior product because it has ingredients apart from the detergent Linear Alkyl Benzene (LAB) which softens the water, ensures that the dirt stays off. He also says that excessive use of soda ash—Nirma contains 55 per cent while Surf contains 10 per cent—could be harmful. Incidentally, the new Sunlight powder contains twice as much soda ash as Surf.

The battle is on and Patel is gearing up to maintain his supremacy. He is thinking of switching over to a powered unit for mixing the powder, thus saving 5 per cent on costs. Says Pramod Patel, who is in charge of the Nirma chemical works in Vatva: "If we have to pay excise we must mechanise, otherwise we will suffer." Patel also plans to start a research and development section this year to look into projects for the manufacture of toilet soaps, detergent cakes and toothpaste. The man who stayed on top by being little Nirma is effectively four companies, kept that way to avoid coming into the large-scale sector, is hence getting set for the big time.

The secret of Patel's success is that he saw a huge market for cheap washing powders while the big guns failed to. The prices of soap-making oils have risen 50 per cent in the last five years and that is the reason why the laundry soap market is growing only at about 2 per cent a year—even poor quality laundry soap costs Rs 10 a kg. For the last decade and more, Karsanbhai Patel has been the leader in the detergent drive and if his past record is anything to go by, he is going to be out there in front for some time to come. —JAGANNATH DUBASHI and RAMESH MENON

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IPCL

In the Top Bracket

WHICH public sector company earns almost as much profits as Reliance Textiles, and has a profits-to-sales ratio that is as good as that of the private sector star? Answer: the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL) at Vadodara.

Which company has bigger investment plans than Reliance? Again, the answer is IPCL. And like Reliance, IPCL is going to pay for its projects with its own and borrowed funds—without going to the Government for succour, as virtually every other public sector company does.

Finally, which public sector company can come close to Reliance in its record of capacity utilisation, achieving more than 100 per cent in some of its plants? You guessed it: IPCL again.

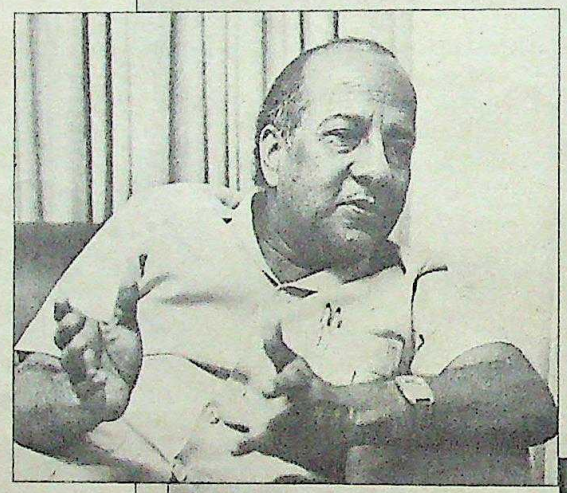
Yet little has been written about IPCL, while reams have been written about Reliance. And IPCL Chairman S. Ganguly is sore. "This company is going to climb heights that others will envy. Yet people write only about Dhirubhai Ambani."

He has a point. For though bigger public sector giants like the Indian Oil Corporation and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission make far more money than IPCL, and have bigger investment projects on their plate, there is one crucial difference: the other profitable behemoths function in monopoly situations and enjoy administered prices. In contrast, as Ganguly points out, "We have to compete in the market-place with private companies, and against imports on the open general licence (OGL)."

The competition between IPCL and Reliance is about to intensify, with Ambani (Reliance's bustling chairman) planning to move into some of IPCL's market strongholds: linear alkyl benzene and mono-ethylene glycol (both raw materials for detergents), acrylic fibre and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). But even Ambani will envy IPCL's track record: its initial Rs 28 crore investment in an aromatics plant in the early 1970s got a payback in just three years, and the subsequent investment of Rs 351 crore in a series of downstream projects got a payback in five years. The irony here is that IPCL undertook this investment in downstream units only because the Tatas, Lalbhais, Amins and Kilachands backed out of the licences they had been given. If IPCL had not stepped into the breach, its 'mother unit' (which cracks naphtha into its molecular components at 850 degrees celsius) would have had no market.

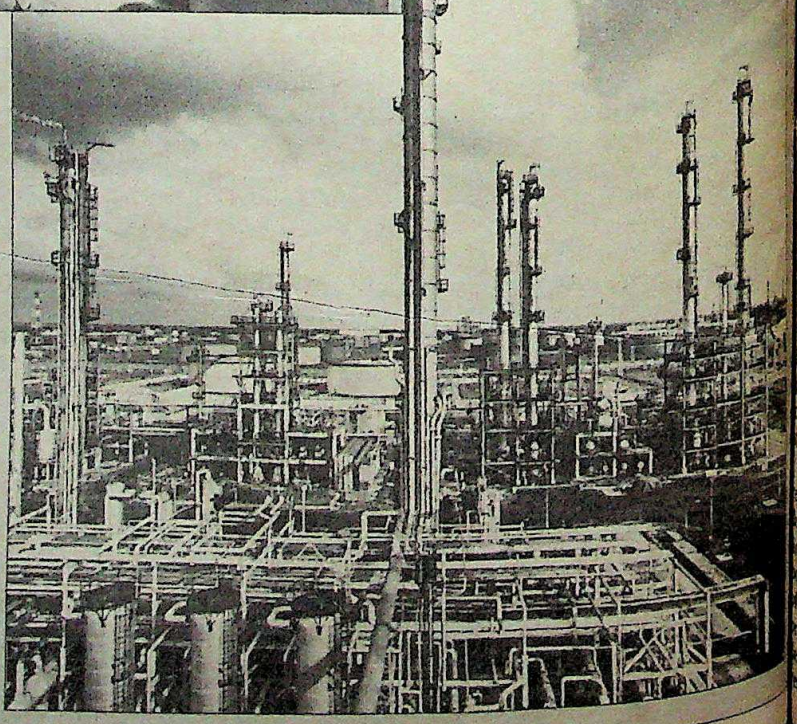
Despite all this, the last time that IPCL got budgetary support from the Government was way back in 1978. Yet the company is now flush with funds: it has repaid its loans ahead of schedule, and is sitting on Rs 44 crore in cash and bank balances. And over the next five years, a company with assets worth less than Rs 500 crore will be undertaking fresh investments of a staggering Rs 1,385 crore (most of it on a new gas cracker complex at Nagothane, Maharashtra's Raigad district). Of this, no less than Rs 625 crore will be generated internally by the company, and the rest will come as loans from a variety of sources, and through the issue of debentures. Undaunted by this mammoth task that lies ahead, Chairman Ganguly is already talking of taking on "a fresh batch of projects after the existing ones are complete in five years".

There are riders, of course, to this success story in public enterprise. For ...



IPCL is now flush with funds: it is sitting on Rs 44 crore; and over the next five years, a company with assets worth less than Rs 500 crore will be undertaking fresh investments of a staggering Rs 1,385 crore.

(Left) Ganguly: financial muscle; (below) the IPCL plant: creditable record



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...ing, till last year IPCL never paid the government any dividend on its massive share capital of Rs 186 crore; so, unlike Reliance, no profits were diverted to keep the shareholders unhappy. For another, it has not always been successful in implementing its projects on schedule. The company's directors attribute the delays to a variety of external factors, but Chairman Ganguly is frank enough to admit that the past record on project implementation needs to be improved upon. Reliance comes out particularly well in this context because of its record of implementing huge projects in a short span. IPCL has a good defence here: Ambani, company officials argue, goes in for project decisions even before he gets government approvals, and he does not waste time on indigenous suppliers, preferring package jobs on equipment from abroad.

But IPCL is capable of matching Ambani in its will to get things done. Early this year, the Planning Commission told the company that the Government did not have the money to invest in the Rs 1,200-crore gas cracker complex. Undaunted, the board of directors met and decided to go ahead with the project with their own funds as much as possible, and worked out a solution: roughly one-fifth of the project cost would be spent after the plant was commissioned, and the rest of the money the company would find on its own, or borrow from a variety of sources, including the World Bank, the domestic financial institutions and the banks. So, while the Planning Commission had told IPCL that its Seventh Five-Year Plan outlay would be only Rs 580 crore, IPCL has decided to go ahead with an investment programme totalling Rs 1,385 crore. Officials in Vadodara fight shy of any suggestion that the implementation of the gas cracker complex implies in any sense a cocking of one's snook at the government, but there is little doubt that the company would have had a relatively empty programme if it had sat back and accepted the Planning Commission's decision on finances.

The result is that IPCL will remain for the next decade the dominant company in the whole field of polymers: polypropylene, polyethylene, etc. Also, because of expansion and modernisation programmes that are being undertaken at Vadodara, IPCL will remain the single biggest supplier of a whole range of other chemical products, though it will face increasing competition from new entrants like the venerable Reliance Textile Industries, and perhaps others like Hindustan Lever and DCM. And the financial projections show that even at the end of the massive investment programme that is now under way, the company will have plenty of financial cushion left in its debt-equity ratio to undertake still more borrowings.

AT THE corporation's sprawling complex outside Vadodara, however, officials don't always talk in terms of financial muscle, awesome as it is. They focus, instead, on the company's safety record. The chemical industry in the United States has an accident rate involving worker absenteeism of 4.89. The average for India is 7.5. At IPCL, the figure is no more than 1.02.

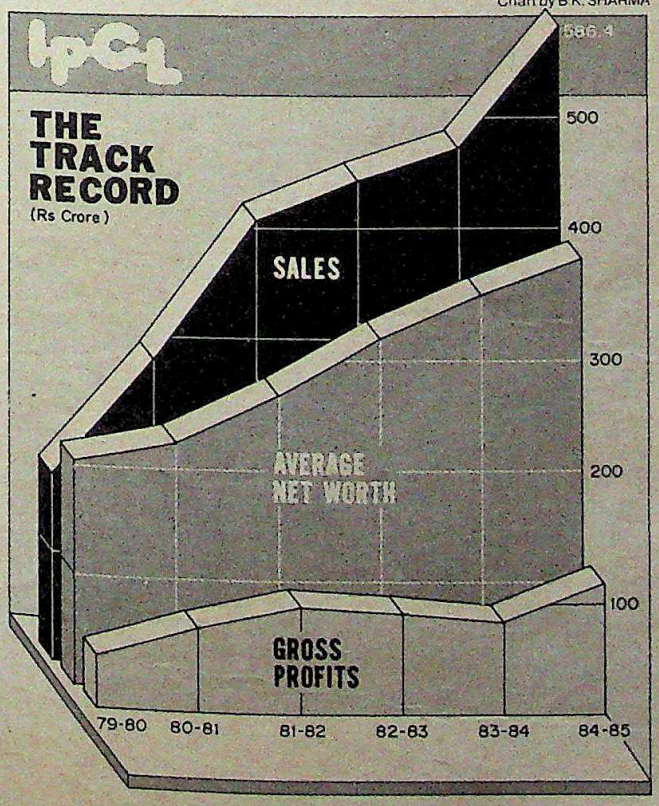
The officials also talk of being responsible for ushering the plastics age in India: introducing polyethylene lining for irrigation canals and ponds to prevent water seepage, replacing milk bottles with cheaper plastic packaging, using PVC pipes for the water-economising method of drip irrigation in the semi-arid areas of Karnataka and Gujarat, encouraging the tyre industry to use synthetic rubber, ushering in the era of synthetic detergents as a substitute for washing soap, getting the Food Corporation to store its grain under polyethylene sheets, and much else. IPCL Marketing Director Hasmukh Shah calls this the concept selling of plasticulture. And he is right when he says that "when IPCL went into production a decade ago, the market for our products simply did not exist. We had to develop the market, introduce new applications." The company has certainly succeeded, for IPCL's products—a variety of esoteric items like ethylenes, acrylonitriles xylenes, polypropylene, polybutadiene rubber, mono-ethylene glycol and surfactants of various sorts (derived from naphtha supplied by the neighbouring Koyali oil refinery)—are now used in pharmaceuticals, pesticides, footwear, and paints, apart from polyester yarn, tyres, all manner of packaging items, and much else.

There is also every evidence at Vadodara of IPCL being a purposeful organisation that knows what it is about. Conscious of the fact that it spends Rs 30 lakh every day on fuel and power, the company has launched a major energy saving programme which has already resulted in savings of a handsome Rs 22 crore over the last five years, with bigger savings to come. And the difficult business of staying abreast of technologies in a field where new developments take place every two or three years is being attempted with some success: the polypropylene unit in Maharashtra, for instance, is going to involve using absolutely the latest technology, three steps ahead of that used in the existing polypropylene plant at Vadodara. Officials say only two plants of its kind now exist elsewhere in the world, and the use of the new technology involves substantial cost economies.

Ganguly is therefore right when he says that "IPCL has tremendous inner strength, in its financial capability, in its technical abilities, and in the quality of its staff". It has problems too, of course, like groupism at the top, the limited salaries it pays to its highly trained research staff, and the struggles that are inevitable in the effort to improve on its past project implementation record. But in the final analysis, the Tatas, Kilachands, Amins and Lalbhais must be kicking themselves in the shins for not taking up the projects that IPCL eventually did, to become the successful public sector enterprise it is today.

—T.N. NINAN in Vadodara

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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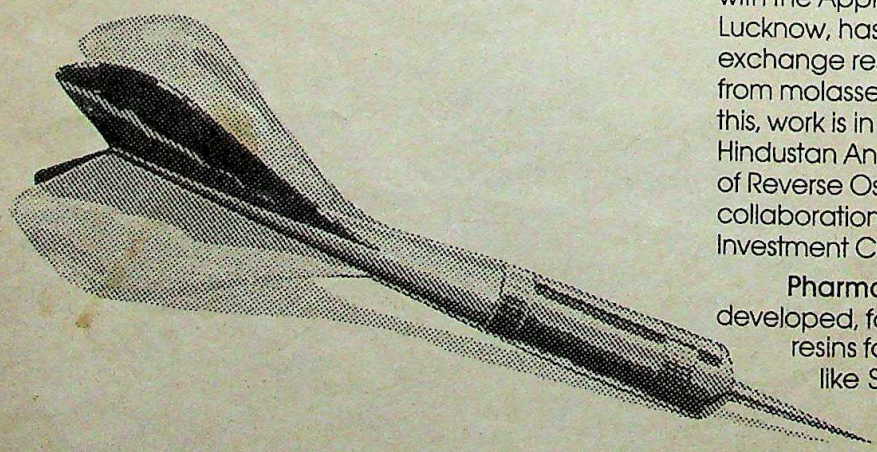
"You mean all these industries come to Thermax for solutions? And that Thermax presents them with technological breakthroughs?"



That's the Thermax Chemical Division for you.

Yes, the Chemical Division of Thermax is a ready source which a lot of industries tap for quick solutions.

And if the Division does not have a ready-made solution to offer, then the R&D Cell meets the challenge, and most often comes up with a technological breakthrough.

Let's take a look at the different industries that have benefited by the Division's technological breakthroughs.

Oil Industry — Oil-soluble demulsifiers from Thermax have superior purification capabilities as compared to water-soluble demulsifiers. Several refineries are reaping the benefits of improved levels of purification.

Thermax has also developed a 'pour point depressant' for better mobility of crude oil in pipelines, specifically suited to the high-wax oil produced from Bombay High.

Coal Washeries — The Thermax polyelectrolyte, TULSEPARS GA-40, has been used successfully in coal benefication. And only 100 to 150 gm of resin (costing about Rs. 12) is required to separate one tonne of high-quality coal!

Steel Plants — The Bhilai Steel Plant uses alum as a clarification agent for the recycled water from their blast furnaces. But the problem with alum is that it forms a heavy sludge. Thermax developed a coagulant aid which reduces the sludge, thereby facilitating its easy disposal.

Sugar Industry — Thermax, in conjunction with the Appropriate Technology Transfer Centre, Lucknow, has developed a process using ion exchange resins, for increasing the yield of sugar from molasses in the Khandsari industry. Based on this, work is in progress to produce liquid sugar for Hindustan Antibiotics. Application work on the use of Reverse Osmosis in sugar production is on, in collaboration with the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation.

Pharmaceutical Industry — Thermax developed, for the first time in India, special resins for use in the recovery of antibiotics like Streptomycin from fermented broth. Thermax has also developed resins for use in slow-release drugs.

Thermal Plants — The Tarapur Atomic Power Station needed nuclear grade resins for

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water treatment. Thermax was the first to indigenously develop these resins.

The Chemical Division's product range offers solutions to a host of industries. Let's take a quick look at the range.

An at-a-glance view of the product range

Our products include the TULSION range of macroporous and gel ion exchange resins for removal of dissolved ionic impurities from water or other solvents. These resins are manufactured in collaboration with Sybron Chemicals Inc., U.S.A. We also manufacture TULSEPARS anionic polyelectrolyte, CAT-FLOC-T cationic polyelectrolyte, made in collaboration with Calgon Corporation, U.S.A., and MAXTREAT non-chromate and chromate-based chemical dosing formulations for cooling water systems.

We introduced in India ECONOMIX, a fireside combustion deposit cleaning agent, which increases boiler efficiency, while saving effort and maintenance costs. This is made in collaboration with Chalbar Ltd., U.K.

We also make oil well chemicals, which include speciality chemicals like the 'pour point depressant', which improves the mobility of crude oil; oil-soluble demulsifiers for oil-water separation; scale inhibitors for water flooding in oil wells; and polyelectrolyte-based deoilers.

And we recently developed a handy test kit for water testing in process industries and in boilers.

The Chemical Division in a capsule

Our problem-solving approach and proven abilities have earned us a great deal of goodwill. Even companies not using Thermax systems or products approach the Division for guidance. And we also undertake to train employees of our clients.

The Division continuously monitors the performance of all products sold. Ours is an improvement-oriented approach, with a constant effort to better product performance. For instance, our entire range of ion exchange resins has been upgraded recently.

The Chemical Division of Thermax not only stands tall on our own strengths but also forms an integral part of Thermax's activities. It enables the Company to offer you, across our different divisions, a comprehensive package of services.

THERMAX

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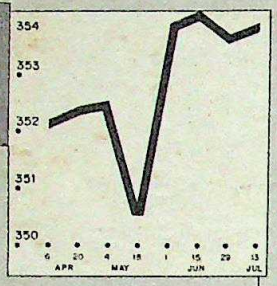
WITH wholesale prices recording almost no change last fortnight, there appears to be no cause for concern on the price front. Industrial production, however, declined last month caused by a drop in manufacturing. The power situation, however, showed a marked improvement in June. The share and bullion markets were relatively steady last fortnight, while money and credit trends saw no major upheaval. All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trend is computed on the basis of the past six months data to which a regression is fitted.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend **6.2% p.a.**

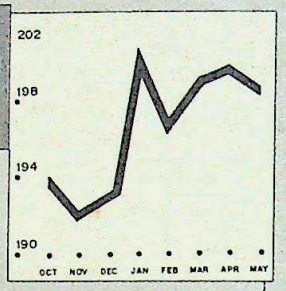


Wholesale prices remained stable. Price increases in food products and manufactures were offset by declines in textiles and primary articles.

Industrial Production Index

1970 = 100

Current Trend **4.5% p.a.**

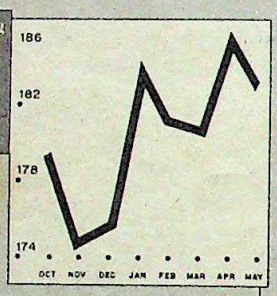


Industrial production declined by 0.5 per cent in May owing to a fall in manufacturing, which offset gains in the power and mining sector.

Manufacturing Output Index

1970 = 100

Current Trend **7.6% p.a.**

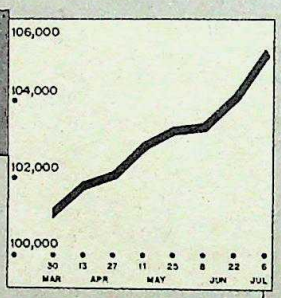


Manufactures dropped by 1.4 per cent last month, owing mainly to sharp drops in textiles and machinery.

Money Supply (M3)

Rs. Crore

Current Trend **11.2% p.a.**

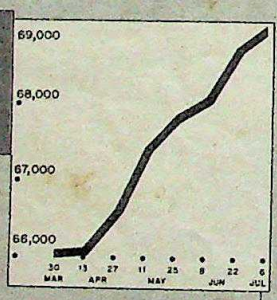


Money supply stayed on trend last fortnight with a 1.1 per cent increase due to an increase in commercial bank credit to the Government.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs. Crore

Current Trend **16.8 p.a.**

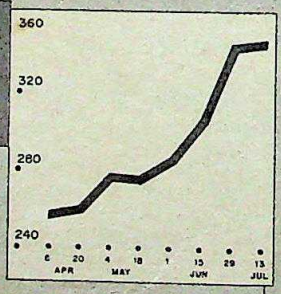


Bank credit to firms was relatively tight with an increase of 0.4 per cent, well below the long term trend.

Share Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend **76.9%**

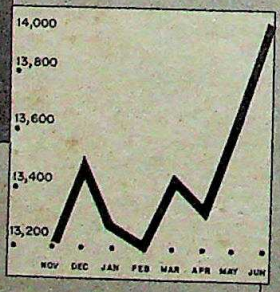


The share market went up by 0.5 per cent. Electrical machinery and jute textiles saw a lot of action on the upswing.

Power Generation

Million KWH

Current Trend **11.8% p.a.**

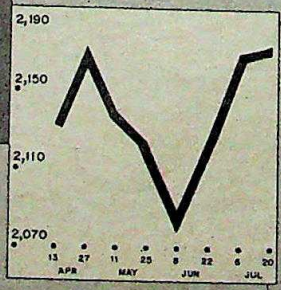


Power generation jumped 2.5 per cent in June, following the onset of the monsoon and consequent impressive gains in hydel generation.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 GMS

Current Trend **18.9% p.a.**



Bullion recorded a modest increase of 0.2 per cent last fortnight, well below the long term trend.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Items with maximum growth in March 1985

	% Growth
Synthetic Rubber	93.02
Grain Mill Products	83.83
Cosmetics	73.04
Machine Tools	38.41
Dairy Products	33.12
Dye	27.57
Insecticides & Pesticides	25.16
Handloom & Powerloom Machienry	21.31
Bakery Products	19.04
Rubber Footwear	17.08
Iron & Steel	16.31
Drugs & Pharmaceuticals	14.76
Explosives	14.56
Paper Machinery	14.01
Hand Tools	13.96
Cement Machinery	11.77
Iron & Steel Structurals	11.41
Footwear	10.86
Tobacco Manufacture	10.46
Railway Locomotives	10.05
Electrical Fans	9.819
Matches	8.980
Confectionery	7.320
Ferro-Alloys	7.180
Petroleum & Coal	7.170
Mining & Quarrying	7.040
Earth Moving Machinery	6.770
Beverage	5.770
Power Driven Pumps	5.370
Synthetic Resins & Plastics	5.050
Watches & Clocks	4.340
Man Made Fibre	4.000
Automobiles Ancillaries	2.960
Chinaware	2.820
Razor Blades	2.760
Salt	2.520
Electric Light & Power	2.380
Sewing & Knitting Machines	2.150
Surgical Products	1.960
Linolium	1.730
Paper	1.350
Non Ferrous Industries	1.3000
Electrical Motors	0.840
Industrial Instruments	0.760
Vanaspati	0.470
Hallow Ware	0.410
Refractories	0.020

Of 119 series considered 53 with a weight of 51.1 accelerated while 66 with a weight of 43.4 decelerated

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, June	533	483
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand Tonnes, June	3392	2759
Electricity Generated Million KWH, June	13365	12344
Rail Movements Net Tonne Kilometres, June	14723	13151
Call Money Rate Percentage, June	10.0%	9.92%

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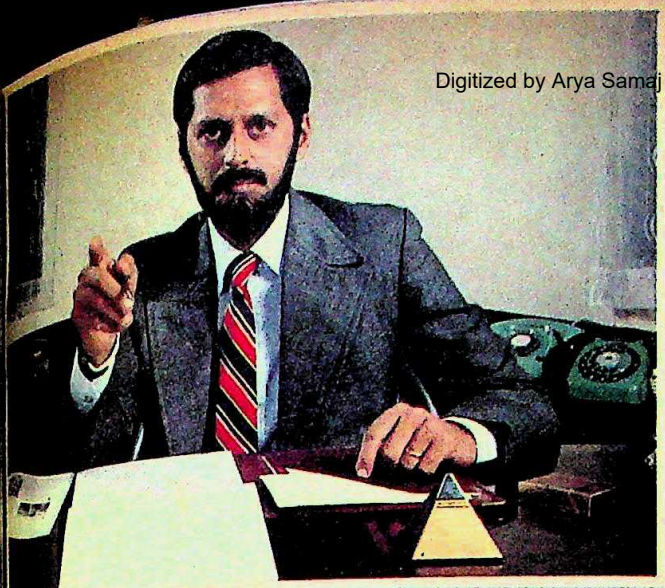

DUNLOP INTRODUCES THE NEW PROFESSIONAL

Tough. Uncompromising. On the fast track. A new breed that's going places. A new generation with professional drive.

For this new professional, Dunlop has a new car tyre. The Dunlop Olympus Nylon.

It's got resilience. A strong nylon casing to take the roughest going.

It's got staying power. With a premium depth tread that goes a long way.

It's got style. A tread pattern designed for better grip.

Olympus. It's the new professional. Made by Dunlop for people with standards like yours.

New

DUNLOP

OLYMPUS

Nylon Car Tyre

Because professional standards demand the best

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If you fly Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong is

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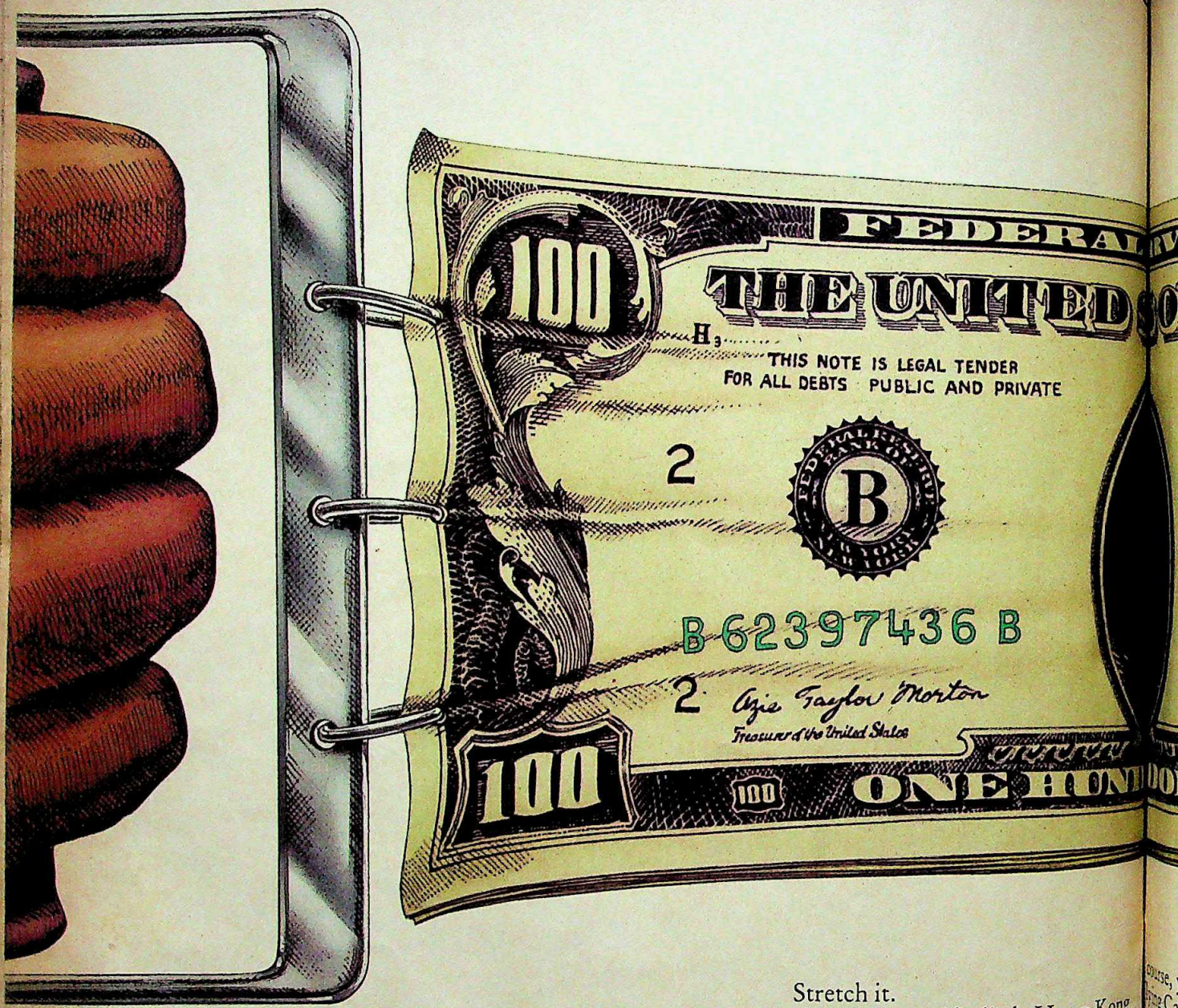


Stretch it.

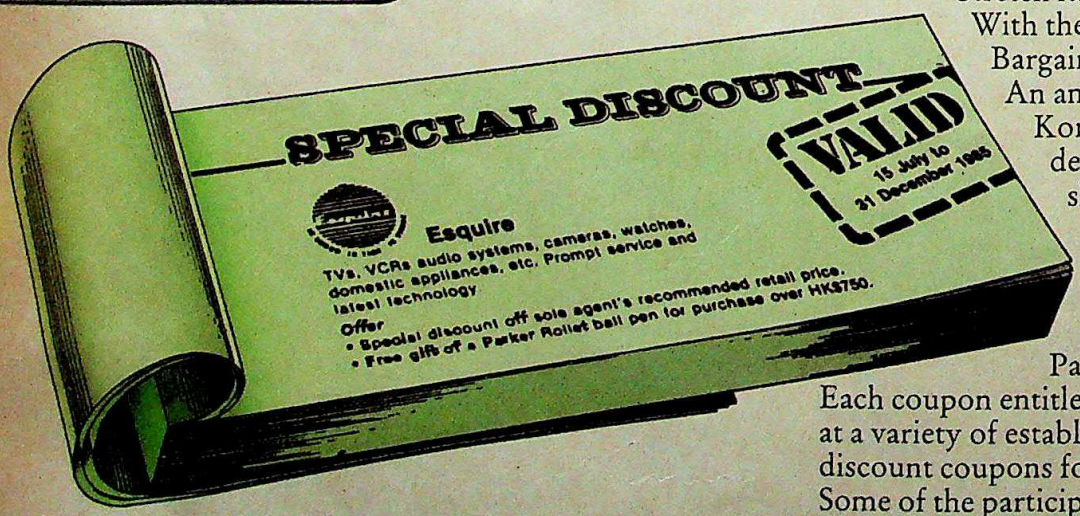
With the terrific little Hong Kong Bargain Book.

An amazing Cathay Pacific-Hong Kong Tourist Association offer designed to make that delightf shopper's paradise even mo a bargain.

It's a booklet containing discount coupons which y get along with your Cathay Pacific airline ticket.

Each coupon entitles you to up to 25% discou at a variety of establishments. In fact, you get discount coupons for each outlet.

Some of the participants include Indian shops, restaurants, jewellery stores, Island cruises and fun places like the fabulous Ocean Park.



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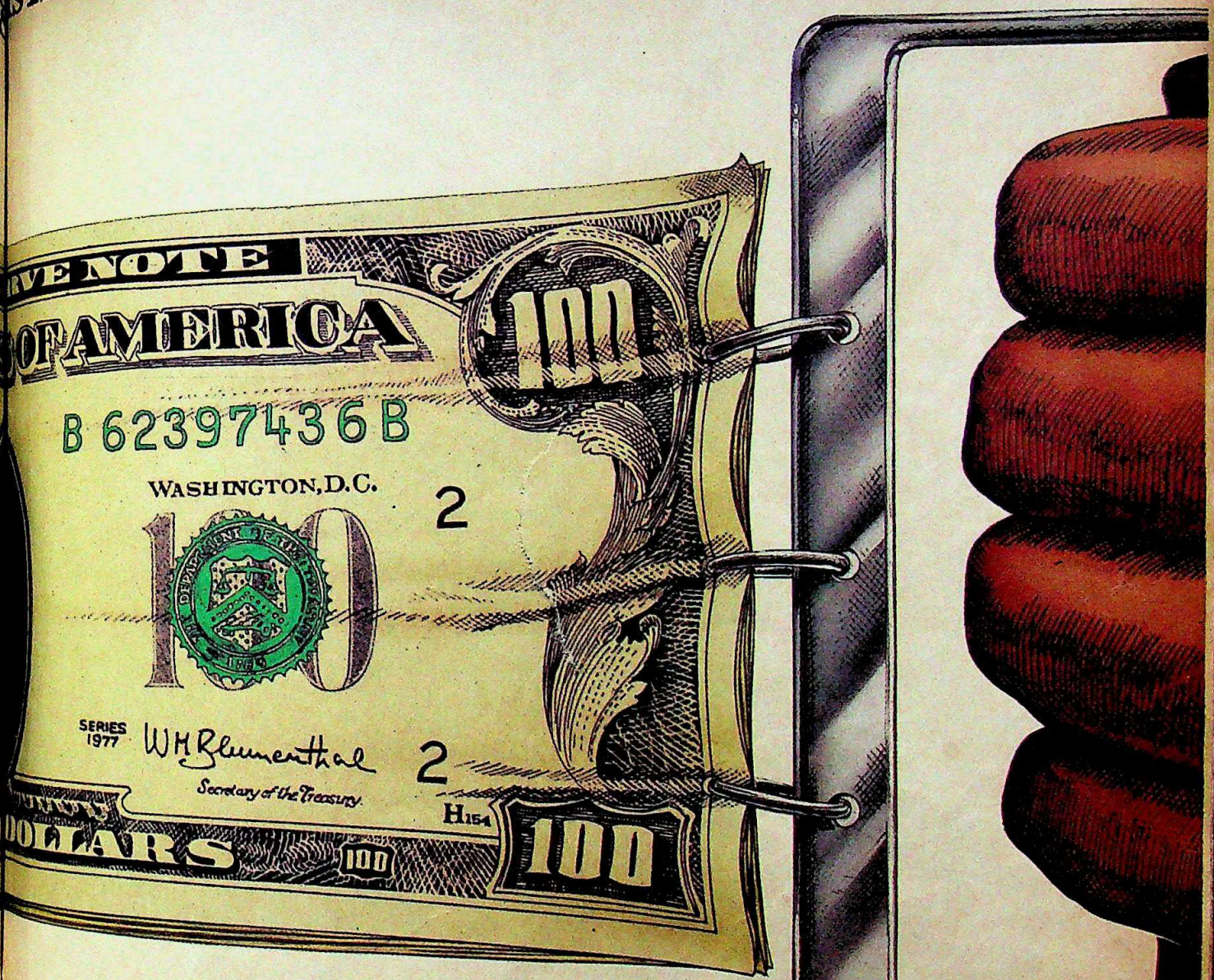
Kong is what you can do with your US $500.



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e the delicious cuisine, a connoisseur's choice
cold refreshments and a charming crew to
ister you.
great fun.
that isn't stretching it.

Arrive in better shape

CATHAY PACIFIC
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Hong Kong Tourist Association

further information, contact Cathay Pacific or your Travel Agent. Bargain Book offer valid only for passengers travelling from Bombay.

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Another Great Idea.

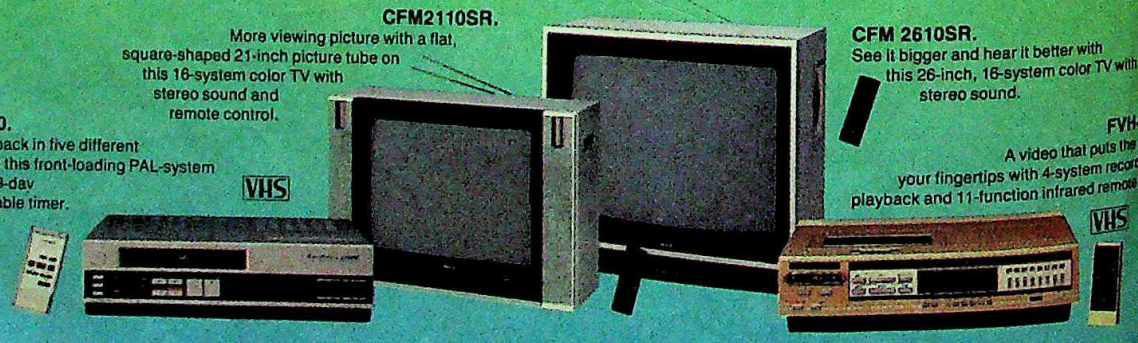
VHS FVH D720 PAL/MESECAM

In 1937, a man named Avery Fisher had a great idea. He would introduce the world's very first high fidelity system. That idea and others that followed—video as well as audio—began a tradition of great ideas that still continues today at Fisher, the company he founded.

One great example: the VHS video cassette recorder shown above. It features a specially-developed, hybrid integrated circuit just one-tenth the size of a conventional IC. Plus a micron-precision video head, a product of Fisher's own fully-integrated manufacturing system.

Together, they provide Fisher video recorders with such extraordinarily high picture quality in virtually every playback mode—forward/reverse picture search, slow/quick motion and still/frame-by-frame—that it must be seen to be believed. With the addition of an 8-button, 11-function infrared remote control, you've got a system that ranks second to none.

One name is setting the standards for the "Audio-Video Age": Fisher. Don't you settle for less. Get yourself a great idea. Get yourself a Fisher.



CFM2110SR. More viewing picture with a flat, square-shaped 21-inch picture tube on this 16-system color TV with stereo sound and remote control.

FVH P720. Video playback in five different modes with this front-loading PAL-system video with 9-day programmable timer.

CFM 2610SR. See it bigger and hear it better with this 26-inch, 16-system color TV with stereo sound.

FVH-M540. A video that puts the world at your fingertips with 4-system recording and playback and 11-function infrared remote control.

FISHER

The first name in high fidelity.

BPL-INDIA Fisher products can be serviced at these local authorised service centres: • Bangalore: Phone: 220266; Cable-Phisilab; Telex-0845-511; • Calcutta: Phone: 431916; Telex-021-2390 • Bombay: Phone: 4940384; Telex-011-73789; • Cochin: Phone: 39422; • New Delhi: Phone: 6411037; Telex-031-2692 • Madras: Phone: 74810; Cable-Phisilab; Telex-041-6507 • Palghat: Phone: 3241; Telex-0853-

Fisher products are available wherever you go:
Saudi Arabia: Al-Oumi Trading Centre, P.O. Box 2211, Al-Khobar TEL 8646801 **Kuwait:** Radio House Co., P.O. Box 1001, Safat Kuwait TEL 419123 **U.A.E.:** Paragon International Co. Dubai, P.O. Box 8771 TEL 231566, Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box 555 TEL 213577 **Bahrain:** Zayani Electronics, P.O. Box 1395, Manama TEL 259672 **Qatar:** Hamad & Mohamed Al-Futtaim, P.O. Box 1427, Doha TEL 416147 **Sultanate of Oman:** Oman Marketing & Services Co., P.O. Box 5734, Ruwi TEL 701180 **Lebanon:** Hiba Trading Co., P.O. Box 7859, Beirut TEL 78173 **Egypt:** Futainasr Trading Co., S.A.E., P.O. Box 59,5 Zaki St., Cairo TEL 748488 **Yemen Arab Republic:** Salem Mohamed Shammakh, P.O. Box 3372, Hodeidah TEL 78173 **Singapore:** Fisher Electronics (Singapore) Pte., Ltd., Inchcape House, Singapore St. Anthony's Consolidated Ltd., 516, Sri Sangaraja Mawatha, P.O. Box 951, Colombo 10 TEL 24261 **Hong Kong:** Fisher Electric (Hong Kong) Ltd., Wing On House, Central, Hong Kong TEL 5-286565 **U.S.A.:** Fisher Corporation, Chatsworth, Calif. TEL 213-673-4204 TEL 4751894 **Canada:** Fisher Canada, Toronto, Ontario TEL 416-421-8344 **U.K.:** Fisher Sales (U.K.), Watford Hertfordshire TEL (0923) 31974 **West Germany:** "Fisher Hi-Fi" Europa Vertriebs-Ges. München TEL (089) 4145-0

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THE MARKETS

Still Rising

THE MARKET's optimism seems to recognise no limits, for shares continued their breathless climb up the charts last fortnight. Led by Century Spinning, Associated Bearings, Premier Automobiles and a host of lesser lights, the market notched up fresh gains at a time when it seemed that a break in the momentum was imminent. After all, the stock market authorities had tried once again to dampen the brokers' unrestrained enthusiasm by imposing heavy margins on shares in both the forward and cash lists. Yet, the bulls continue to run way ahead.

The power of the bullish operators was in fact more than fully evident last fortnight in the manner in which they forced the market authorities to reduce the margins that had been imposed in late July. Within two weeks of this drastic step, when the brokers had to put down 40 per cent margins on their purchases the bulls forced the authorities to reduce these margins to 20 per cent on cash-paid shares and 30 per cent on forward shares. The bulls had, of course, wanted the margins to be no more than 3 per cent, but this was clearly well beyond reach. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the stock market is still in the hands of those who would like to drive share prices even higher.

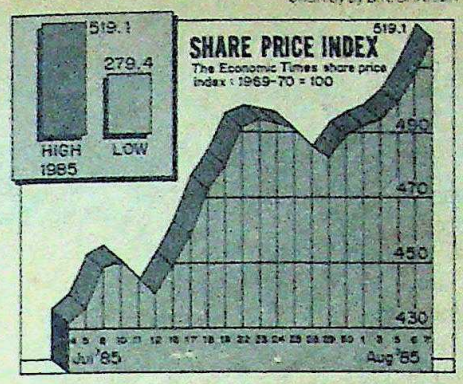

Chart by B.R. Sharma

The reduction in margins in early August had the desired effect, and fresh gains were notched up on most counters. The bears did make their presence felt by pushing down the prices of shares like ACC, Larsen & Toubro and Tata Engineering—all three favourites of the last few months—but this amounted to swimming against the tide. And there was no mistaking the broad undertone of optimism that continued to influence the market.

Nevertheless, investors must watch the industrial trends carefully. For one thing, while a dozen corporate giants are taking advantage of the government's liberalised policies and planning an investment of no less than Rs 3,000 crore, these investments will take time to actually materialise. For another, the government's decision to broadband industrial licences in a number of areas has not yet resulted in any follow-up action. Also, the government's decision last fortnight to call for a review of the technical collaborations proposed by automobile manufacturers, and to keep applications in the cold store while the review is completed, points to the kind of pitfalls that lie ahead. In short, change in Indian industry is likely to come slower than many anticipate. So, while it may pay dividends to hitch one's investment bandwagon to the bulls that are setting the pace just now, investors with a long-term view must weigh their options carefully lest they end up making their purchases when the market is at or near its peak.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	1985 LOW	CLOSE 6.8.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	58.00	29.00	57.00	5.00 +
Associated Cement	610.00	385.00	560.00	14.00 –
Atul Copper	70.00	37.50	63.00	2.00 +
Associated Bearings	685.00	425.00	682.50	42.50 +
Bajaj Auto	2000.00	855.00	1825.00	175.00 +
Balmer	64.00	45.00	64.00	13.00 +
Birla Rayon	440.00	281.00	435.00	41.00 +
Bata India	88.10	48.00	84.50	6.50 +
Bihar	480.00	305.00	445.00	10.00 –
Bom & Cosmopolitan	115.00	61.00	105.00	2.00 –
Bharat Forge	85.00	35.50	79.00	3.00 –
Blue Star	71.00	36.50	65.00	7.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	75.00	33.00	75.00	5.00 +
Bombay Burmah	188.00	66.00	124.00	1.00 –
Big Tyres	83.00	47.50	75.50	4.75 –
Century Spinning	275.00	180.00	275.00	5.00 +
Colgate India	1310.00	810.00	1210.00	225.00 +
Dalmia	91.00	56.00	80.00	2.50 –
Dyes	85.00	32.25	76.00	5.00 +
Dyestuff	370.00	147.00	185.00	nil
[illegible]	80.00	33.00	70.00	5.00 +
[illegible]	83.00	16.00	63.00	12.50 +
[illegible]	45.00	22.30	45.00	6.75 +
[illegible]	102.00	54.00	96.00	3.00 +
[illegible]	102.00	48.27	95.00	8.00 +
[illegible]	215.00	85.00	185.00	2.50 –
[illegible]	70.00	26.50	46.00	1.00 –
[illegible]	32.00	24.00	27.00	7.00 +
[illegible]	32.00	14.25	29.50	1.75 +
Grasim Rayon	810.00	387.00	785.00	45.00 –
Hindustan Lever	90.00	50.75	70.00	14.00 +
Hindustan Motors	130.00	91.00	108.00	1.00 –
[illegible]	84.00	37.00	77.00	3.00 +
Indian Dyestuff	390.00	267.50	340.00	15.00 –
Indian Explosives	72.50	33.00	72.50	6.50 +
Indian Hotels	135.00	76.00	100.00	25.00 –
Indian Organic	124.00	50.50	112.00	3.00 +
Indian Rayon	119.00	66.00	106.00	17.00 +
Indrol	250.00	90.50	225.00	17.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	360.00	162.00	340.00	37.50 +
ITC	65.50	29.00	65.50	19.20 +
J K Synthetics	106.00	52.75	103.00	13.00 +
Kinetic Engineering	380.00	128.00	350.00	20.00 +
Kirloskar Oil	38.00	23.00	28.00	nil
Lakme	200.00	74.00	175.00	10.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	175.00	72.00	160.00	5.00 –
Lipton	58.50	25.50	53.00	5.00 –
Lohia Machines	85.00	42.00	70.00	nil
Mahindra & Mahindra	102.00	48.00	86.00	8.00 +
Motor Industries	670.00	321.25	650.00	10.00 –
National Organic	550.00	240.00	480.00	10.00 –
Nirlon	70.00	37.75	56.00	2.00 –
Peico Electronics	88.00	38.40	96.00	1.50 +
Premier Auto	645.00	322.00	610.00	58.00 +
Ranbaxy	127.50	49.00	107.50	3.00 –
Raymond	120.00	56.00	101.00	8.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	95.00	57.00	80.00	5.00 –
Reliance Industries	252.00	120.00	236.00	7.00 +
Sandoz	82.00	31.00	73.00	2.00 –
Shriram Fibres	61.00	34.00	61.00	10.50 +
SPIC	137.00	43.50	121.00	3.00 +
Tata Steel	1130.00	380.00	1060.00	72.00 +
Telco	1030.00	435.00	820.00	5.00 –
Vulcan Laval	125.00	64.00	115.00	nil
Zenith Steel	71.00	32.00	77.00	4.00 +
20th Century Leasing	84.00	31.50	66.00	3.00 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.6805	8.5684
Austria	Schilling	100	60.9539	60.2707
Bahrain	Dinar	1	31.8432	31.7917
Bangladesh	Taka	100	44.2013	43.9128
Canada	Dollar	1	8.8849	8.8212
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1847	1.1738
Egypt	Pound	1	14.5732	14.4981
France	Franc	1	1.4027	1.3926
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.5556	1.5423
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0817	1.0137
Iran	Rial	100	13.3582	13.1297
Italy	Lira	100	0.6217	0.6201
Japan	Yen	100	5.0859	5.0432
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7420	0.7411
Kuwait	Dinar	1	39.6017	39.5917
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.9146	4.8684
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.7817	0.7803
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6497	0.6455
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.8129	3.7768
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7817	0.7609
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.4864	5.4441
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0720	0.0713
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4510	0.4503
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4438	1.4302
Switzerland	Franc	1	5.1443	5.1337
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7130	0.7119
Thailand	Baht	100	45.2817	45.1919
UK	Pound	1	16.4148	16.2972
USA	Dollar	1	12.1850	12.090
UAE	Dirham	1	3.2917	3.2817
USSR	Rouble	1	14.7072	14.6583
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.2614	4.2507

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd. New Delhi, and quoted between the Banks on 9.8.85.

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"I'm supposed to watch my cholesterol level—at 34 ?! Does this mean I have to change my whole lifestyle ?"

No, you don't. With Ranbaxy's Garlic Pearls.

Taken regularly, Ranbaxy's Garlic Pearls help to reduce your high cholesterol level. Because they contain pure garlic oil, extracted from the richest varieties of garlic. And garlic has been recognised by Ayurveda, and now by modern medical science, to have great curative properties.

However, garlic loses its beneficial properties in cooking. And raw garlic has to be chewed thoroughly for the oil to be absorbed by your system. Swallowing does not help. Moreover, you have to chew about 10 cloves of garlic daily to get the required amount of garlic oil. And that can be quite unpleasant. That's why you need Ranbaxy's Garlic Pearls—purest garlic oil without the smell.

Ranbaxy's Garlic Pearls also help in relieving gas and indigestion, easing joint pains, preventing coughs and colds from recurring.

Just two Ranbaxy's Garlic Pearls twice a day keep you in good health.

RANBAXY'S
GARLIC
PEARLS

All the cures that natu
put in garlic—
without the smell.

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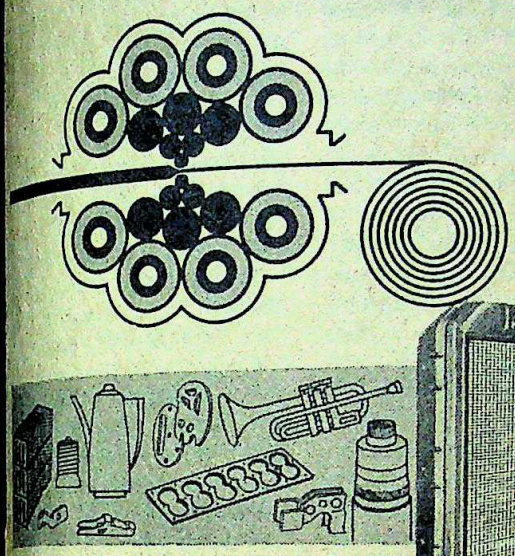
It is 20 years....
when the first SENDZIMIR mill came to India at
BRALCO-DEVIDAYAL

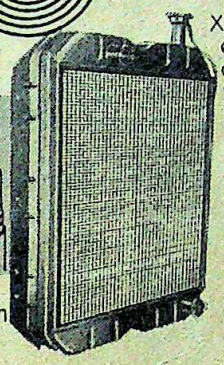
Pioneering the thin guage technique of rolling Copper and Brass in India.



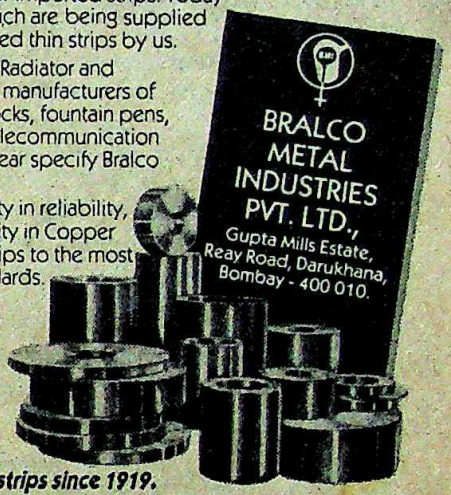
Bralco has produced over 50,000 tonnes of top quality thin strips since 1964 and the Automobile Radiator and Ancillary Industry alone has been supplied with 20,000 tonnes. In 1964, organised Radiator manufacturers numbered 10, using thick guage or imported strips. Today there are more than 40 units which are being supplied with totally indigenously rolled thin strips by us.

Not only Automobile Radiator and Ancillary Industry but also manufacturers of XLPE cables, lamp caps, clocks, fountain pens, electronic components, telecommunication components and switch gear specify Bralco quality.

Bralco means superiority in reliability, consistency and quality in Copper and Brass thin guage strips to the most exacting standards.



Radiator Strips upto 0.05 mm



BRALCO-manufacturers of non ferrous strips since 1919.

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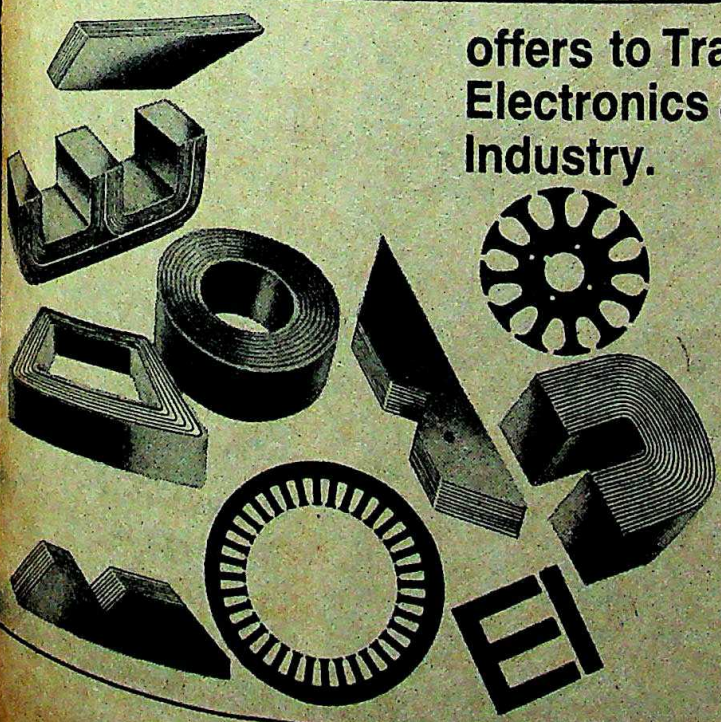
offers to Transformer, Switchgear, Electronics and Instrumentation Industry.

AMA-TE-35X



Laminations: For transformers upto 100 MVA ratings. They can be mitred, holed, V-notched and tip cut as per the customer's requirements.

Strip Wound Cores: All types of Strip Wound Cores viz. Toroidal or Ring Cores, and Rectangular Cores as well as 'C' & 'E' Cores in matched pairs for transformers, switchgear and the electronics industry.

Stampings: Various sizes, E & I shapes, J's, U's, etc. and Fan Stampings.

Manufactured in one of the most modern plants in the country under strict quality control.

TUMUS ELECTRIC CORPN. LTD.,
P.B. 42, Rani Baug, Rewa-486 001 (M.P.).

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KERAN

Village Wiles

KERAN exists on the edge of nowhere. A sleepy village 165 km north-west of Srinagar, Keran's wooden hovels are strung out along the banks of the Kishen Ganga river which forms a natural no man's land between India and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). Placed by fate and circumstance on the Line of Actual Control, Keran's 9,000-odd inhabitants live a remote and ragged existence and to get to it means braving bone-chilling winds and razor-edged mountain paths across the Farkian Pass (9,000 ft). For six months of the year in winter, the village is completely cut off from the rest of the world when the pass is choked with snow and the narrow little paths are blocked by avalanches and uprooted pines.

In 1947, when Pakistan stormed the state, Keran was sliced in half and gradually the river changed its course to form a natural boundary between the village and its dismembered limbs on the other side. By the time it is late afternoon elsewhere in the state, Keran is already shrouded in a thick, suffocating blanket of darkness. Last fortnight, however, thanks literally to a blinding flash of inspiration on the part of local leaders, Keran suddenly emerged from the shadows into the flashbulbs of publicity as a local Srinagar daily, *Srinagar Times*, banner-headlined the sensational story that more than 60 children had been blinded. The paper also carried extensive photographs of a dozen of the supposedly blinded children.

The story predictably created a storm in the state and a panicked administration immediately rushed a medical team to the area and set up an emergency medical camp. However, the doctors discovered that the locals had deliberately fed the story to the press and the children examined were found to be suffering [illegible] congenital cataract. "They never [illegible] ported their ailments to the doc[illegible] has been posted here for the la[illegible] years," said Dr M.A.Shawl, who [illegible] medical team. The doctors found [illegible] children had developed refractive [illegible] which could be easily removed [illegible] gery and the use of corrective gla[illegible] as Rehmatullah, a retired teac[illegible] plained: "Having been brought up [illegible] isolated border town, we people a[illegible] shy and superstitious to make pub[illegible] diseases of our children."

Though the event was revea[illegible] what it was, a mere publicity stu[illegible] locals did manage to achieve their [illegible] tive to focus public and official att[illegible] on their miserable existence. Is[illegible] and ignorance have turned the [illegible] into a miasma of misery. Tubercul[illegible] eye disease is rampant and 33 ch[illegible] died in 1981 due to measles and diar[illegible] Poverty adds its own bit to the scen[illegible] children look like beggars, clothed [illegible] and grime while the elders hudd[illegible] gether in superstitious sullenness, [illegible] tered at the valueless hand that fate [illegible]

Photographs by RAGHU RAI

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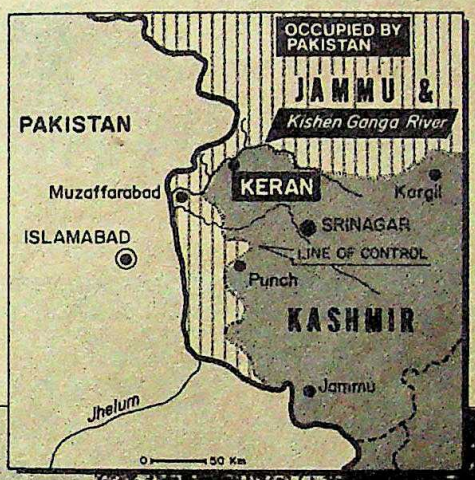
dealt them.
there is, of course, a fly in that sad
a reason for Keran's sudden,
lunge for exposure. "The other
as the locals enviously refer to their
across the river, is what it is
all about. Whether by delib-
design on the part of the Pakistan
ment or pure circumstance, in the
of the poor villagers of Keran, the
river represents the dividing line
heaven and hell. "Look at that
road sir, look at the spacious dak
and the houses and the regular
and then look at us," says
Khan, a local contractor who
the story about children being
in the press after he lost a badly-
government contract.

the opposite village is clearly
and so is the partial truth of Khan's
plea. Bedford buses adorned
brightly-coloured advertisements
down the serpentine main road
at regular hourly intervals, ferry-

villagers and the land of their
greener on the other side

ing passengers to Muzaffarabad, the capital of POK, 75 km away. The dak bungalow with its spacious rooms looks large and well-maintained and the double-storied wooden houses scattered over the Neelam Valley, as the area is known, are better than the dingy hovels on the Indian side. At night, when Keran is clothed in depressing darkness, the bright lights of the dak bungalow powered from a generator are like a beckoning beacon. But if envy is the sole criteria, then it is misplaced.

The residents of the Neelam Valley are fortunate and isolated symbols of Pakistan's Gulf boom. Virtually every family has a minimum of one member working in the Gulf and the result is the conspicuous prosperity that has become a confusing cancer slowly eating away at the inhabitants of the less fortunate village of Keran.



There are other stories that add acid to the bile: one about a young infant who was handed across the river by his mother to her sister who lives in POK and two hours later he was handed back, having been expertly treated "over there" by the doctors. "Had it been here, it would have taken us two days to reach the hospital in Srinagar," says the narrator. However, as T.S.Mehta, the area development officer cautions: "All that glitters is not gold. The blinding episode that has been given a dramatic twist would land all of them in jail had they tried that across the river." But to the wretched of Keran, they are already prisoners of the darkness in their minds, and all they can see through the iron bars of their daily existence is the grass growing increasingly greener on the other side of the river.

—DILIP BOBB with
GHULAM NABI KHAYAL in Keran

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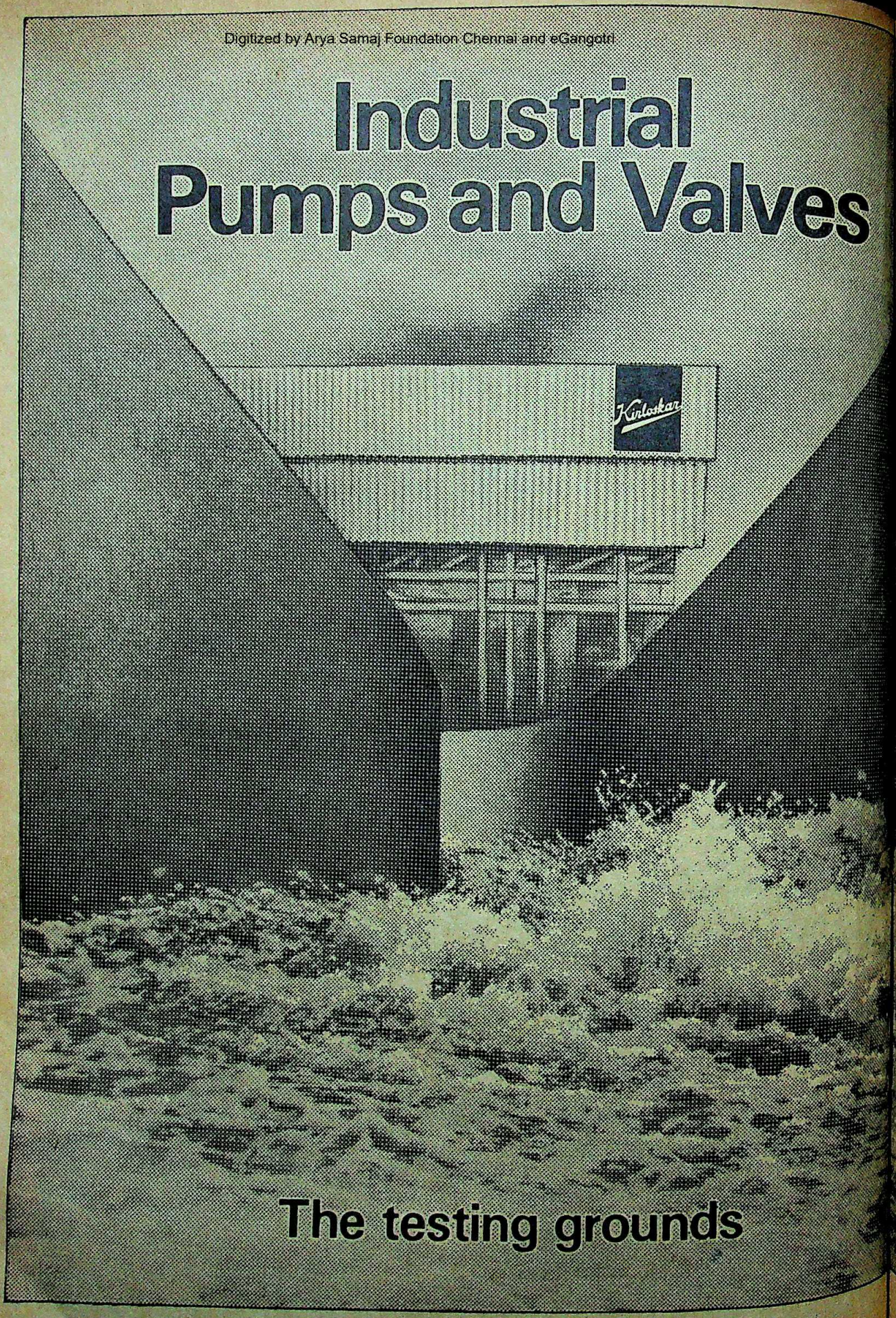

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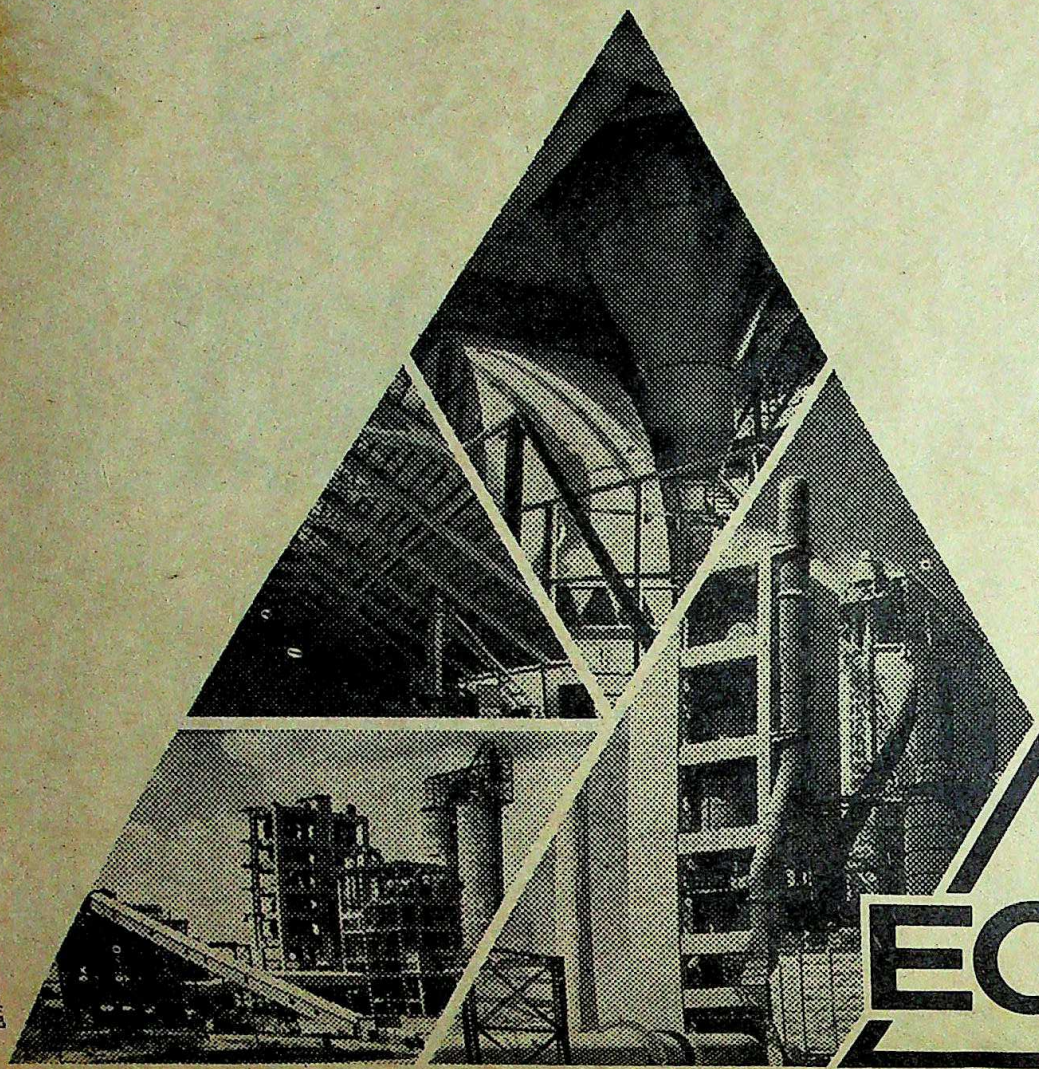

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RAJASTHAN

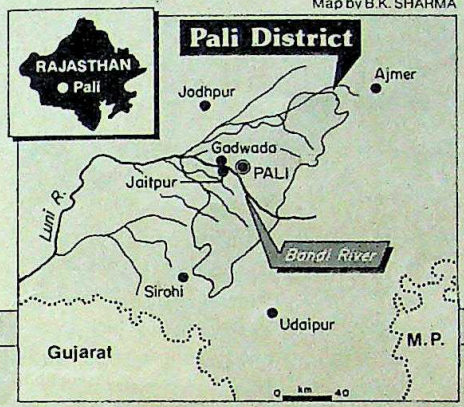
Stream of Destruction

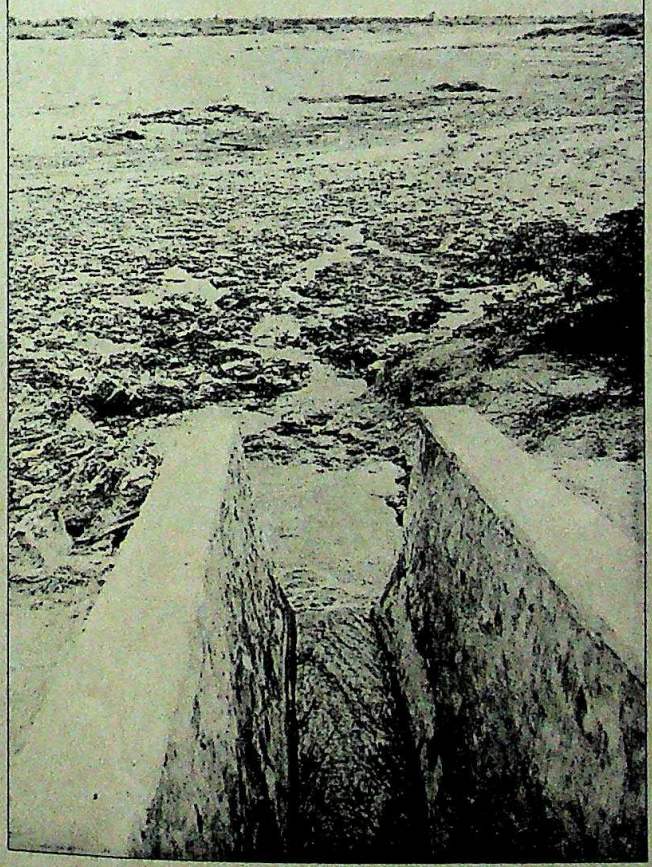
THE RIVER, if it can be called that, is a stream of dark liquid of the kind that overflows city drains after heavy monsoon showers. But the Bandi river runs through no monsoon-deluged urban sprawl. It was once, not all that many years ago, a fresh water stream which brought much-needed sustenance for the fields that sat on its banks. Today it spreads destruction as it travels: the black muck it transports is industrial effluent from some 700 textile processing units in the vicinity. And it spells disaster for the residents of riverine villages in Rajasthan's Pali district. It presents the classic case of industrial success being accompanied by a serious problem of pollution.

Consider the twin villages of Jaitpur, about 20 km downstream of Pali, on one bank of the Bandi, and Gadwada on the opposite bank. The only irrigated fields in these villages are the ones along the Bandi. Wells were sunk to lift water for the crops, mainly wheat and a form of mustard, but residents weren't ever warned about the effluent. When, over time, the well water turned into a coloured liquid—the effect of dyes in the effluent discharged into the river—the farmers stopped drinking it but continued to irrigate their fields with it. Sure enough, in the course of a few seasons those crops either failed or their yields dropped, in some cases to half of what they used to be.

One farmer who suffered is Jaitpur's Lakshman Ram. He stares dismayed at his barren fields and says: "I don't know when this land will grow anything of worth again." Adds Gangadan, the tall, young sarpanch of the Gadwada panchayat that includes Jaitpur: "Many people along the Bandi grew fruits and vegetables on the river bed but that time is past now. Not even grass grows any longer. Pollution has reached us in the last three to four years. Several wells in these two villages have been more or less deserted."

Map by B.K. SHARMA





The Bandi river spreads destruction as it travels; the black muck it transports spells disaster for the riverine villages of Rajasthan's Pali district.

Jaitpur and Gadwada are typical of the larger problem. District Collector P.K. Deb reels off troubling statistics: "About 20 villages along the Bandi have been affected. While water in 104 wells shows traces of pollution, in another 116, it is not fit for even irrigation, let alone drinking. Some effects of pollution can be seen as far as 50 km from Pali town and an estimated 5,300 hectares of cultivable land on the Bandi's banks have either turned barren or now produce reduced yields."

Deb has tried hard to cope with the problem, but he faces an uphill task. It is estimated that when the textile processing units run at full capacity, the daily discharge of effluents into the Bandi river is in the region of 12 million litres—the payload of 1,200 tankers. Dissolved solids are a parameter for measuring the absorbed waste in water and suspended solids for unabsorbed waste. Two kinds of organisms in the water, aerobes and protozoa, require dissolved oxygen in the water to attack the waste and make it harmless. If the waste is too large in quantity, the oxygen becomes inadequate and the protozoa and aerobes begin to die off. And so does life in the river.

Not surprisingly, then, Deb says the area's livestock population appears to be affected by skin, gastric and waterborne diseases. He adds that there have been reports of the death of 150 head of cattle but these have been impossible to confirm. Villagers believe that their health too has suffered, but nobody has done any systematic study and this also cannot be confirmed. Alarming information comes from the state's Ground Water Department which has found that since 1978, ground water pollution has increased by 15 km down the river. Ground water also flows in the same direction as river water. Explains an official: "Ground water and aquifer pollution is slow in coming but once it does, it is exceedingly hard to get rid of." Because the

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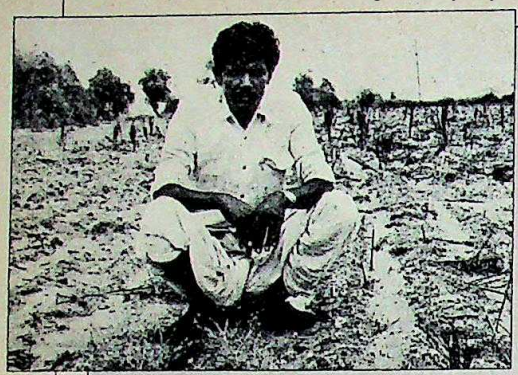
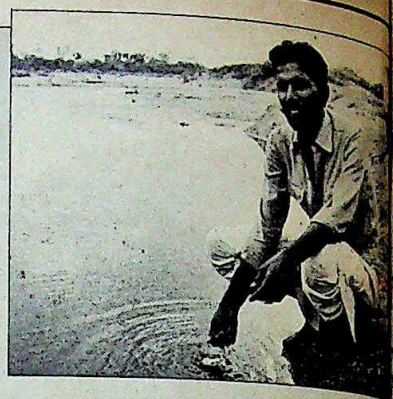


LAKSHMAN RAM
farmer
Jaitpur village,
Pali district

"I don't know when this land will grow anything of worth again."



GANGADAN
sarpanch,
Gadwada
panchayat Jaitpur

"Not even grass grows any longer. Pollution has reached us in the last four years."

Bandi is dry most of the year, the effluent is never diluted. The result: ground water pollution along the Bandi threatens to move into river Luni which the Bandi joins about 40 km from Pali.

Before the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act came into force in 1974, scant attention was paid to pollution. The Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO) developed two industrial areas in Pali in the early '70s. From the first dyeing unit in 1962, the number has swelled to about 700 units today with a 20,000 work-force and a turnover of over Rs 100 crore—and business is still growing. While there is only one large textile manufacturing plant, most of the factories are processing units which undertake one or more of the processes from mercerising to bleaching, dyeing, printing, stentering and calendering. The entire economy of this prosperous town (population: 110,000) rests on this industry.

Unfortunately, most of these units were set up with no provision for effluent treatment. Indeed, many of the units were erected haphazardly in the centre of the town. When the legislation was finally passed, an area called the Mandiya Industrial Estate was developed so that units within the town could be shifted there. But that didn't happen as planned. While some entrepreneurs did move out, others started new units but continued to operate their old units too. Today, there are no fewer than 295 units within the municipal area.

These units add to the degree of alkalinity in the effluent. The high alkalinity comes essentially from a process called mercerising—used to heighten the lustre and strength of the cloth—in which the cloth is dipped under tension in a concentrated solution of alkali.

As early as 1976, RIICO decided to have an effluent treatment plant at Mandiya with a capacity of 4.50 million litres of effluent per day—and it expected textile unit owners in Mandiya to pay the cost of setting it up. By the time the plant became operational in 1983, the entrepreneurs ended up paying six times more than what had been asked for earlier. Even so, the Rs 50-lakh plant was to prove a disaster. It costs about Rs 1 crore a year to run and runs at 25 per cent capacity because entrepreneurs refuse to pay its running cost. The running costs are higher than anticipated because, ironically enough, the Bombay textile strike led entrepreneurs to set up a large number of mercerising units. And mercerisation increases the alkalinity of the effluent requiring large quantities—14 tonnes per day—of sulphuric acid to neutralise it. Complains a RIICO official in Jaipur: "There were few mercerising units at the outset but now there are about 100 of them. How could we have anticipated that?"

"The truth is that RIICO officials never bothered to take samples of effluent or even talk to us before setting up the plant."

M.L. THANVI
president, Rajasthan Textile Hand Processors Association

"That explanation is nonsense," snaps M.L. Thanvi, president of the Pali-based Rajasthan Textile Hand Processors Association. "The truth is that RIICO officials never bothered to take samples of effluent or even talk to us before setting up the plant. If they had bothered so much as to read our project reports submitted to them, they would have found that most entrepreneurs planned to go in for mercerising sooner or later."

However, even presuming that it had functioned successfully, the plant would have reduced, not solved the problem of pollution. It caters only to the 300-odd units in Mandiya.

Belatedly, the authorities are beginning to take notice. RIICO is no longer allotting plots to textile units. And the Rajasthan State Board for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution has filed cases against 66 textile units for discharging untreated effluents. While this action has undoubtedly put entrepreneurs under pressure to fall in line, the board has made limited attempts to actually help solve the problem.

The units are so small that the ultimate solution can come only from combined treatment for all factories on a cooperative basis. Deb feels that the first step would be to shift all mercerising units to a single area so that their waste water can be collected at one point. A caustic deposit plant would not only get rid of the alkalinity but the caustic that recovered would to some extent cover the cost of running the plant. Meanwhile, the price to pay for fouling ground water keeps rising relentlessly.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Pali

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Hawkins Introduces

The Anti-Pressure Cooker

Preparation Pressure

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Item	Preparation time in minutes	Pressure cooking time in minutes	Preparation time compared with cooking time
Peas n' Potato Curry	68	7	9.7 times
Mutton Curry	90	15	6.0 times
Chola Dal	33	7	4.7 times
Channa Dal Pulav	35	7	5.0 times
Rice n' Milk Kheer	20	14	1.4 times
Average	49	10	4.9 times

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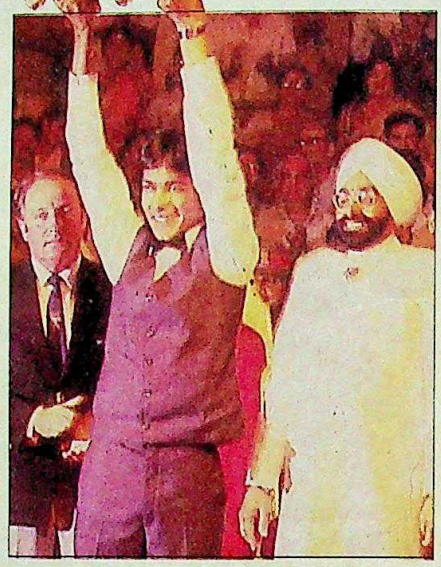
WORLD BILLIARD'S CHAMPIONSHIP

The Big Break

IN AN age when youth, speed and aggressiveness, even violence, are the singular symbols of sport, it is the ultimate anachronism, as if a time warp has transported the gathering back into the genteel, effete world of the Victorian era. The players are attired in starched white shirts, bow ties and waistcoats and their average age bears perilous proximity to 50. Instead of the grunts and epithets and crowd-screaming that provides the background music for modern sport, there is a sepulchral silence, interrupted politely by the click of crystallate balls or the soft scrape of chalk against a leather tip. Even the playing surface is muted with dark green baize and the players softshoe around the table as if they were in the Vatican. No other game provides a monotony so hypnotic, the same sequence of gentle shots played over and over again as the score inches up in agonising slowness. For the uninitiated, billiards is about as exciting as watching grass grow.

But is there also a muffled message in the fact that it is the only game in which India has figured prominently and consistently at the top in recent years? Last fortnight, the country produced its third world amateur billiards champion in the form of the dashing and debonair Geet Sethi, the 24-year-old prodigy who, playing in his first world championship, beat the legendary Australian Bob Marshall, 50 years his senior, to win the 25th World Amateur Billiards Championship held in the chandeliered convention hall of a Delhi five star hotel. Sethi becomes not only the youngest player to win the title but the only unseeded player to ever do so and also the only one to win the world title on his debut.

But more than Sethi's sensational win was the fact that there were three Indians among the four semi-finalists, reaffirming the dubious stranglehold that India currently exercises on the sport. The other two were Michael Ferreira, three time's world champion and defender of the title, and Subhas Aggarwal, the Kapil Dev of Indian billiards. Sethi disdainfully demolished Ferreira and Aggarwal en route to the final, heralding the arrival of yet another Indian on the international billiards scene and one who, in comparison to the rest, is virtually still a baby.

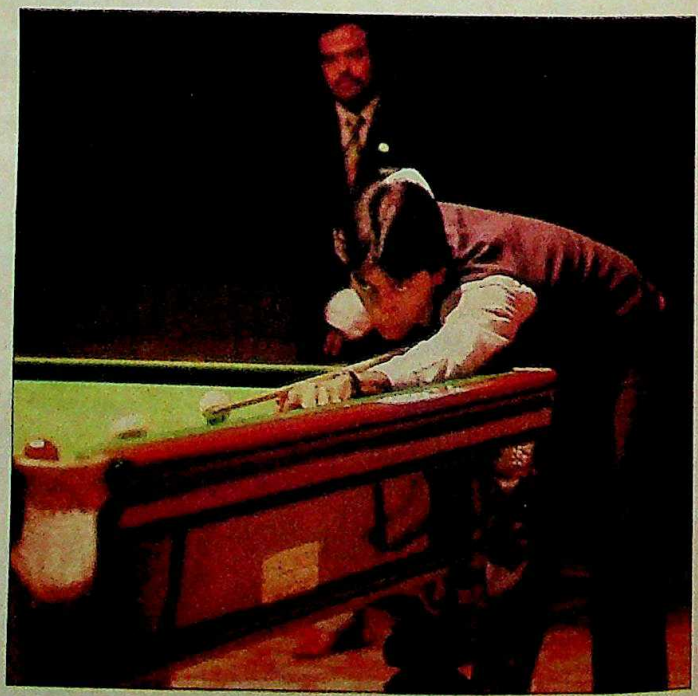


Sethi with the trophy: triumphant debut

But the tragic reality is that it is a dominance which is deceptive. Billiards is one of international sport's endangered species. In fact, the word 'international' is a misnomer. Like cricket, it is only by a handful of Commonwealth c like Britain, Australia, New Z Malta, Sri Lanka, Pakistan an And, apart from India, billiards ha a back pew to the more visually a and faster game of snooker player same surface but with a variety oured balls instead of the pair of w one red ball employed in billia because of the similarity in the two and the fact that snooker offers more lucrative pickings in prize and is extensively televised, most class billiard players have switch giance to professional snooker. One example is Om Aggarwal, the champion who won the World A Snooker title in 1984 and promptly pro. The new champ, Geet Sethi, tially a snooker player, had already fied, and got his professional licence the International Snooker Federatio asked them to delay his nomina after the World Snooker Champi next November. Says R.K. Viss patriarch of Indian billiards' snooker comes to India then could face the problems it has in countries."

Even the fact that Delhi has host to the World Billiards Champ twice in the last four years is because there are very few countr international billiard organisation ing to host the meet because of the spectator-response and the inor time and expense required to championship—last fortnight's Delhi stretched to 13 d was subsidised finan the Government, th where the tourn staged and the play commodated, and on Tata Companies (Gee happens to be emplo Tata Oil Mills). The es cost of the champions around Rs 10 lakh nately for the org spectator response w whelming, inspiring ions of a revival of th But as Ferriera says the reason is that we many world cham titles won by the starting with Wilson

The other reaso most clubs and a n schools and colleges still boast of billiard Subhas Aggarwal, th



Sethi in play: supernatural cool

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the East, learnt the game at his local club in Bombay where he came under the patronage of India's first world champion, Wilson Jones who had himself taught the game in a billiards parlour during his house in Pune. Michael Ferreira started playing at his school, St Paul's in Darjeeling. Geet Sethi started displaying his phenomenal talents at the Gujarat Sports Club in Ahmedabad. Of late however, the trends have been moving the other way. In British pubs and American saloons, billiard tables have been replaced by the smaller, American-style pool tables. "Snooker has definitely put billiards out of the running," says nonagenarian Bob Marshall who won one of four World Billiard Championships a quarter century before Geet Sethi was even born. Without taking away from the obvious talents of Ferriera and Aggarwal, that is perhaps also the reason why India continues to be the last bastion of billiards.

The result, as was evidenced last fortnight, is that it is probably the only modern sport with the possible exception of chess where three generations of players can be seen in the same competition. Indeed, apart from the three Indians and Marshall, who emerged from a 22-year hibernation for this particular championship, the rest of the field was sparse and only refitting a world championship with the top players having joined the professional ranks. Sethi, the new Boris Becker of billiards, plans to make a bid for a rare double—the world amateur snooker title in Blackpool this November, after which he too will join the ranks of the professionals, though he told INDIA TODAY that he was keeping his options open.

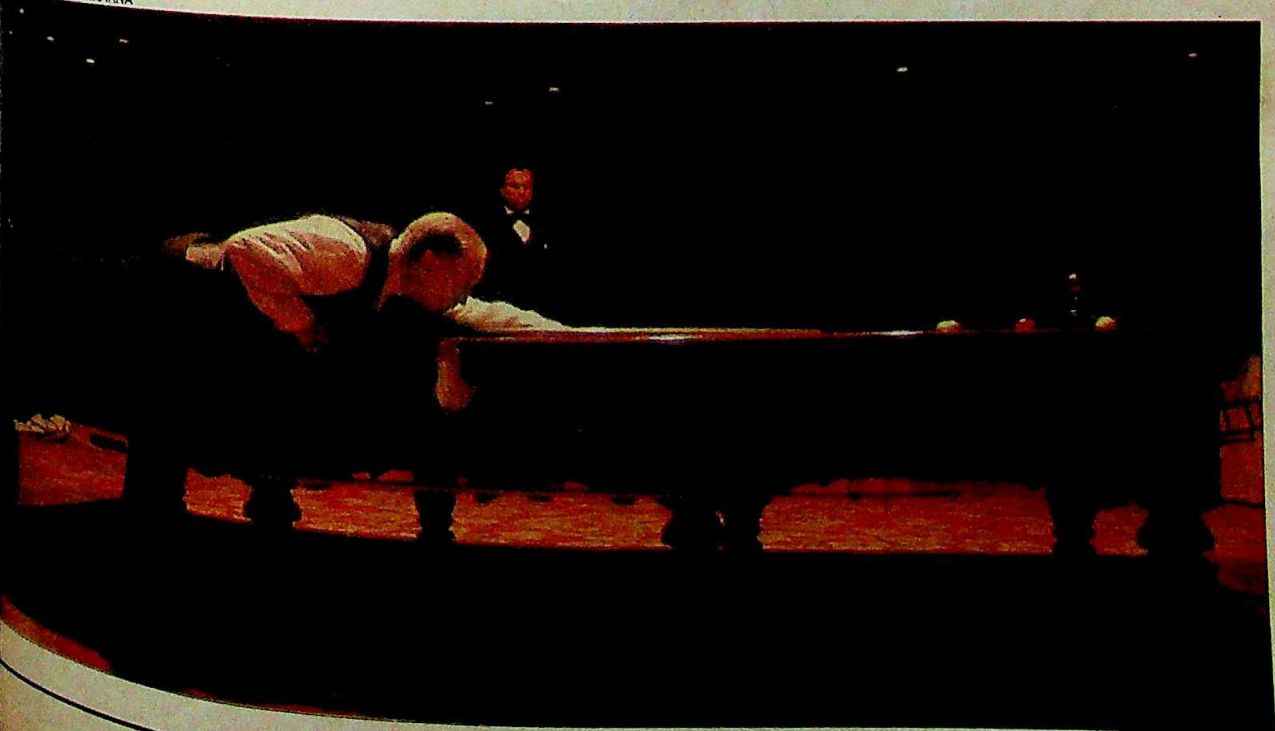
But however hollow the victory, Sethi is the stuff of superstars. Modest and unassuming, he turns into a nerveless killer when he stalks the table. In each of his matches against Ferreira, Aggarwal and Marshall, he trailed by large margins but kept his supernatural cool to eventually and systematically destroy his opponents. Said Marshall after the final: "Geet has exceptional talent. To win at 24 is unique. I did not even play in my first world championship till I was 26." Adds Vissanji, now in his 70s, who has watched every championship played except for one: "It was a triumph of temperament. Playing in your first world championship has pressures of its own." Sethi undoubtedly has all the attributes of a great champion, style, temperament, ambition, self-control and an astonishing range of strokes. He has also learnt his billiards at the feet, or rather the hands, of the masters. In Ahmedabad, he was under the wing of Satish Mohan, the losing finalist in the 1973 world championship. Sethi later received vital tips from Jones and later, Ferreira who has no regrets about being beaten by an unseeded upstart. "The best man won," he shrugged.

Sethi has also been encouraged by his parents, though not at the cost of his education. He is an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and shifted to Bombay for a year when he joined Tata Oil Mills. He then returned to Ahmedabad though his parents have moved to Lucknow where the elder Sethi has a bakery business. Sethi first hit the news spots when he won the junior national title in 1981 and then went on to win both the junior and senior titles before hitting a slump when he joined the Asian circuit. By last year, he had obviously come to terms with his game and formed a unique partnership with Om Aggarwal, Sanjay Sawant and Prem Farid who pooled their money to play on the English snooker circuit and shared whatever prize money they won. The experience obviously was invaluable for Sethi. He won the Pontis Amateur Title, which earned him the right to turn professional, then came back to win the national snooker title. Says Om Aggarwal: "I am happy that Geet has joined the world champions club. Nobody could have deserved it more."

As a professional, the sky is the limit as far as financial earnings are concerned. Having become a top-ranked player, Sethi can command an appearance fee for every tournament he plays in. Accordingly, even if Sethi does not win a single tournament, he can still earn around £10,000 (Rs 1,70,000) a year in appearance money alone. If he does, however, win a major snooker tournament the prize money can be in the region of £15,000 (Rs 2,50,000). Either way, Sethi has a luminous future ahead of him and regardless of the sport, India has an exciting new world champion in a period when world titles are getting fewer and further between.

—DILIP BOBB with P.V.J.KAR

Photo by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Marshall: stretched to the limit

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Mounting Myths

FOR A people who produced the *Kamasutra* and Khajuraho, the average Indian still remains surprisingly ignorant in matters sexual. That, at any rate, is the opinion of Bombay sexologist Dr Prakash Kothari, who believes that Indians conform to a condition which the raffish Khushwant Singh once described as "sex on the mind, fear in the heart". Not much is known about the results of Khushwant's research into the subject, but Kothari, a medical doctor with a doctorate in sexology, is a specialist who will be presiding over the 7th world congress of sexology in New Delhi in November. He has spent several years investigating myths about sexual relations and practices. After lengthy interviews with 1,000 men and 1,000 women aged 15 to 80, Kothari came up with a list of myths among Indians that would be comic if it did not denote a serious problem.

Kothari's findings include such popular misconceptions as: sexual intercourse with the female on top prevents pregnancy; sex education in schools and colleges may lead to an increase in unwanted pregnancies; a man with a large penis is sexually more gratifying than a man who is poorly endowed; masturbation is harmful and excessive indulgence leads to sexual inadequacy and that intercourse with a virgin cures venereal disease.

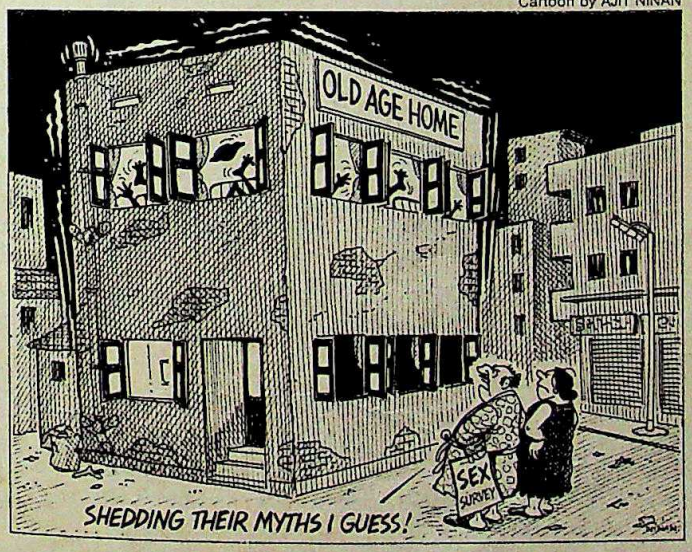
Of all aspects of sex, masturbation seems to be the most misunderstood. Each and every person interviewed—male and female—believed that masturbation is harmful. Medical graduates and para medics, who constituted 20 percent of those interviewed and should have known better, proved as ignorant as the rest. They shared such misconceptions as:

- one drop of semen is equivalent to 40 drops of blood and replenishment requires a lot of nourishing food;
- wet dreams (nocturnal emissions) indicate a sexual disorder;
- deficiency of sperm affects a man's sexual potency.

These fallacies, Kothari discovered, exist more in the male than in the female mind, but the surprising revelation of the survey is that even college-educated men and between 60 to 80 percent of males in the medical profession believe in them. Only one medical college in the whole country—the GS medical college in Bombay—has a department of sexual medicine and the remaining medical students are just not taught about the psycho-physiology and psycho-pathology of sex and sexual dysfunction. The resulting ignorance, Kothari feels, is the the product of an environment in which people imagine they know everything about sex once they have learned about the reproductive organs. "This is akin to saying that as soon as one is able to read musical notations, one is ready to sit down and play the piano. Most sex education is from the street where misinformation is abundant, and fantasies get confused with facts".

Dr Kothari: exposing ignorance

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



To distinguish fact from fantasy, Kothari says he took special care to phrase his questions as colloquially as possible. He did this after discovering that a bland question like: 'Are you reaching orgasm?' would get a straight 'yes' or 'no' answer without the person understanding the meaning of the word orgasm. Kothari says he found that this question had to be phrased differently for different women. A Gujarati woman would understand only when asked *"tamne sukh male che?"* (are you getting happiness?). What is *'sukh'* for the Gujarati woman becomes *'samadhan'* for the Maharashtrian, *'santosh'* (contentment) for the North Indian, *'shanti'* for the Sindhi and *'trupti'* or *'santrupti'* for the Tamil or Telugu woman.

This woefully inadequate knowledge also affects the success of the family planning programme in India. Sterilisation and vasectomy operations, Kothari says, are not successful mainly because of the fear of post-operative sexual inadequacy. For instance, it is widely believed that the quantity of semen gets reduced after vastectomy.

Regarding the popular myths, Kothari says masturbation is beneficial and should be considered normal activity. "It protects society against men with a powerful sexual passion. If suppressed, the number of cases of sexual crimes may increase enormously. In my opinion nervous effects of masturbation only occur if a person stops masturbating." Similarly, he says the popular connection between virginity and chastity needs to be broken. "There are virgins who are not chaste and chaste individuals who are not virgins. A woman need not bleed the first time. I have seen plenty of marriages on the rocks due to this misconception".

Nor does menopause mean an end to an active sexual life as is widely believed. Says he: "The view that sex after sixty is not possible needs to be changed". Kothari also cautions against advertisements of sex tonics and aphrodisiacs by quacks, saying there are no genuine products. The so-called effects are mainly psychological. In other words, misconceptions can lead to, well, miss conceptions. —RAMINDAR SINGH

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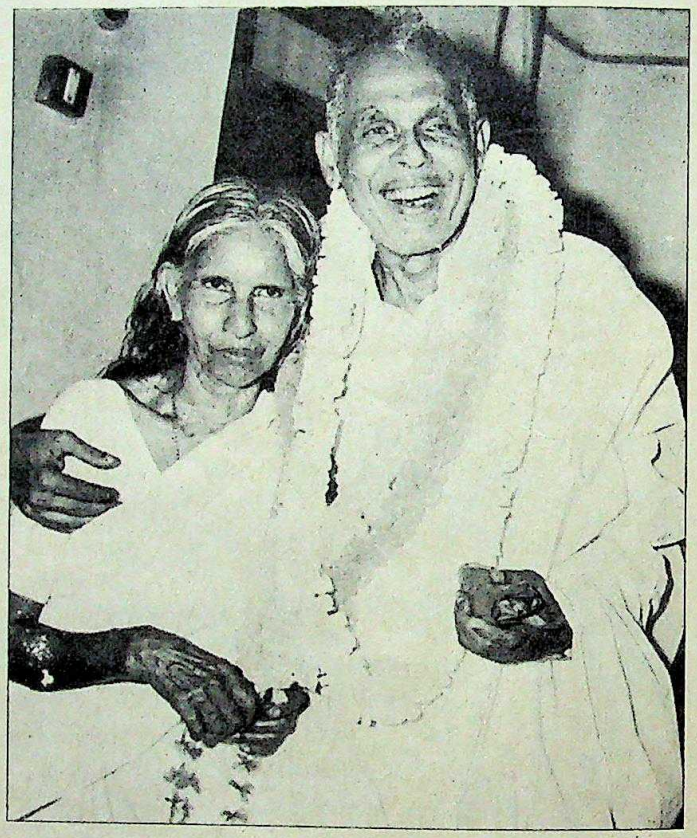
THAKAZHI SIVASANKARA PILLAI

Crowning Achievement

HIS REALM is the shrunken and scarred underbelly of society, where the underprivileged and life's losers huddle together for false comfort—the landless serf, the weary worker and the impoverished fisherman. They are his subjects and his reign over them has been supreme and unquestioned. But only now, in the twilight of his enormously productive years, has Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, 73, the grand old man of Malayalam literature been finally crowned king. Last fortnight, Pillai received the most coveted literary laurel in the land, the Jnanpith Award for 1984.

It is a measure of the boundless and legendary humility of the man that the announcement of the award surprised no one but himself. "It is a matter of great satisfaction for me to win the greatest literary award in the country. I hope the Jnanpith will make me more humble than ever before," he said almost apologetically. And yet it is this characteristic humility and compassion that has earned him the reputation of one of the most sensitive and perceptive writers in the Indian language. Thakazhi's entire literary journey has been as a chronicler of the social struggles and sorrows of the lower classes in his native Kerala. But there is a stark and stunning universality in his protagonists, be they peasants or poachers. From his most famous *Chemmeen* (The Shrimp) to the most recent *Kayar* (Coir), each of his 35 novels and 500 short stories bears testimony to this. Acknowledges Dr K.M. George, chairman of the Jnanpith advisory committee for Malayalam: "Thakazhi's fertile imagination is adept in weaving stories of the underdog who has been insulted, humiliated and abandoned and through his intimate grasp of social realities he makes a passionate plea for social change."

Born in 1912 into a feudal landowning Nair family in Thakazhi, a village in Kerala's rice-bowl Kuttanad, the writer acquired his insight and sensitivity from his circumstances and surroundings in his impressionable years. It was in this village that the leftist movement in the state gained ground in the early '50s when the communists began organising underpaid and landless labourers.



Thakazhi with wife Katha after winning the Jnanpith award: still humble

Says well-known novelist and former bureaucrat Malayatoor Ramakrishnan, who looks on Thakazhi as his mentor: "He has always been a spokesman of the working class and his novels bring out the class struggle prevailing at that time." As a lawyer at the Ambalapuzha mofussil court, Thakazhi found himself in regular contact with the people he was to later write about with such eloquent passion: poor fishermen, bonded labourers and rich landlords. He was moved by the plight of the downtrodden and the injustice that abounded. His genuine indignation and sympathy found expression in his writings and was to dictate his themes for a long time to come—the pathos in his stories and his fervent message of

But it was also a message of interpretations—change in change in the system and most im change in literary expression. Thakazhi is credited with havi Malayalam literature from its s traditional mould by adopting, alo his contemporaries, Neo-realis other trends. Though his initial showed the pronounced influ Maupassant and Che gradually developed distinctive style and

His literary style however, go down we some critics. Noted yalam critic Professor nan Nair still mainta language is not Tha strong point. "I would consider him the g Malayalam writer be Pottekat and Kuttyp have command over the guage while Thakazh guage is rustic," he say also admits that his sto the social conscience.

Literary criticism his is a simple, lucid sty the common man whom he writes can identify with it. His u plicated technique he the genre of the Mala novel a new dimension of this was the sens success of his very first *Puthumalar* (New Flow collection of short published in 1934. Th followed by equally successful nov *Prathipalam* (Reward), *Thottiyude* (The Scavenger's Son), *Patitha (Fallen Lotus)* and *Randidangha* Measures of Paddy).

It was *Randidanghazi* that esta him as a major novelist. The no plores the root of the relationship b the exploiter and the exploited, th owners and the bonded labourers, gh the interweave of his character nies, Thakazhi laid bare the cri shame of this age-old relationship calls it his favourite novel. Anoth tivating novel from his pen is *Ear* (Rungs of the Ladder) which h background the state secretariat erstwhile state of Travancore. Set 50, the novel deals with politic tunists who kick the very ladder to climb to positions of power.

However, it was *Chemmeen*,

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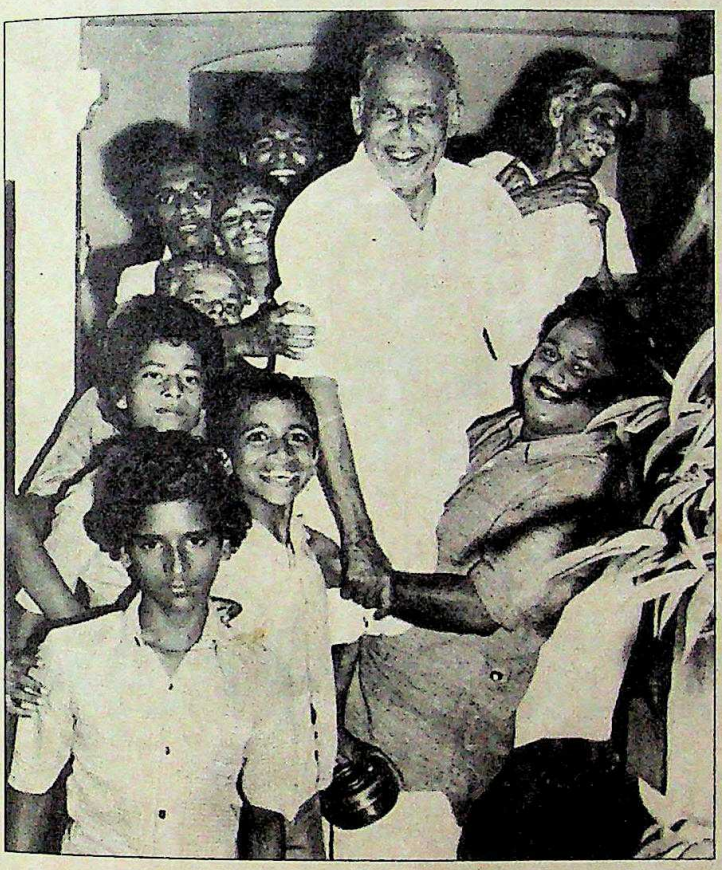
the fishing community of Kerala, ought him the Sahitya Akademi in 1956 and world-wide fame. Not it was translated into more than guages all over the world and the film made on it by noted Ramu Kariyat went on to win the t's gold medal and major awards as well. The novel was a moving entation of the trials and tribula- of fishermen trapped in the net of ances. Though the is the love-lorn life of a fisherwoman, the per- e expands to take in le social context.

others rate *Kayar* as *e resistance*. It is the of a community unfold- through six generations centuries with over a nd characters living their chequered lives on pages. Dr V.K. Nara- Menon, Thakazhi's En- translator, writes in the to this book: "I have come across an Indian of *Kayar*'s dimension; breadth of vision and its profound insight into the life people who rise with dig- even after being caught the wheels of time and ge." In fact, it was *Kayar* decided the Jnanpith in selecting him for the and his second this year. ntry, he was awarded Padma Bhushan.

Thakazhi writes without notes and takes his own time writing. In fact, his magnum opus *Kayar* took 20 years to complete before it was finally published in 1980. Says Thakazhi: "I have a specific idea of the life I want to depict. But I myself do not know what would be the end of the novel." He says he is committed to the common man and it is his problems that he wants to portray.

The novelist with admirers



"Being a farmer myself, I know the difficulties of the peasants," he says. His lifestyle too reflects this identification with his ordinary, everyday characters. He admits that he was influenced by Karl Marx in his initial years, but gradually the Marxism gave way to Gandhism. He says he has outgrown ideological commitments, but still thinks in terms of Gandhian philosophy.

At the same time, the realism in his writings has become increasingly tempered with romanticism. Confesses Thakazhi: "The Kuttanad that I used to know has changed and the working class has become more affluent." Which is why, perhaps, he has now focused on the middle class. He is now working on a novel set in this milieu and it promises to be different from all his earlier works.

In keeping with his simplicity, he attributes his success to his wife, Kamalakshi, whom he fondly calls Katha. It was she who inspired him to write and who looked after him as he laboured at his desk. As Katha herself says: "His dedication to his work has got him the award." At 73, Thakazhi has no more ambitions but to continue knitting his tapestries of life and death and injustice, enriched and made unique in the hands of a master weaver.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

EXTRACT

"Do you know why the sea goes dark sometimes ? That is when the anger of the goddess of the sea is roused. Then she would destroy everything. At other times she would give her children everything. There is gold in the sea, child, gold," Chakki said.

"Purity is the great thing. Purity. The strength and the wealth of the fisherman lie in the purity of his wife."

"Some Kochumuthalais with neither character nor decency defile the seafront. Low-caste women come from inland to help at the curing yard and sift the fish. They do not understand the purity of the seafront. They are not the daughters of the sea goddess. But it is the fisherfolk who pay for their deeds."

...Then with the utmost seriousness Chakki gave her daughter forewarning. "You are no longer a girl, but in the full bloom of your youth. Kochumuthalalis and young reckless fishermen with neither morals nor character will stare at your bare breasts and eye with lecherous eyes."

Karuthamma shuddered. That was exactly what happened in the shadow of the boat. Karuthamma's aversion for what happened was perhaps something she had inherited. If anyone stared at her bare breasts, it was not befitting the honour of the daughters of the sea goddess.

"My child, you must not be the cause of the ruin of the seafront."

—from *Chemmeen* (1962)

This wide-open sea contains ev- thing, my child. Everything. Why do think all the men who go out there come back safely ? It is because of the women at home who live clean lives. Otherwise the currents in the sea will overpower them up. The lives of the men are in the hands of the women on shore," Chakki continued.

It was not the first time that Karuthamma had heard those senti- ments. Wherever four fisherwomen gathered, one heard the very words. But was it wrong to have laughed at Pareekutti ? She had not yet been married with the life of a fisherman. When she had such a life to guard, she should guard it with the greatest care. She knew how it had to be done. No one need teach a fisherwoman that.

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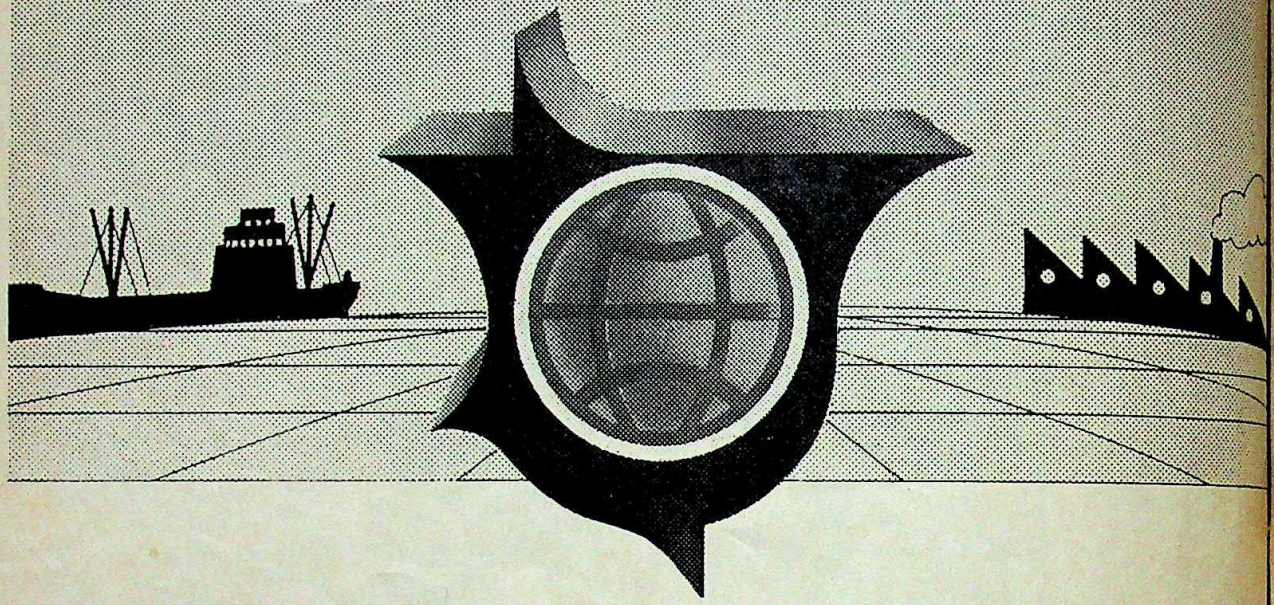
USHA MARTIN



No.1 in wire ropes.

And that's just part of the story.

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The story began in 1960 when Usha Martin entered into a collaboration with *Martin Black of U.K.* This marked a major step for the manufacture of steel wires and wire ropes in the country.

Since then, Usha Martin has come a long way. It has grown into a large diversified engineering conglomerate with an annual turnover exceeding Rs. 5,800 lacs.

Today, in addition to steel wires and wire ropes, Usha Martin also manufactures a wide range of wire rods and wire drawing and allied machines incorporating the latest technologies from world leaders.

Wires and Wire Ropes Division, Ranchi

Established in 1962, the Division manufactures the widest range of steel wires and wire ropes in the country. The fact that its products are well established in over 30 countries — speaks for itself.

Few facilities have such wide ranging capabilities under one roof in the world today.

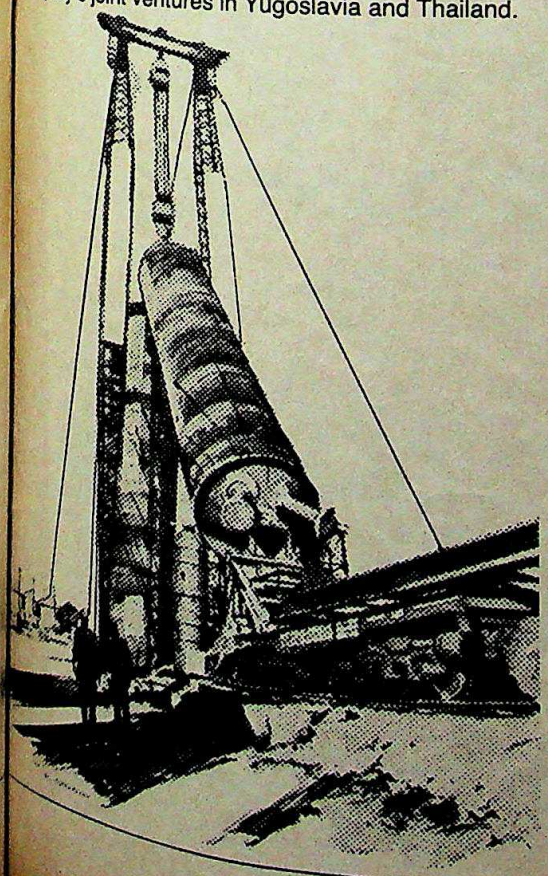
Special Products Division, Ranchi

This Division manufactures PRE-STRETCHED WIRE ROPES in collaboration with *Bruntons (Musselburgh) p.l.c. of U.K.* to meet the country's defence requirements.

Stemming from the special demand of the Second Hooghly Bridge at Calcutta, manufacturing facilities for PARALLEL WIRE STAY CABLES were established for the first time in India in collaboration with *BBR Ltd.* and *Stahlton AG of Switzerland* and *Simonbuild Ltd. of U.K.*

Machinery Division, Bangalore

This Division commenced manufacture of wire drawing and allied machines in collaboration with *Marshall Richards Barcro, U.K.* in 1975. It supplied a major portion of the plant required for the Company's joint ventures in Yugoslavia and Thailand.



Recent collaborations with *De Angelli of Italy* and *Hi Draw Engineering Ltd. of U.K.* will enable this Divison to manufacture equipment incorporating state-of-the-art technology.

Wire Rod Mill, Jamshedpur

Set up in 1979 with an annual installed capacity of 50,000 metric tonnes, this was the country's first rolling mill with controlled cooling facilities and an entirely automatic process for handling billets, cooling and coiling. Subsequently, it entered into collaboration with *Ovako Ay Ab of Finland.* Its wide range includes wire rods of cold heading quality steel and stainless steel wire rods.

COMPANIES PROMOTED BY USHA MARTIN

- **Usha Alloys & Steels Ltd.**
- **Usha Breco Ltd.**
  — in collaboration with British Ropeway Co. Ltd., U.K.
- **Usha Ismal Ltd.**
  — in collaboration with CCL Systems Ltd., U.K.

JOINT VENTURES ABROAD

- **Unis Usha Steel Ropes Factory,** Yugoslavia
- **Usha Siam Steel Industries Ltd.,** Thailand

100% Export Oriented Unit, Ranchi

To cater to the country's offshore operations and increasing overseas demand, this unit is being set up to manufacture 3000 metric tonnes per annum of CABLE LAID SLINGS, CUSTOM-BUILT LARGE DIAMETER WIRE ROPES and STRANDS. It is scheduled to commence operations by the end of the current year.

Technical excellence has undoubtedly played a major role in Usha Martin's success. Yet, this would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of a team of professionals and skilled workers operating in a cordial environment with uninterrupted operations sustained through captive power.

The quest for growth continues. To meet the challenges of the coming decade, Usha Martin is currently implementing a major scheme of modernisation at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,200 lacs. The future, thus, holds promise of further growth and prosperity.

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It pays to go with the leader.

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CALCUTTA

Wiping Out History

The General Post Office (above) (right from top) the high court, C Collectorate and Metcalfe Hi slated for demolition

CALCUTTA: the name is not calculated to bring on visions of urban grandeur and beauty. And indeed, from its unplanned beginnings to its far from orderly present, the city has always showed a chaotic juxtaposition of the rural and the grandly urban, prompting the English visitor Lord Valencia to remark, circa 1800, that "Calcutta is a village of palaces." The village has endured, but the palatial buildings of the city's heyday as the political and commercial capital of British India seem destined to vanish. A number of the architectural landmarks that survived decay in the city's heart, Dalhousie Square (hence renamed Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bag) are now proposed to be partially or completely demolished to make way for high-rise structures.

Last fortnight, the state Public Works Department Secretary S.M.Murshed disclosed that the state Government was even planning to pull down a portion of the Calcutta High Court, one of the oldest court buildings in Asia, to create office space for its burgeoning number of functionaries. Meanwhile the Public Works Department is going full steam with its plan to demolish all but the facade of Dalhousie Square's oldest office building, the Calcutta Collectorate, to house a 14-storey office complex. The Central Posts and Telegraphs Department has equally grandiose plans: the rear of the old Imperial General Post Office which dominates Dalhousie Square with its silver dome and majestic neo-classical columns is to be completely demolished for the usual multi-storeyed story.

With that, a unique skyline that could make a strong claim to beauty seems set to more closely approximate the reality on the ground. And these proposals, the city's conservationists suspect, may just be the precursors of many more growing in the secrecy of government fi first phase of Calcutta's developm place along the Laal Dighi—late Dalhousie Square—and by d this area, says the ex-curator of t toria Memorial and president of t ety for the Preservation of Archi terials and Monuments of C Nishith Ray, the city's architectur tessence would be lost. As it is, su state governments have not bot preserve even such historic build St John's Church, which dates b couple of decades of the city's foun Charnock's death.

Fuelling the conservationists the future of Dalhousie Square is that most of the property in belongs either to the state or Government. Both are desperate space in the heart of Calcutta's district. Most of the state Gove 600-odd secretariat employees stance, are housed in Writers'

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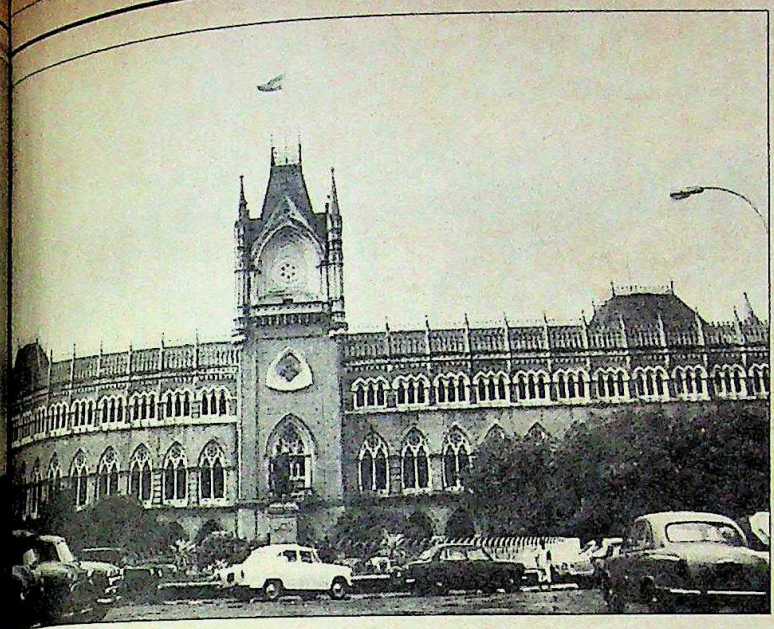

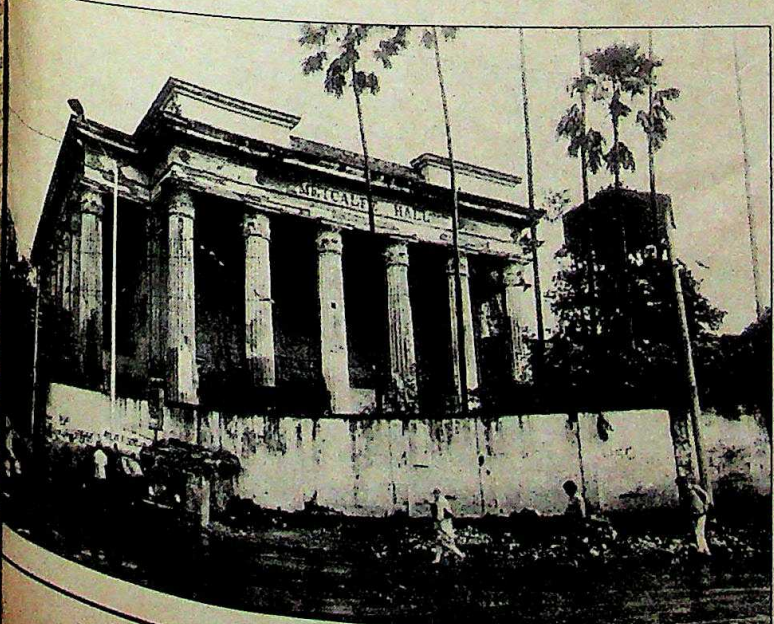

which on paper has 50 square feet for every employee. But much of this space is in the form of corridors, staircases and a meeting hall, so that many lower level employees wind up having to sit on benches in the corridors.

There is no refuting the pressing need for governmental and other office space. But what many concerned conservationists wish to demonstrate is that need is not necessarily antagonistic to conservation of the city's architectural masterpieces. R.M.Kapoor, director of the Times of India Research Foundation's Urban Studies Centre argues that a more rational use of the existing space in the area could mitigate the shortage. He has a strong point. At present the historic Metcalfe Hall and adjoining buildings on a three-acre site on Church Lane, which was once the old Imperial Library is being used as nothing more than a stationary dump.

"Nothing can justify the low-priority use of such magnificent old buildings in the heart of the city," says Kapoor. But the instances of just such inefficient use are legion. The former Government Press at Kiron Shankar Roy Road is being used to store government publications, while the old Currency Building has been walled up internally to create godown space and tiny office cubicles. Another case is that of the 10-acre property in the Posta Bazaar area, the Old Mint, currently being used as a silver refinery.

By shifting low priority users and erecting a few new buildings, feels Kapoor, the space shortage could be easily overcome. That proper redevelopment of the area is possible was shown recently by the Calcutta Port Trust's decision to demolish the unused jetties and warehouses on Strand Road. The free land will now be used for expanding the circular railway and building a new north-south expressway, while the surplus land will be used to put up a few office buildings.

The Central Government's bureaucrats seem to have seen the wisdom of this argument. The more daunting task seems to be to convince the state's Public Works Minister, Jatin Chakraborty, who is notorious for his antipathy towards anything that smacks of excessive cultural sensitivity. He first shot into prominence by banning pop singer Usha Uthup from performing in a government-controlled hall. He has also been replacing statues of the colonial era with those of revolutionaries. And if these statues commissioned by him are anything to go by, beauty is not guaranteed victory in the battle to preserve Calcutta's architectural heritage.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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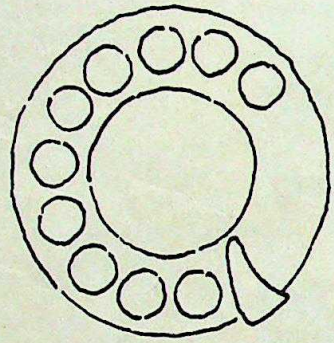
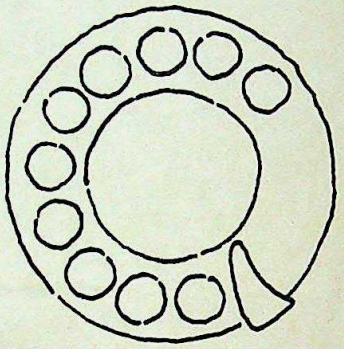
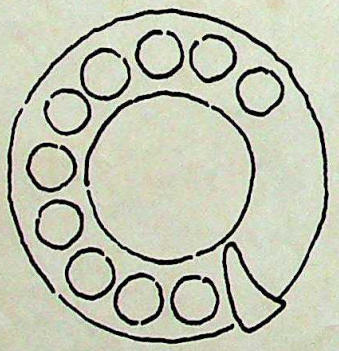
If you think compute
we have one that's as ea
And just as indispensab



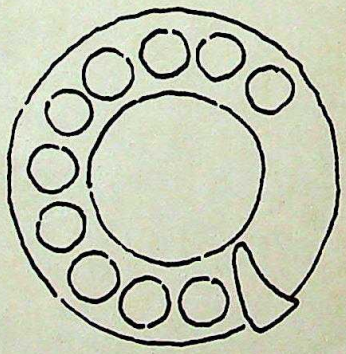
The Chi² is on your desk.
You switch on 'Power'.



You unwrap a diskette.
Looks like a 45 rpm record.



Instantly, the screen's
covered with rows and columns.



You type in 'Years' and 'Sales',
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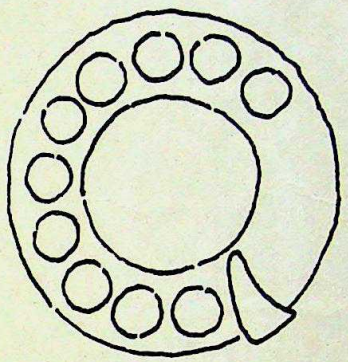
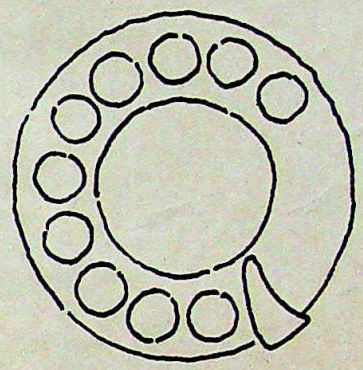
complicated, use as a telephone.



Suddenly, the screen is alive By itself! "Today's date?"



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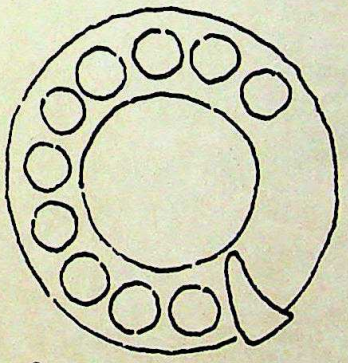

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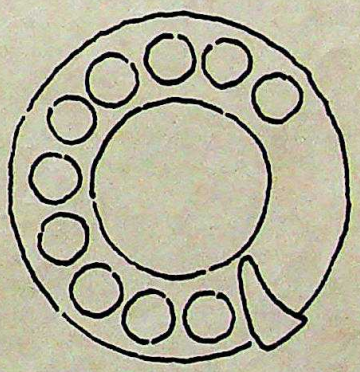

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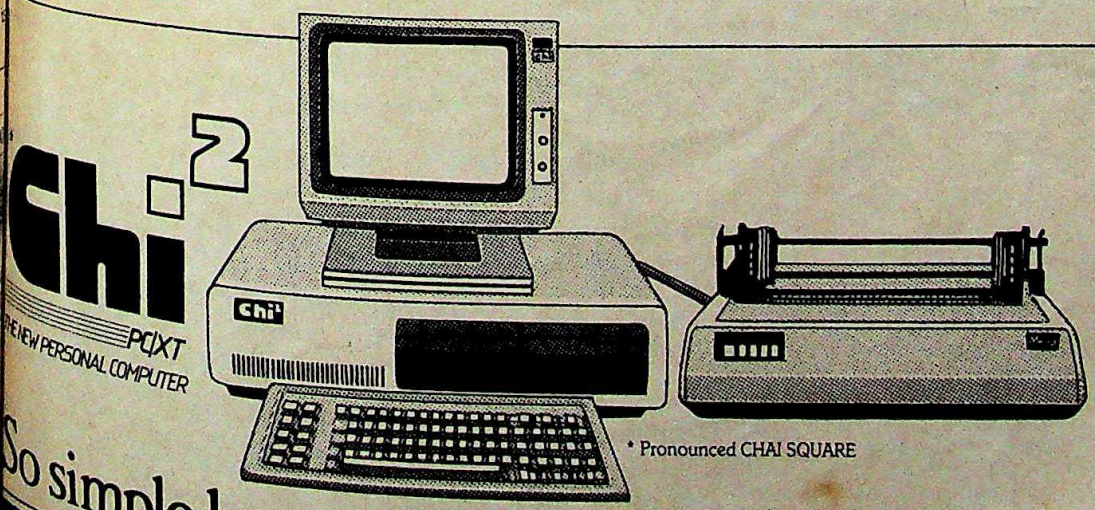

* Pronounced CHAI SQUARE

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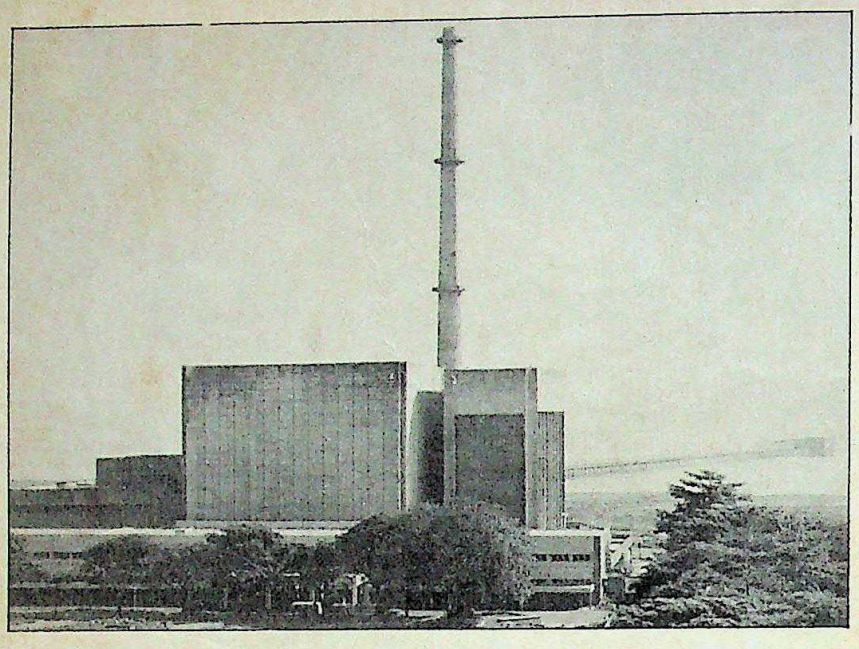

Dhruva reactor block: indigenous e

DHRUVA

Nuclear Landmark

IT WAS just two days after the 40th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On August 8, at 2.42 a.m. India's first completely indigenous nuclear reactor, the 100 MW Dhruva went critical. Exulted Raja Ramanna, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, on hearing the news in Delhi: "The scientists have achieved a major landmark in the country's atomic energy programme." Dhruva, he claimed, would be the largest research reactor in the world. Besides providing a better understanding of nuclear power plant operations, necessary in view of plans for 500 MW reactors in the country's energy future, Dhruva will also provide radioisotopes that will have uses in industry and bio-technology.

But that is not all that Dhruva implies. The reactor will be able to produce some 30 kg of weaponsgrade plutonium a year, assuming that it works at full capacity. This, by rough calculations would be good for up to 4 to 5 nuclear bombs—if India chose to use it all to make them. And since Dhruva is completely Indian-made it is not subject to regulation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In contrast, the fuel used for the Pokhran explosion in 1974 is believed to have come from the Cirus reactor built with Canadian help. As a result Canada broke all nuclear ties with India.

Officials are, however, tending to downplay this aspect of Dhurva. A senior scientist involved with the construction of the reactor said Dhruva would provide only about twice the amount of plutonium that Cirus produces, and added that all of it would be used for research purposes. And said K. Subrahmanyam of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis: "The talk about bombs is beside the point whether bombs are made or not is a political decision. The plutonium from Dhruva will be important, however, as starter fuel for the 500 MW fast breeder reactor envisaged for the future."

But the salient difference between Dhruva and the five other reactors at Trombay: Apsara, Cirus, Zerlina, Purnima I and Purnima II—all built with British or Canadian assistance—is that "it has been totally conceived, designed and built by our own engineers and has given us fresh confidence in our capabilities, " says Bhaba Atomic Research Centre (BARC) Director P.K. Iyengar. "Technical features have been modified by our experience with the nuclear power programme, as in the fuelling machines and in separating the moderator from the coolant for better safety. It has added features such as the ability to make fuels for the 500 MW reactors. "

Besides its priority role as a testing ground for the larger reactors of future, Dhruva is expected to increa the production of the isotopes Iod 131, Chromium-51 and Molybden 99, which are useful in medical diag sis and therapy. It will also help prod isotopes like Iodine-125 which are pr ently imported. For the pure scientis BARC the reactor will help in fund mental research with its neutron be which sustain the fission chain in reactor core.

Like all thermal nuclear reacto Dhruva is fuelled by natural urani which in turn will produce plutonium the fuel for the second-generation breeder reactors. But it will take tim do that. The first of the fast bree reactors is nearing commissioning Kalpakkam near Madras, and initi the spent fuel from the Rajast Atomic Power Station will be re cessed at the special plant at Tarap plutonium and used in Kalpakkam.

When it was code-named R-5 1975 the plan was to commiss Dhruva as the fifth reactor at Tromb But Purnima II , which uses Urani 233 as fuel was commissioned earlier is intended to match the long-ra programme in which thorium is to converted into Uranium 233 and use fast breeder reactors. In spite of Dhruva's delay has been useful as scientists have been insisting on ma mum safety in plant operations. separation of the moderator and coolant by design changes was one step to maximise safety.

Although the Rs 75 crore spen Dhruva is quite a large sum, Iye emphasised that it was still economic as buying one of a similar kind on t international market would cost mo than $ 200 million (Rs 243.2 crore)

Another important feature hi lighted by the building of the reactor w the capability of the engineering ind try. While many major compone were made in-house at the central wo shops of the BARC, the fuelling machi came from the Walchand Industries Larsen & Toubro and the heat exche ers from Bharat Heavy Electricals The commissioning of Dhruva is dawn of a new era of research that help determine whether the new MW reactors will perform better at turn of the century than the Tara Rajasthan and Madras atomic po stations of today.

—AMARNATH K. ME

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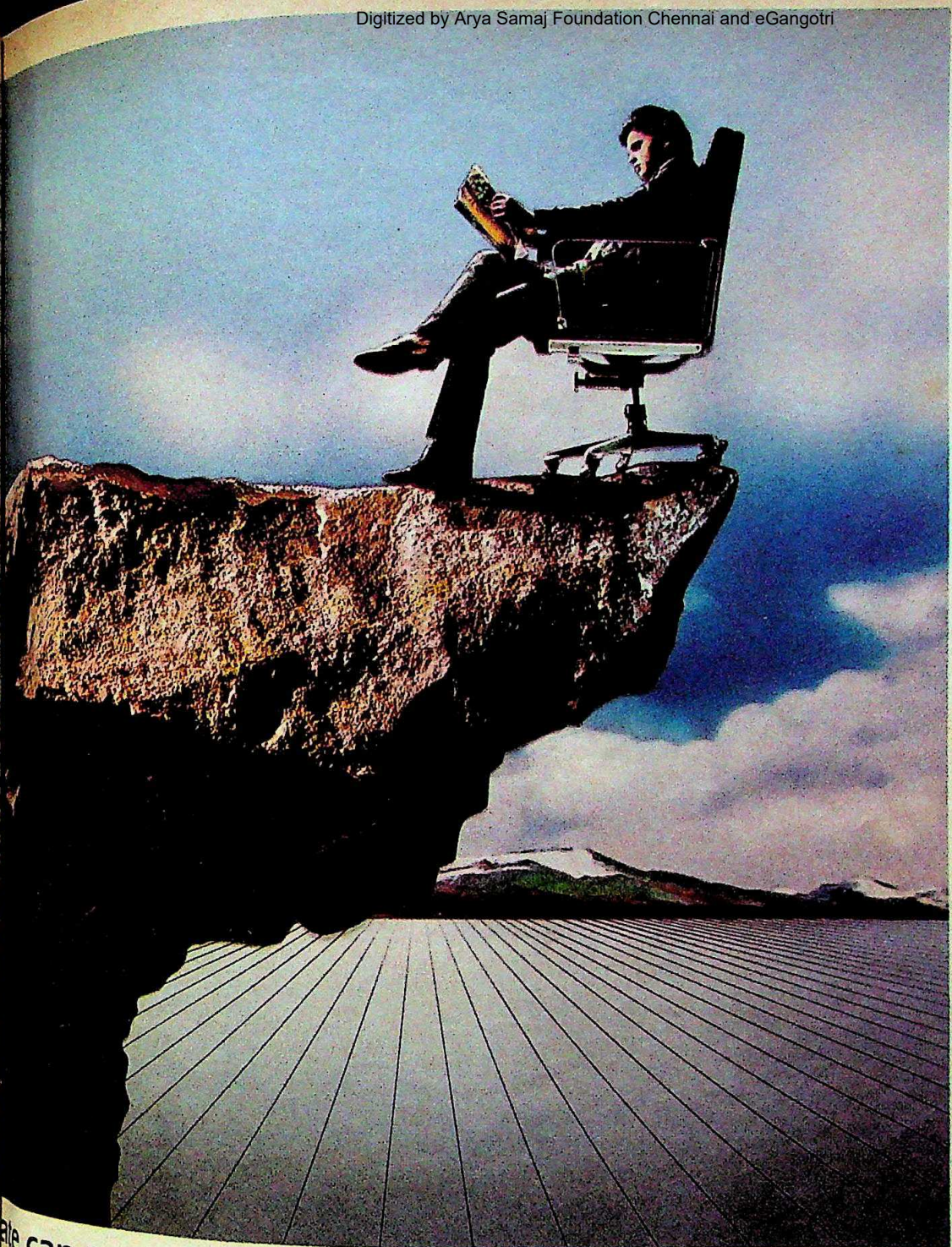

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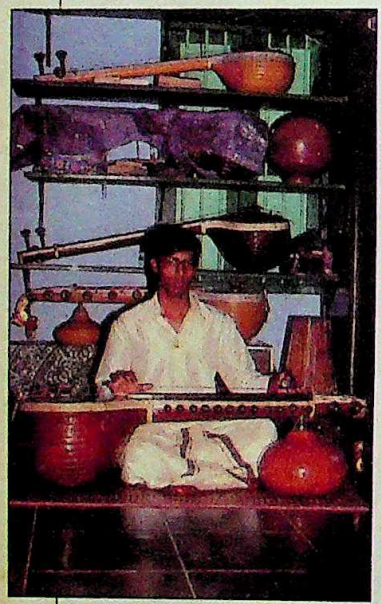
◆ The first birds chirped in their nests, the sun rose gently over the city of Madras and 18-year-old **Ravi Kiran** placed himself before the *gottuvadyam*—a large veena-like instrument—at the Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Adyar. The next day, as the city again yawned and stretched itself to life, Ravi was still there—playing on, possessed by some divine inspiration. During the magical 24 hours, as hundreds of people found themselves drawn to the temple, Ravi did not get up even once, eating and drinking nothing except three sips of milk. "I did not do this as a challenge or to create a record. It was done purely as a rendition to God and out of an inner call," said Ravi who already has a doctorate in music and will participate in the Festival of India in France in September. Ravi has always been a wonder kid: at two, he could identify all the 72 ragas in Carnatic music; at five, he gave his first public performance as a vocalist and at eight, he picked up the *gottuvadyam*, one of the few people alive who know how to play the ancient instrument.



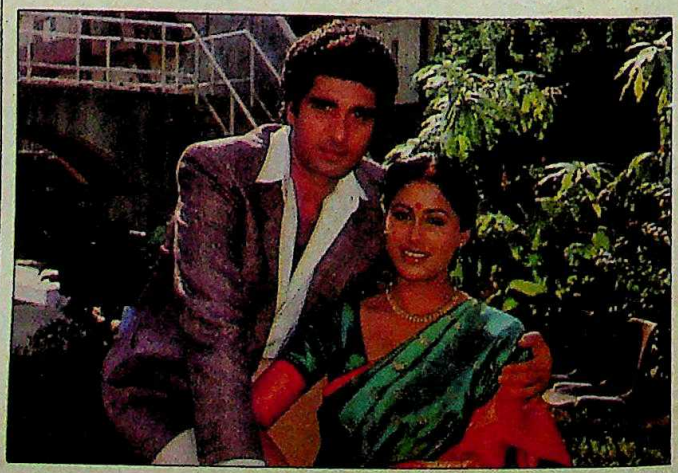
Ravi playing the *gottuvadyam*: record-breaking devotion

Sushma: Benegal's new find

◆ It was a crowded cocktail party but he spotted her at once, in the corner, behind the clutch of Bombay's glamorous admen, nimbly holding on to her glass. "Wonderful," muttered **Shyam Benegal** and walked right up to **Sushma Prakash**. A few hors d'oeuvres later, Sushma had been signed on to play the central role in Benegal's latest film *Trikal*. Set in balmy Goa, it deals with pre-liberation attitudes and customs and Sushma plays Ana, the granddaughter of Leela Naidu. "I knew I could face the cameras," said the fresh, young heroine who's also done a bit-role in Govind Nihalani's *Aaghat*. Now, Sushma may feel great to have found a grandma like lovely Leela, but if she looks closely at her palm, she may find something even more exciting: the strong line of success that most of Benegal's discoveries have.

◆ **Smita Patil** and **Raj Babbar**—the husband of another woman—got married. *Tut, tut.* Smita Patil and Raj Babbar got married two years ago. *Tut, Tut, tut.* Well, as a wise man said: "Polygamy is having one spouse too many, monogamy is the same." Last month, Raj and Smita however decided to drop the pretence and bare all. "A lot of things are not easy to understand," said brave new bride Smita in a magazine interview, ripping the shroud off her five-year-long secret affair. "Besides, I'm not worried about society's hostile glance." While their marital status has changed, nothing else has—Raj and Smita continue to be full-time st part-time partners and m amazing of all, with magnanimous consent Raj's other wife Nadira. S he simply: "I fell in love w both of them and marr them." After all, a spouse the spice of life.

Raj and Smita: the reception after the wedding



◆ What does a rich, beau ful and famous American —not to mention 24 and gle—do when she goes holiday to the exotic ea Well, **Kerry Kenned** daughter of the late Bobb brother of the famous JFK, a rived in India last month an did something no foreigne has done in centuries. S rolled up her jeans, wave away the limousines an hopped on to a mule—a then she hardshipped it rig through the ancient Mugh route around Kashmir whe the remains of Jehangir buried. That done, curi Kerry craved for more. S got Rajeev Sethi and his A troupe to take her to the rem test of villages where she i isted on seeing it like it w warts and all. Said Sethi: was totally offbeat, noth tourists do."

—Compiled by SIMRAN BHARG

Kerry: fantastic voyage

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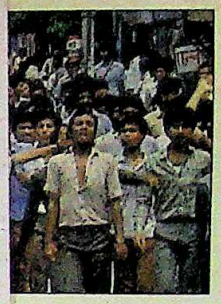

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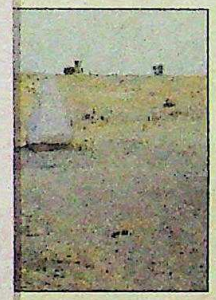
ition is likely to pres-
ems as foreigners are

.....42



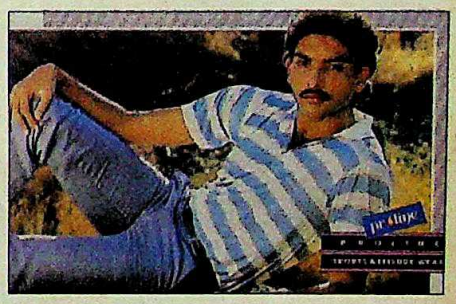
kistan border has
danger zone—with
over for training and
India for smuggling
ian intelligence has
of its slumber.

.....74

Bouquets and Brickbats

Finance Minister V.P. Singh is at the centre of several converging storms over the massive tax raids, the post-budget price rise, his inaccessibility and much else. Undeterred, he is stirring up new storms, and enjoying the prospect. An exclusive report on his style.

BUSINESS 94



The Celebrity Sell

Cricketers plugging motorcycles, editors sporting suitings, television news-readers on their breakfast tastes: celebrity advertising is making new waves in everything from cigarettes to ghee. A detailed report on the new eye-catching trends in marketing.

BUSINESS 108

VOICES.....14
INDIANOTES.....19
COVER STORY
Punjab: Return to Uncertainty 22
CURRENT EVENTS
Assam: Celebration for Peace 42
National Anthem:
Jana Gana Mana 46
Kerala: Point of no Return 51
Alleppey: Storm at Sea 52
Uttar Pradesh: Gift-Wrapped 57
Gujarat: Back to Work 58
Youth Congress(I):
Indecent Exposure 60
Bihar: Isolation Ward 61
Tamil Nadu:
The Waiting Game.....63
Rajasthan: Bigamy Blues.....71
SPECIAL FEATURE
Infiltrators: A Quiet Invasion.....74
SPECIAL REPORT
Rachpal Singh:
Diary of an Extremist 82
LIVING
Squatters: Battle of the Budge 84
TRADE WINDS.....93
BUSINESS
Finance Minister:
Bouquets and Brickbats 94
Hegde & Golay:
Running Out of Time 98
Businesspeak: M.S. Gujral 99
Marble Industry:
Polished Performance..... 100
Kerala: Costly Error 105
Stock Market: Scrip Scrap 106
Advertising: The Celebrity Sell 108
Seventh Plan:
Hope on the Horizon 112
The Economy Monitor 115
The Markets: Turning Tide 119
NEIGHBOURS
Sri Lanka: Tough Talk 120
LAW
Muslim Personal Law:
Controversial Verdict.....128
MEDICINE
Thalassaemia:
The Doomed Children 131
ARCHAEOLOGY
Andhra Pradesh: A Rich Find 137
HEALTH
Neurology: The Better Brain 143
LIFE-STYLE
Merchant Navy: A Sea of Sorrow 146
ENVIRONMENT
Citizen's Report:
Saving the Good Earth 150
EYE-CATCHERS.....156

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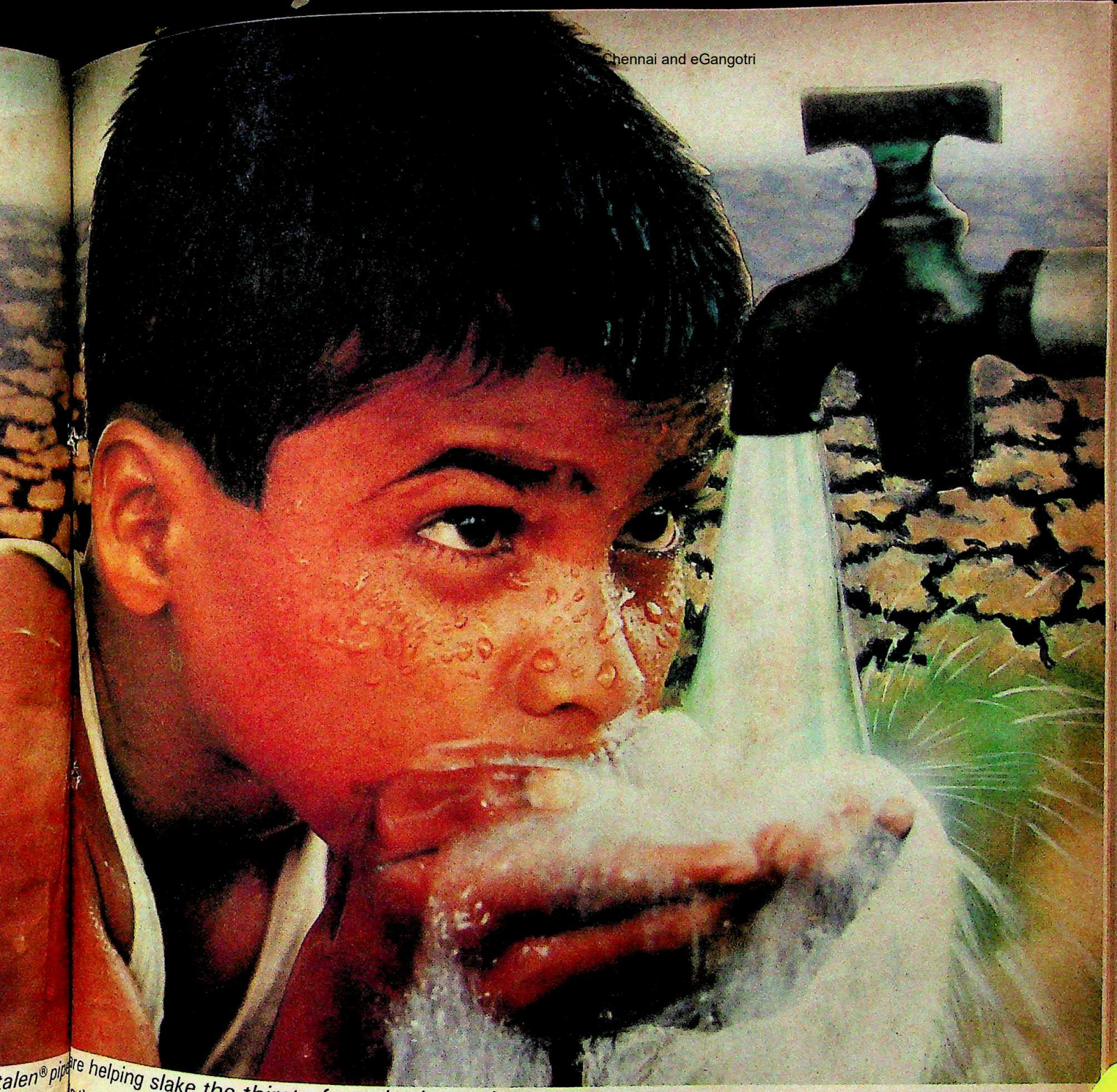

are helping slake the thirst of parched mouths.

In the backwater islands of Kerala, it was a case of water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink. Till a solution was engineered: a Hostalen pipeline laid on the undulating lagoon beds.

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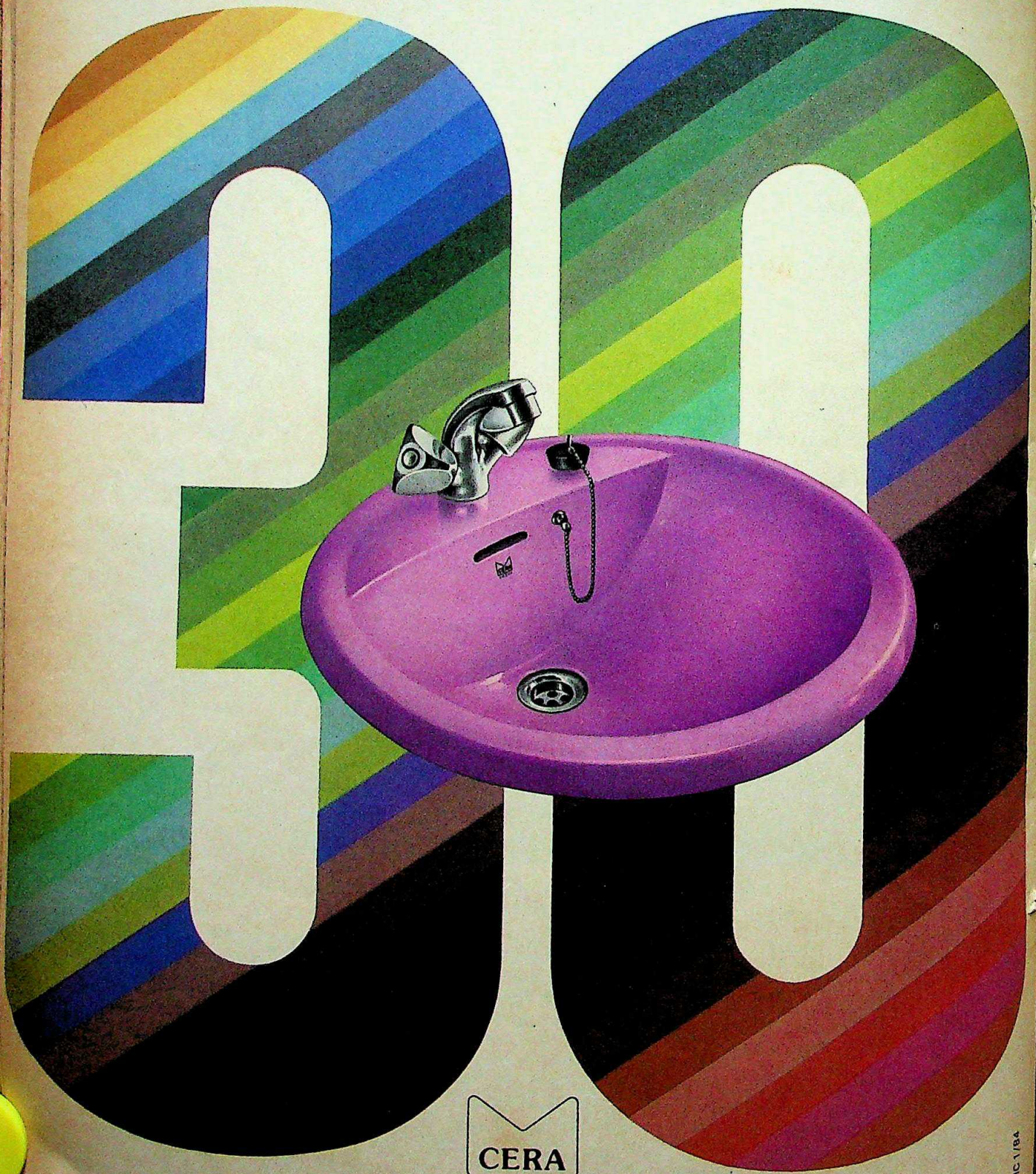

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME X NUMBER 17
FOR THE FORTNIGHT SEPTEMBER 1–15, 1985

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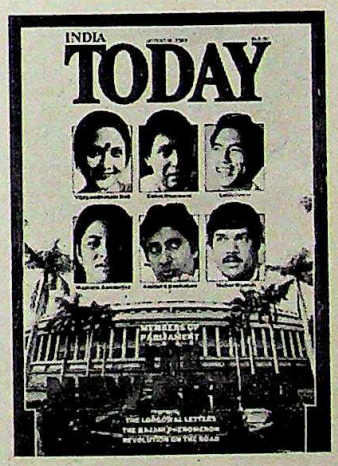
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

LIKE most things that have been around for a while, magazines have personalities, identities that readers come to recognise, to feel comfortable with and, ultimately, empathise with. INDIA TODAY, *which has been in existence almost ten years, has evolved its own personality over the years. The key word is 'evolved', for readers will agree that in this decade there have been ongoing changes even though the basic identity of the journal—as a newsmagazine—has remained constant. Such evolution is as important to a periodical's life and growth as maturity is to human beings. But just as maturity adds to personality, so does evolution to the character of a magazine. Thus, readers of* INDIA TODAY *will not see comic strips or horoscopes or features on cooking in it. What they will see are new news features which diversify the scope of the magazine and give its coverage bigger dimensions.*

To do a better job of projecting visuals and photographs, INDIA TODAY *has been employing more and more colour in its editorial pages. With this issue, it introduces two new regular features. Capitalook will take the reader behind the scenes in New Delhi, to the corridors of power and shed light on processes, events and personalities that otherwise remain out of the public gaze. In every alternate issue, Businesspeak will project the views of a leading business figure on issues of public interest, particularly those which deal with industry, business and the economy.*

Forthcoming issues will present two other occasional features. Changing Scene will look at how institutions and people in the public view have evolved, how they reflect or epitomise change in this country. And Statenotes will give readers a glimpse of trends and events in the towns and villages across the country.

LETTERS



FRESH APPROACH

■ Calendar age does not necessarily equate with political outlook, nor is it necessarily better but the energy and enthusiasm of "the new breed" of parliamentarians (August 31) will vitalise their office and the possibility of progress is greater. They are a star-studded cast of princely descendants, movie stars, bureaucrats and cultural figures, all coming from diverse backgrounds. All 86 of these first time MP's are untried, it is true, but they all, apart from some exceptions must be applauded for the fresh approach they have brought to the tasks before them.

Meerut — RASHMI ROSHAN LALL

COMING OF AGE

■ In your article "The Rajani Phenomenon" (August 31) you have said that Priya Tendulkar is 25 years old. In the previous issue in the Eye-catchers column you had said that she was 27. How is it that she has become younger by two years over a period of 15 days?

Lucknow — UMESH NAGAR

POOR QUALITY

■ B. De Souza's statement that you can't get even a simple door lock of the right quality ("Revolution on the Road", August 31) made me feel happy because at last there was somebody else as well who thought that way. Indian industry may be producing its own nuclear power plants, satellites, computers, etc., but it has failed miserably in producing good quality locks, scissors, electric plugs and the list goes on... And this is only because the consumers accept the trash that is available in the market.

Pune — SANJAY S. DESAI

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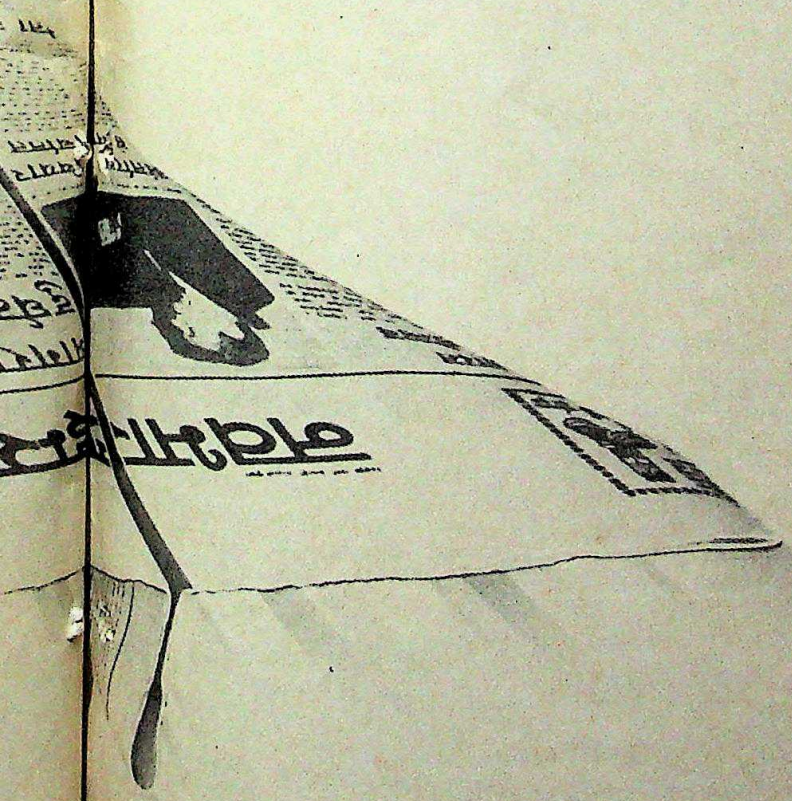
't verything of readership you reach?"



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The quality of readership of any publication is largely dependent on the quality of its editorial content. And this is an area where The Times Group has always been ahead. Its editorial staff list reads like a veritable Who's Who of Indian journalism.

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The Times of India Group of Publications

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ACCORD DISCORD

Your investigative cover story on the Punjab accord ("Breakthrough", August 15) was exemplary. It is a historic agreement which would go a long way in bringing an era of peace and harmony in the ailing state. All one now prays is that the terrorists don't strike again and bring back the problems that have lasted such a long time and cost so many innocent lives. The prime minister should now bring the Punjab economy back on the rails with strong guards to thwart the attempts of extremists who want to derail it.

Delhi SARBINDER SAWHNEY

■ May I remind you that the transfer of Chandigarh to either of the states is not what the citizens wanted. They wanted it to remain a Union territory. Chandigarh does not belong to any particular state because when the compensation for the land acquired was given, it did not come from any particular district's treasury. To have let Chandigarh remain a Union territory and a joint capital of both Haryana and Punjab would have been the best possible gift to national integration.

Chandigarh SAMRITA KAUR GILL

■ Punjab lives in villages, and not in Chandigarh and Amritsar where you have conducted the opinion poll. Bureaucrats, merchants and other exploiters reside in cities while the farmers live in villages. The farmer is the person who has been hit hard by the accord. He is the person who supplied volunteers for the morcha, recruits to the army and he is the person who has been deprived of water. The urbanites who have nothing to lose are happy but ruralites who are the true citizens of Punjab will suffer and thus condemn the accord.

Ludhiana GURBHAJAN SINGH GILL

WISDOM DELAYED

Your Comment, "The Punjab Lessons" (August 15), is one of the best write-ups I have seen on the Punjab problem. The lessons that you have derived are for the politicians to learn from. As per the settlement the most controversial demand pertaining to the Centre-state relations stands referred to the Sarkaria Commission. It would easily have been done much earlier, as the Akalis were always agreeable to have their controversial demands put before a tribunal. This points to the fact that if the Government had to concede to the demands and do what the Akalis wanted then it could have done so long ago and avoided all the riots and assassinations.

New Delhi HARISH JAITAK

RETHINKING

The report on the BJP wanting to return to the saffron flag ("Revamping the Pantheon", August 15) is realistic and objective. The BJP has reached a dead end, and should, without delay, choose between the alternatives of remerging with the Janata Party or returning to the saffron flag and renaming itself the Jan Sangh. There is a growing desire that India should have a rightist, Hindu-oriented alternative to the Congress(I) like the old Jan Sangh, and those who want to give a nationalist Hindu orientation to politics and policies. But A.B. Vajpayee does not reflect their mind. He is backed by people who have come to the BJP from the Congress(I) via the Janata Party.

It is wrong to describe the tussle in the BJP as one between the so-called liberals and the conservatives. These liberals are only opportunists who want a short cut to power.

New Delhi ONKAR SING CHARAK

■ Though one cannot runaway from the fact that introspection is necessary in view of the party's recent electoral defeat, it would be unfair of the BJP to revamp itself into its old egg shell. Any progressive party would like to adapt to the changed times to be better equipped to fight its opponents on their own grounds. But trying to choose a different path primarily because the Congress(I) has found inroads into its vote bank is a fallacy to be dispensed with.

The Indian voter looks up to an alternative not because of the ideology a party adopts but because of the poor performance of the ruling party, as has been demonstrated in the '77 and '80 elections. In India a secular party will win at the hustings always because the Hindu voter is generally not fundamentalist. Kudos to A.B. Vajpayee for standing up to the hardliners, though it would be better if he put his foot down more forcefully.

New Delhi NISHA KAPOOR

LOOPHOLES

Your explicit account of a shocking tale "In Cold Blood" (August 15) speaks of the escalating crime in the country. The perverse adventurism of the terrorists could have been thwarted had the intelligence wing acted in anticipation of the threatening letter Lalit Maken received a couple of days before. Besides, the brutal assassination in broad daylight pinpoints the apparent loopholes in the style of functioning of the police force.

Hyderabad ZAHEERUL ISLAM KHAN

LOW RETURNS

I don't think anyone would object strongly if fate were to achieve what the financial policemen of the country have not been able to ("Power Tussle", August 15). Peerless claims that investment under their schemes is "highly profitable" and the schemes have been introduced for the "welfare of the public". How far this is true will be evident from the fact that the rate of interest underlying their schemes works out to less than 7 per cent and the free accident insurance cover provided by Peerless to a maximum of Rs 50,000 is available from the nationalised insurance companies to the extent of Rs 1 lakh for an annual premium of only Rs 75.

Delhi RAJAN

STRIP-TEASE

The article "Cabarets: Flooring the Show", (August 15) portrayed the concepts and protests of the people very well. With the incredible flow of money from the Gulf, there has been a hike in inflation in Kerala, which in turn has produced these evils in society. There has been a rapid spread of crude shows at disreputable places. It is ironical to witness these evil happenings in a state like Kerala which is proud of numerous temples that provoke spontaneous devotion even from an atheist.

Kalpetta SARASWATHY GANESH

PRINTER'S DEVIL

Your Trade Winds item "Limited Access" (August 15) says we have booked orders worth Rs 45 crore. This statement is completely false and seems to have been made by you with the malicious intent of harming our interests.

New Delhi RAKESH GANDHI

The figure of Rs 45 crore was a typographical error. There was no malicious intent. The error is regretted.

—Editor

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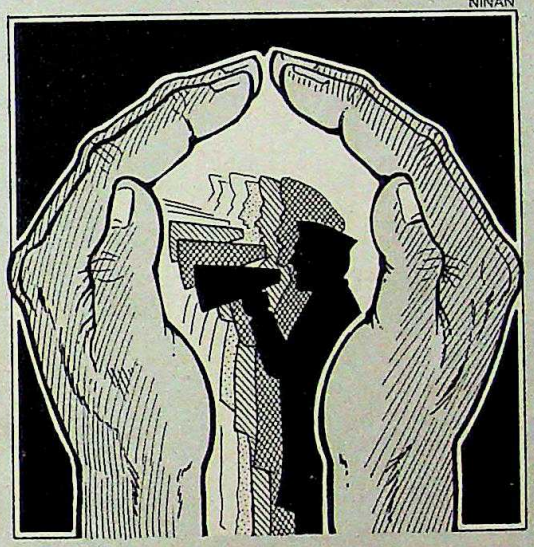
Democracy on Trial

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to go ahead with the elections in Punjab in spite of Longowal's assassination is the only one it could have taken. No one has put the reasoning and justification better than Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi whose words in Parliament bear repetition. He said: "Shall we allow the exercise of the will of the people to be obstructed, frustrated and subverted by the forces of extremism and terrorism? On a correct response to this hinges the fate of the democratic system in India ....How individual parties fare is of little consequence. It does not matter who wins and who loses. What matters is that the lamp of democracy is not extinguished; what does matter is that India wins."


NINAN

The decision is a calculated gamble, one which puts at risk all that has been achieved in Punjab in the last few weeks. But it is an unavoidable one. Any other decision would have put the terrorists in the driver's seat. Any move to delay the elections would have caused the problem in Punjab to fester longer, denied a popular government which alone can take charge of the state's problems and tackle them in the only lasting way—democratically. Any move that seemed to reflect weakness in the face of a terrorist threat would simply have emboldened the terrorists and strengthened their hands further.

It is, of course, easy for those who are not in the firing-line to pass judgements such as these. What matters is that similar affirmation has also come from politicians, from the prime minister to his party colleagues and the Akali Dal, people whose lives are threatened and will undoubtedly be on the line during the election campaign. Intelligence reports confirm that terrorists will do their worst to disrupt the election, that the lives of candidates, their supporters and the public will be endangered, that death will stalk the campaigns. So the decision to go ahead was not one that could have been taken lightly. On the contrary, it reflects courage and a determination to do the right thing.

Yet it is also necessary to add that the Government owes it to the politicians who will fight the elections and the public that will participate to do its utmost to provide security. It is now a truism that nobody can escape the determined killer, and the whole world knows how hard it is to silence these guns of hatred which spit death and despair even in countries where security is far better organised. All this calls for an election with a difference. It calls for an election which must be conducted with less than the usual fanfare. Indian elections are usually festive *melas*. But the Punjab election is being held in more sombre circumstances, in the wake of political assassination and under the shadow of the terrorist gun. It needs to be swiftly and purposefully conducted. And if the polling turnout is lower than usual, it need not be taken for a negation of the democratic process.

The Election Commission rightly frowns on the presence of military and paramilitary forces at election time. But in this one instance, nobody will grudge the political parties or the Government the extra precaution of having these forces out in the streets through the campaign and on polling day. Moreover, in the face of mounting evidence that a number of terrorists have been in camps in Pakistan and have been sneaking back to India in the past few weeks, there will be every justification to put the armed forces on the border on alert against the infiltration of trouble-makers.

Ultimately, however, the threat of violence will be against the candidate, and Government must consider taking extraordinary steps and providing special precautions. There is no reason why, for instance, the major political parties cannot agree to minimise well advertised roadside public meetings, why they should not this time round forego the intimate contact of door-to-door campaigning, why public meetings cannot be held as far as possible in more easily protected public halls or away from potential sniper positions or, at some cost to the political parties, with suitable barricades and protected platforms as is done routinely in the case of VIP's. In the interest of keeping emotions in control, political parties must also accept their obligation to refrain from making communal appeals or raising communal issues.

Longowal's assassination shows that even the presence of gunmen is no guarantee of safety, but the Government will have to very seriously consider providing each candidate with a suitable number of bodyguards who are more than a token deterrent to a would-be killer. After all, the law says that the death of a candidate is cause for the postponement of an election. And having failed to scuttle the accord by killing Longowal, the terrorists cannot be allowed to abort the election through violence.

It is possible, of course, that in spite of all the efforts and the best will in the world, some bullets will find their targets. But it is now a fact that with every killing the terrorist finds himself more isolated from the people whose interests he claims to serve. The widespread abhorrence of Longowal's assassination is evidence of that. Fortunately, terrorism is confined to the Punjab problem, and more and more people of Punjab—both Sikhs and Hindus—want peace and normalcy. It is only when the people of the state develop a vested interest in that peace that the terrorist will be restrained. And that can only come about when the elections have been conducted, when the lamp of democracy burns bright in Punjab.

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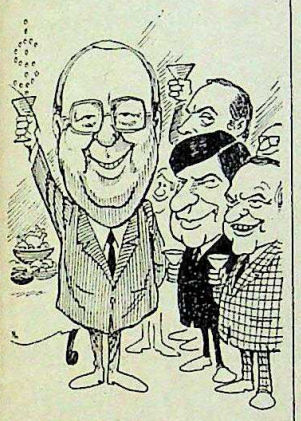
Favoured Few

● In the world of business, where the guessing continues as to who is in and who is out with the Rajiv Government, the ones standing tall just now are Ratan Tata and Dhruv Sawhney, the young chief executive of the Triveni Engineering group and a school and college friend of the prime minister. Both were on the prime minister's guest list for the small lunch that he



threw for World Bank President A.W. Clausen, and word quickly got around that while the finance minister may be observing partial purdah, the prime minister was willing to sup with businessmen on a formal occasion.

Ratan Tata, as it turns out, is also among the few businessmen who have had a private audience with the prime minister. Another is Russi Mody, chairman of Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO). And once again, the message received by the business community is that the Tatas are looked upon kindly by the Government.

This does not, however, mean that the country's leading business house is going to have its own way with the Government. Ratan Tata has been trying very hard to get entry into the telecommunications business, but the Department of Electronics is yielding little ground. Similarly, Russi Mody complained publicly at TISCO's annual shareholders' meeting recently that some of the company's applications for decisions that would involve saving foreign exchange have not been acted upon by the Government for the past year. T.N. NINAN

Collision Course

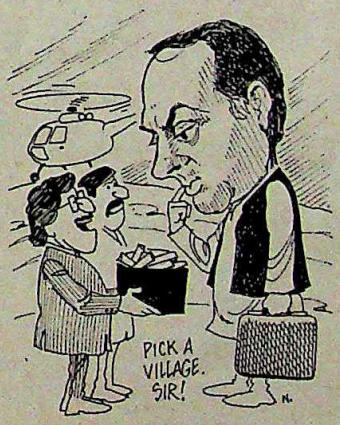
● High-profile diplomacy does have its own peculiar pitfalls as Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari discovered to his discomfiture last fortnight. Bhandari was speeding along the capital's Vijay Chowk, reclining in the back seat of his official car, his mind, no doubt, deeply immersed in some diplomatic tangle or other, when suddenly another car shot across the road. And before anyone could say By Thimpu, the two were entangled in an unholy crunch. A shaken Bhandari emerged indignantly from his car nursing a bloody nose, but ever the polished diplomat, he turned into Sir Galahad when he saw that his automotive adversary was none other than the attractive wife of a fellow foreign service officer. The formalities were quickly dispensed with and everyone went their way. Unfortunately, Bhandari was scheduled to go peacemaking between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan authorities in Bhutan, and was obliged to take along with him a most undiplomatic liability: a patrician nose criss-crossed with strips of plaster. South Block

rumour has it that the lady in question received a flurry of calls from some of her husband's colleagues congratulating her on achieving what they have been yearning to do for some time. Car Seva?

DILIP BOBB

Royal Itinerary

● How does the prime minister select the names and the number of villages he wants to visit during his whirlwind tour of the states? Like his mother, he doesn't depend on the officials of the state Government for the finalisation of his itinerary. Instead, his aides in the Prime Minister's Secretariat collect the names of all the villages forming part of a block or a panchayat. Once the list is collected mandarins at South Block give their opinion keeping in view security requirements. But last month his advisers humourously chose a village named after one of his aides for the visit to Orissa. In res-



ponse to a directive from the prime minister's office, Orissa's resident commissioner in New Delhi supplied a list of 14 villages in Sambhalpur district. When the list landed at the desk of Joint Secretary Mani Shanker Aiyer, he found Georgegarh on the list. Promptly, he called V. George, private secretary to the prime minister, and told him that he was including Georgegarh in the tour programme. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented Rajiv from making it to Georgegarh and the village —not to mention V. George —missed making a footnote in history. PRABHU CHAWLA

Coffee, Tea or Me?

● Minister of State for Railways Madhavrao Scindia formerly used to spend his summer vacations in England in pursuit of sybaritic pleasures such as the Derby at Epsom Down. This summer

was different: the exuberant young minister slogged it on British Rail trains and brought home disposable plastic cups with filters attatched that are used to serve passengers fresh coffee and tea in the finest English tradition. But when he showed the cups to the commercial department of the Indian Railways to be copied for first-class passengers here, the department's officials quickly calculated that each cup would cost Rs 8, thereby sending up the cost of a humble cup of tea or coffee to Rs 10. The aping scheme was shelved, of course, but not before it was decided to provide individual service: first class travellers on Indian trains will henceforth be provided with thermos flasks of hot water with tea /coffee bags, plus a willing bearer to smilingly pour out the required beverage. Scindia, as a result, is now popularly known as the 'coffee, tea or *koi hai*' minister.

SUNIL SETHI

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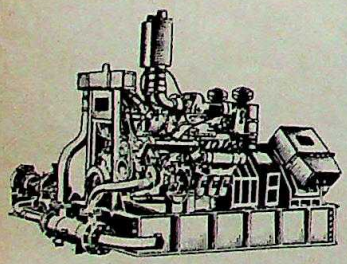

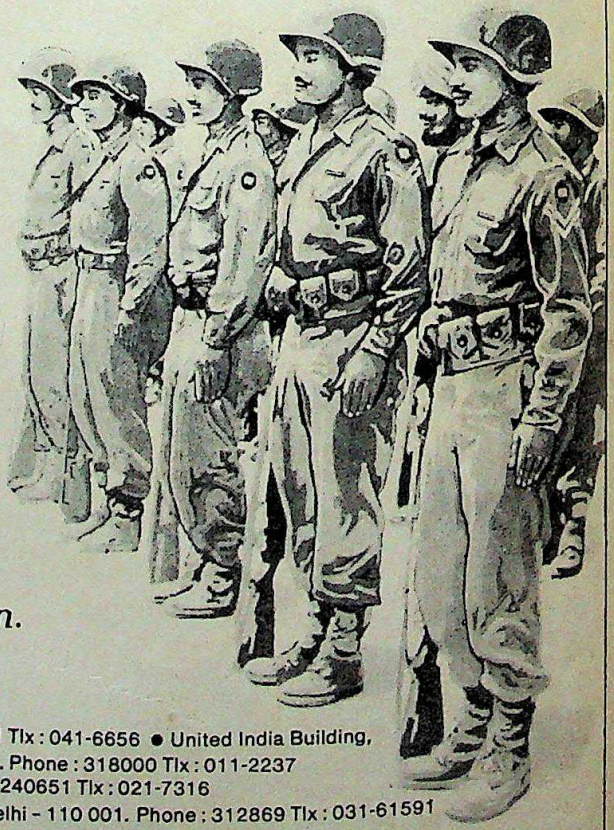

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The Times of India

● *Earlier parties used to be grassroot parties. Now all of them are nominated parties from the top.*
■ I.K. GUJRAL in *The Sunday Observer*

● *I have regained my lost friend.*
■ FAROOQ ABDULLAH about Rajiv Gandhi at a public meeting

● *They (Indians) have a much more fantastic attitude...I think if we live in countries like that long enough and become more Indian in our approach, we would perhaps see things in a different way.*
■ PRINCE CHARLES in *The Sunday Times*, London

● *Doordarshan can perhaps never acquire an Indian personality unless it gives up the identification of India with the newly-emerging middle class and the habit of viewing Indian life through the narrow prism of a middle class outlook.*
■ The P.C. Joshi report on Doordarshan software quoted in *The Telegraph*

● *The smiles on the faces of my leprosy patients and the handicapped inmates is my greatest reward. I value that more than any award.*
■ Magsaysay Award recipient BABA AMTE in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *When you are winning people say you are a good captain and when you are losing you are the worst.*
■ KAPIL DEV in *The Sunday Observer*

● *My purpose is served...I was here to popularise billiards... and in this I feel I have succeeded.*
■ BOB MARSHALL after his defeat in *The Week*

● *If possible, I'll try to re-enter film acting. I haven't yet decided about it.*
■ N.T. RAMA RAO in *Free Press Journal*

● *The impression that is strengthening at every level, and within the Congress(I), is that in order to achieve catapultic growth, the less privileged will be sacrificed to runaway inflation.*
■ ROMESH THAPAR in *Business India*

● *What was wrong in his (Amitabh Bachchan) describing politics as a cesspool? It is.*
■ KHUSHWANT SINGH in *Filmfare*

● *I'm writing puranas, not novels. I'm not interested in becoming a Western novelist.*
■ RAJA RAO in *Society*

● *When I get married, it will be because I want to become a mother. I want to fulfil that part of my womanhood.*
■ ZEENAT AMAN in *Star & Style*

● *I'm very bad in arithmetic, mathematics, accounts and figures.*
■ DEV ANAND in *Showtime*

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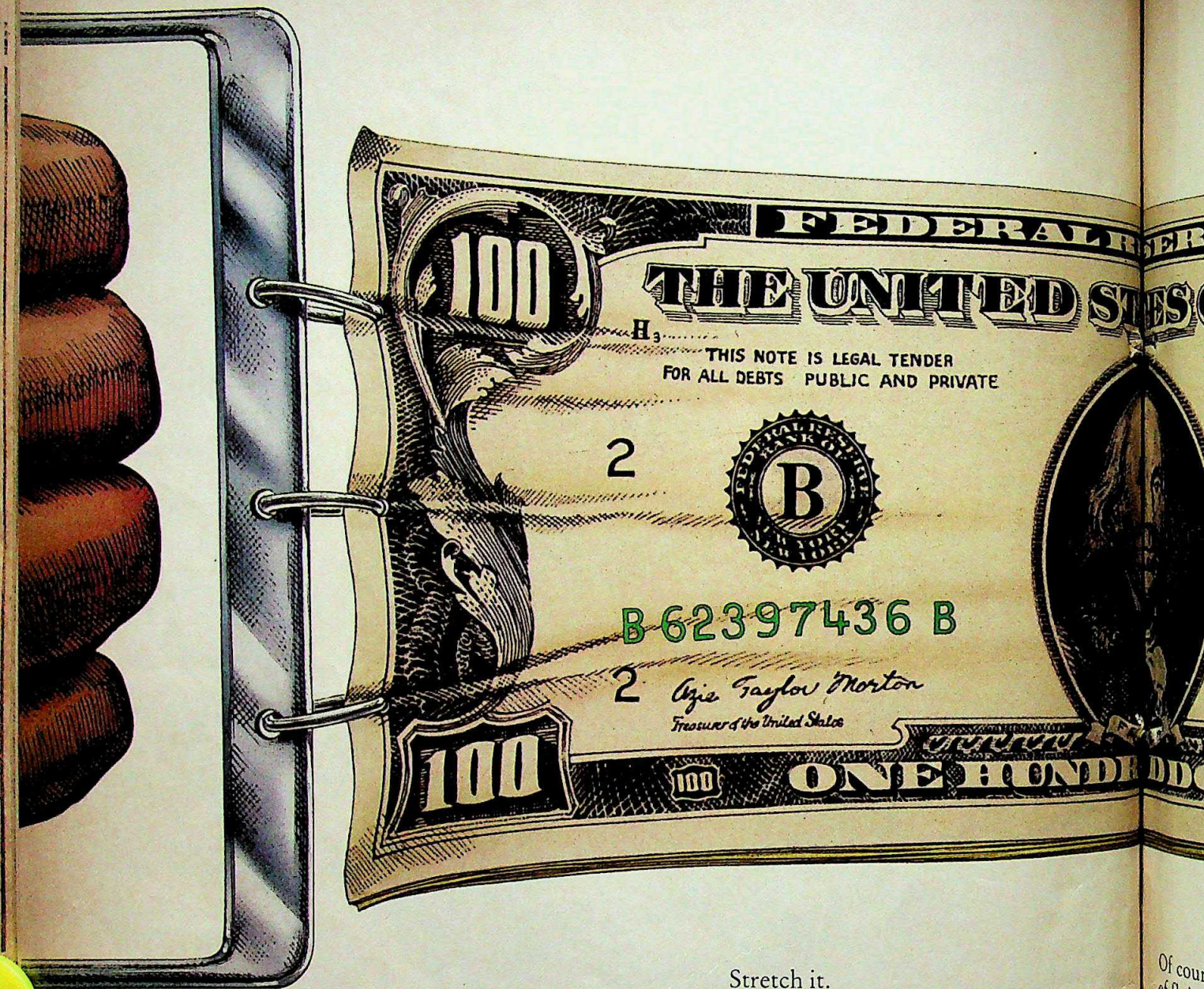

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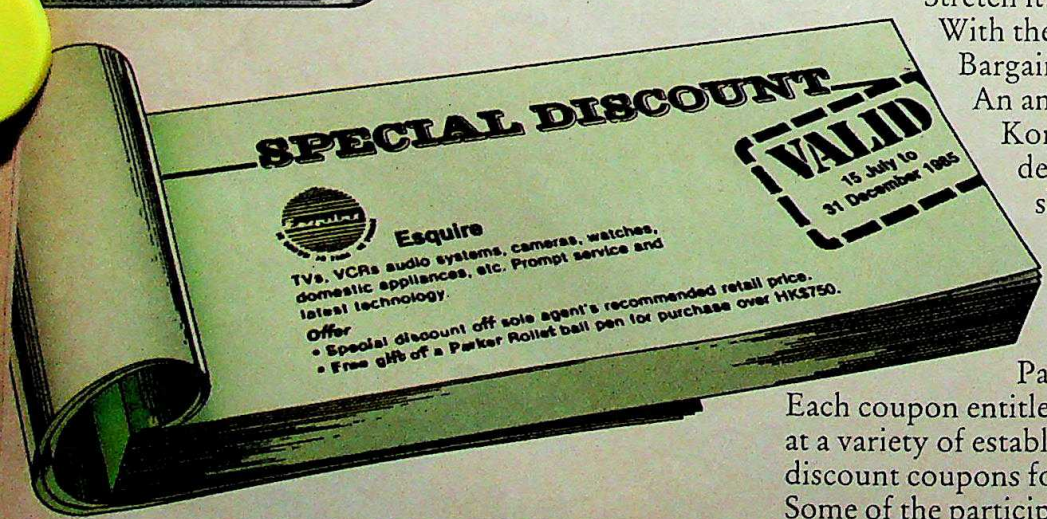

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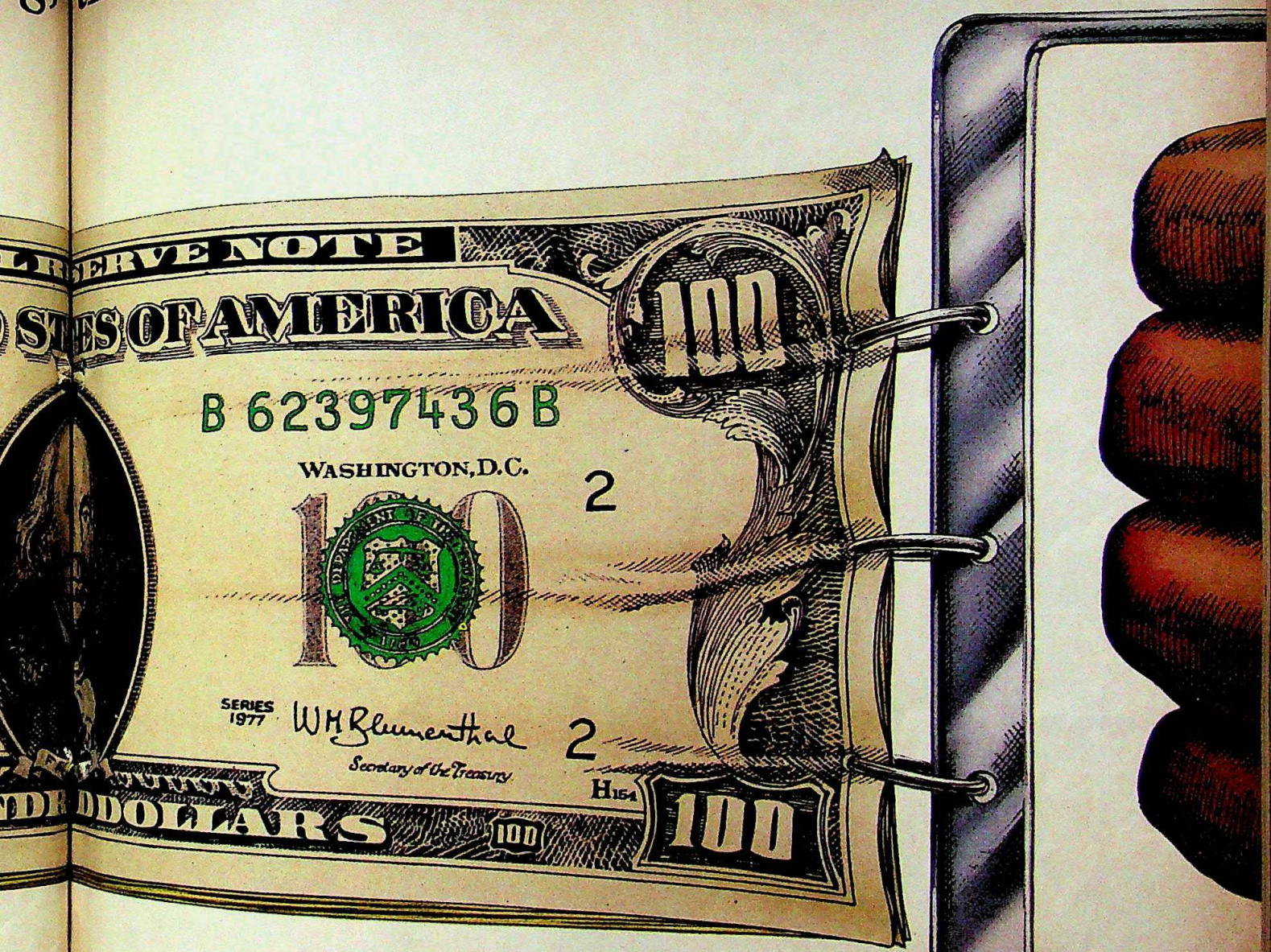

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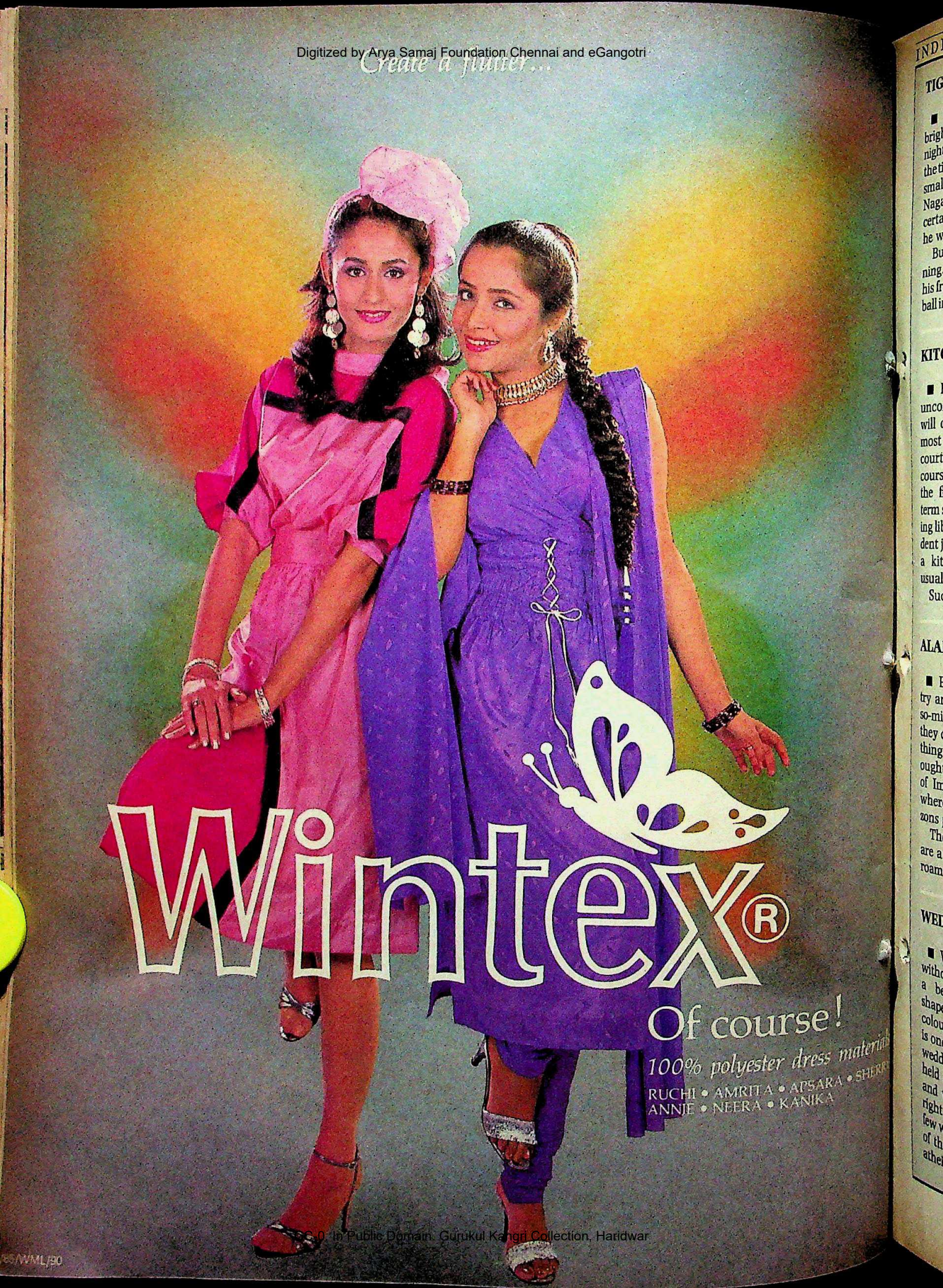

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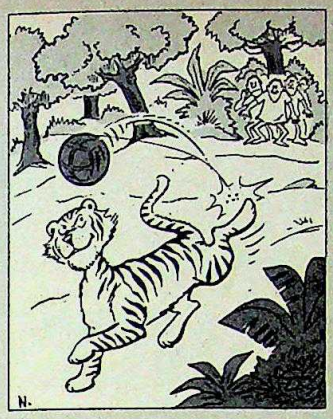
TIGER'S TALE



■ Tiger, tiger, burning bright, in the forests of the night, said William Blake. But the tiger burning bright in the small town of Kalibar in Nagaon district of Assam was certainly not in the forest—he was out in the fields.

But to go back to the beginning. Champak Hazarika and his friends were playing football in a clear patch of ground near the Kamakhya hills when Blake's beloved rushed from the forests and stalked around the field. Of course, the spectator intrusion on the pitch did not go down well with the players, who withdrew to a corner—not the corner where the tiger was—and the standing committee went into session.

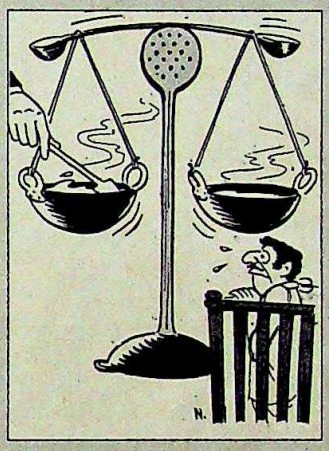
The meeting lasted for 10 minutes and a consensus was reached—Hazarika would bell the big cat. He picked up the football, balanced it on one trembling hand and threw it to the tiger. The tiger sniffed at the offering and slowly dribbled it away into the forest. For a long time the young boys could hear his growls as he tried to score a goal. They were no doubt relieved at having got away but quite a few of them grumbled over having lost an expensive football.

KITCHEN COURT

■ Kitchen cabinets are not uncommon in India and it will come as no surprise to most people that kitchen courts exist in this country. Of course, not a kitchen court in the figurative sense of the term since that would be taking liberties with an independent judiciary, but a court in a kitchen using furniture usually found in a *rasoi*.

Such is the magistrate's court in Varkala, Kerala. It is temporarily in an outhouse and the result is quite excruciating. The august magistrate sits on a chair placed on a slab used for cooking. The lawyers have to sit on hefty wooden planks used for cutting and chopping vegetables. The exhibits have to be put somewhere and they are: in the lavatory, which is presumably not in use.

When confronted with this unsavoury state of affairs by



Marxist MLA Varkala Radhakrishnan, state Home Minister Vayalar Ravi admitted that the court had a what he choose to call a "space problem." He added, however, that the Varkala magistrate's court was first on the list of the 22 courts which needed to be built and for which the Centre's approval had been sought. No longer would the magistrate's friend have to ask him "what's cooking?"

ALARMING AMAZONS

■ Policemen in this country are often under the not-so-mistaken impression that they can get away with anything. But any policeman ought to shudder at the name of Imphal, because that is where the alarming Amazons prowl.

The alarming Amazons are a group of women, who roam the streets of the city

carrying flaming torches looking for drunks. They are temperance maniacs and are taken with great respect by the town. To cut a long story short, the alarming Amazons on their nightly round uttering strange cries, came upon a police officer who had imbibed well but not wisely and was in the process of beating up people in the bazar. The women caught him and for some time he was subjected to rigorous questioning. At one time it was reported that he burst into tears.

Things would have gone quite badly for the gentleman had it not been for a posse of constables led by a deputy superintendent of police, who raided the torture chamber and rescued their erring brother in uniform from a fate worse than drink. The alarming Amazons were let off with an admonition.

WED BY WIDOWS

■ What would India be without its weddings, held in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes? A lot less colourful, that's what. There is one common thread to all weddings and that is they are held in the presence of God and when all the signs are right. But there are quite a few who beg to differ and one of them is a rationalist and atheist from the town of Athur in Salem district of Tamil Nadu.

Last month he celebrated his son's wedding with the requisite gusto. Five hundred widows led the procession, bedecked in glittering polyester and diamonds. The musical accompaniment was given by instruments usually used at funerals and the mournful notes cast an odd shadow. The wedding proper was held at the time of "rahu kalam"—considered to be

the most inauspicious among devout Hindus.

But what really drew approving gasps was the way in which the sacred mangalsutra, the marriage necklace of the bride was blessed—by two expensively-dressed widows—and given to the groom who put it round his wife's neck to cries of "down with superstition" and "stop humiliating widows." In India anything is possible.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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PUNJAB RETURN TO U

FINALLY, it was a terrorist's single bullet that changed it all: the soaring spirit of one man's courage, the painstakingly laid foundation of peace and the wave of relief that after four years of dread had at last begun to filter slowly but noticeably through like a miraculous antidote throughout the troubled state.

Travelling to the assassinated leader Sant Harchand Singh Longowal's cremation in the heart of Punjab last week, the land was verdant with a rich harvest of paddy but faces everywhere were blighted with sorrow. Horror, grief and mourning at the passing of a man of peace were one thing; but the thousands who spontaneously poured into his village gurudwara in district Sangrur to witness his last rites were also there to mourn their own uncertain future.

From far out gurudwaras in Jammu and north Delhi, delegations of Sikhs travelled through the night and half the day to reach the spot on time; there were as many Hindus as Sikhs; and truckloads and tractor trolleys full of simple, unlettered peasants came bringing their womenfolk and children in homage. Gursaran Kaur, a 28-year-old farmer's wife had come all the way from a village in district Gurdaspur about 400 km away. She was unaccompanied by any other member of her family but had joined the local *jatha* which was made up of one person from each family in the village. She had never seen the Sant in her life, "but," she explained, "I had to come because his death is like a death in my own family."

For those first few hours after the Sant's killing, the forces of darkness seemed to be closing in on Punjab again. The gradual build up of euphoria following the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal accord of July 24 appeared to be evaporating fast. And the anguish in people's voices reflected the return of political instability and fear of terrorist violence in the state.

Almost as swiftly and insidiously as the assassin opening fire, came the first discordant signs of strife over a leadership crisis in the Shiromani Akali Dal. For six

Sant Longowal being carried on his last journey: paying the price for peace

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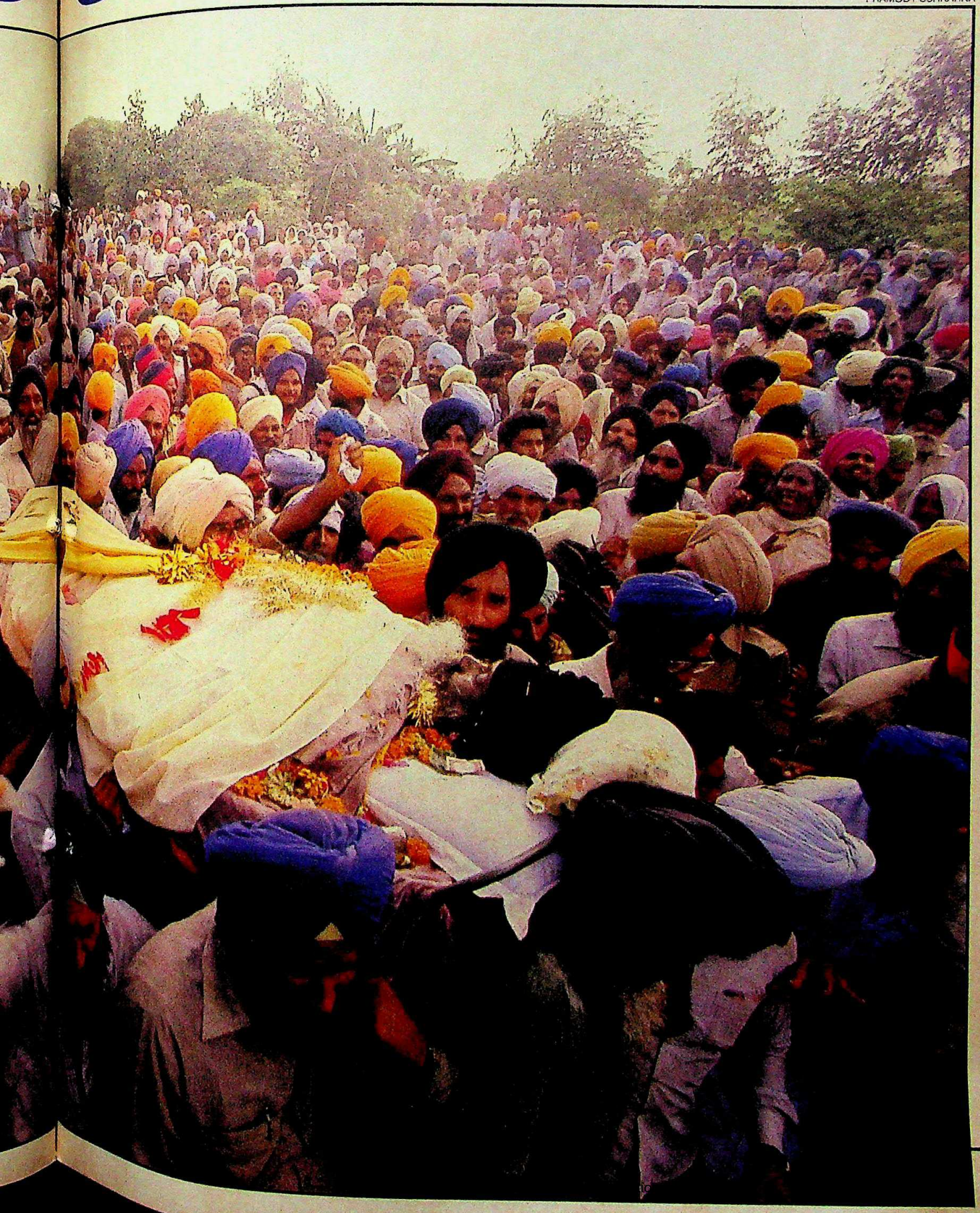
O UNCERTAINTY

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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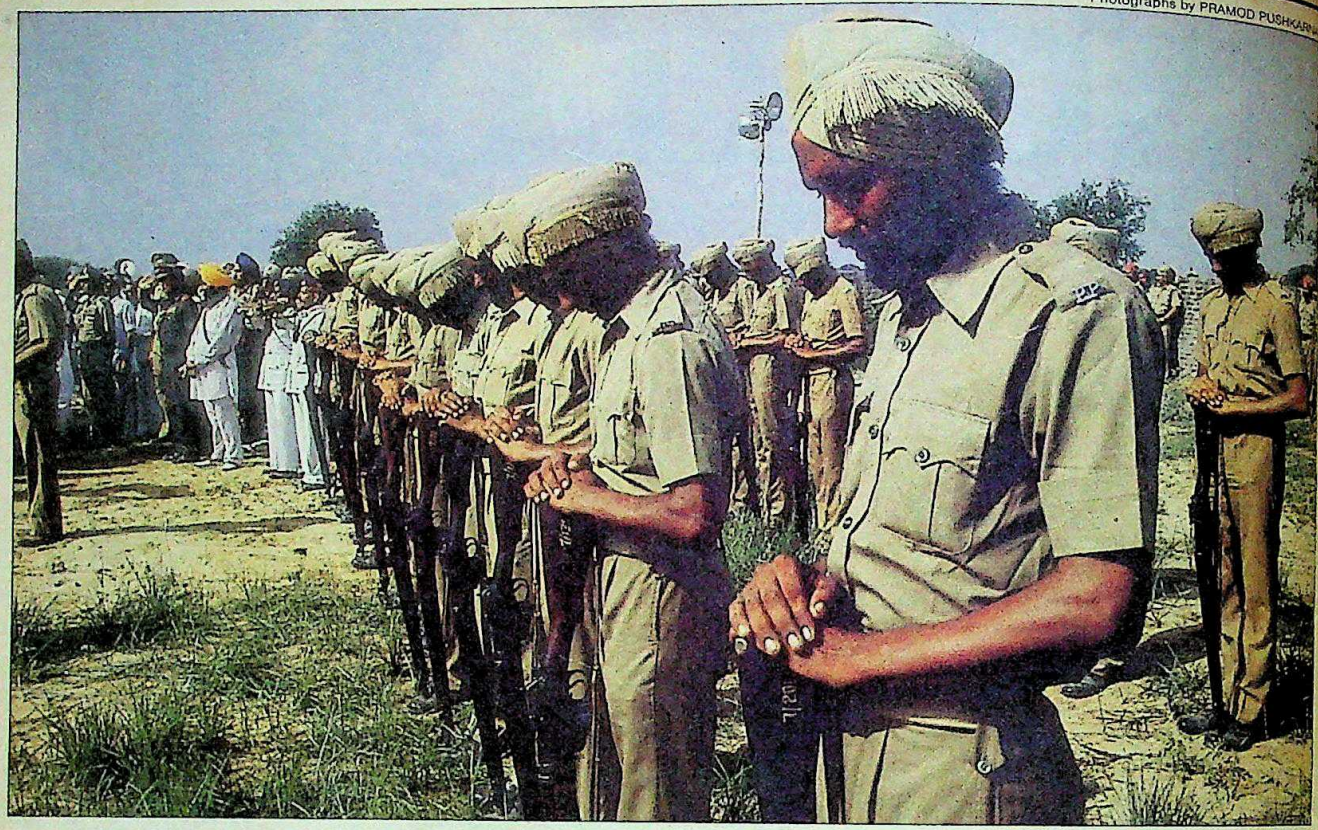

Police guard pays homage to Longowal's passing bier: widespread sympathy

years the Sant had headed the party firmly, steering it through the longest agitation in its history and transforming his own status from puppet chief to paramount dictator whose growing popular appeal, in the end, outshone all other leaders. Hours before his death, he had successfully managed to cement a serious rift in the Akali Dal by skilfully drawing back into the fold two of its most powerful dissenting members, former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal and Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) President Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who had consistently opposed the party accord with the Government and objected yet more strongly to calling an early election in the state.

The Sant's funeral pyre was still burning when the first acrimonious squabble burst out between the two factions over the succession issue. Assembled jathedars came virtually to blows, snatching the microphone in which the *antim ardas* (last prayer) for the Sant had minutes before been recited, and screeching on top of their voices to be heard. One group wanted Jathedar Ajit Singh from Ropar, a political nonentity produced like a rabbit from a magician's hat by the Badal-Tohra faction to be immediatly nominated as ad hoc convenor of the Akali Dal. The other majority faction pushed the tall, stringy, 60-year-old former Union minister for agriculture Surjit Singh Barnala, one of the Sant's closest associates and staunch protagonist of the accord, as the natural heir. Confusion reigned supreme, Badal and Tohra quietly vanished from the scene, and a grief-stricken Barnala fainted and was carried into the gurudwara where he revived after over an hour. The emotional shock, the physical exhaustion as also perhaps the unseemly bickering proved too much for the man who four days later was chosen acting president of the Akali Dal. "I just passed out," he confessed on the eve of his election in Chandigarh. "I had no idea what was going on outside. Our party is still in a dazed condition after the tragedy."

Arun Nehru, Arjun Singh, Balram Jakhar, P.V. Narasimha Rao and G.K. Moopanar at the funeral

An Akali Dal riven by devious alliances and rife with rivalries was only shaken out of its reverie by the Chief Election Commissioner R.K. Trivedi's announcement within 48 hours of Longowal's murder that the Punjab elections would be postponed by merely three days, from September 22 to 25 to accommodate the period of mourning. Almost every Akali leader in those 48 hours was expecting a postponement of the poll for reasons of gaining time to establish supremacy within the party or the tangibly grim external reality of facing terrorist wrath. "We needed some more time to come together," grumbled the wily SGPC President G.S.Tohra. "It

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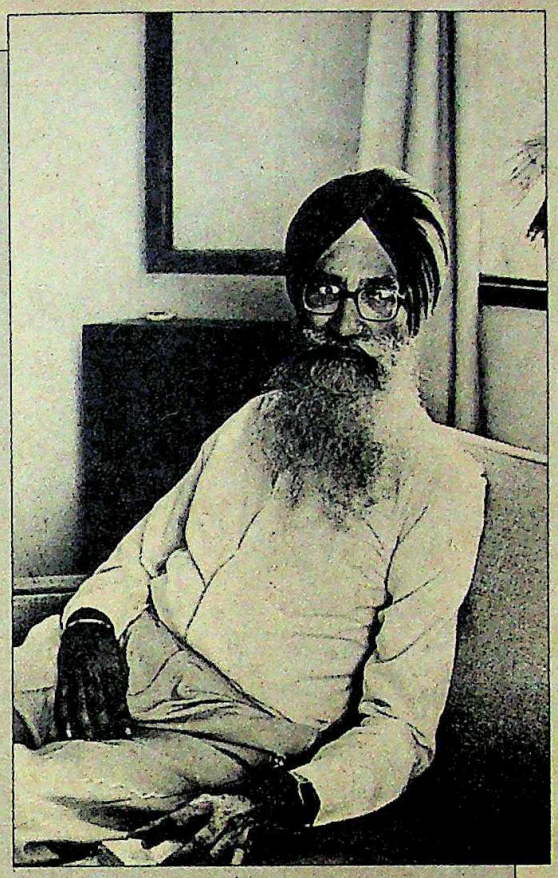
was imperative to normalise conditions in the state before calling elections, but perhaps this is Delhi's way of wanting to capture the polls." And Bibi Rajinder Kaur, president of the Istri Akali Dal, the party's women's wing, a meeting of which Sant Longowal had gone to address in Sherpur village that fateful afternoon of August 20, lashed out: "You wait and see, Sikhs in Punjab's villages will slit each other's throats and a reign of terror will again commence if the polls are held on schedule. Sikhs have not adjusted to the accord yet, nor have they had time to set their party affairs in order. It is clearly the Congress Government's strategy to get the Akalis to fight among themselves."

It was not only to pre-empt such alibis for the intensifying power struggle among Akali factions that Punjab Governor Arjun Singh operated at lightning speed. From the moment the accord between the prime minister and Sant Longowal was signed, he had been an avowed votary of holding elections immediately, believing that only a rapid restoration of the democratic process could end the continuing uncertainty in the state. The prime minister endorsed his view by saying that he was not in favour of prolonging President's rule, due to end in Punjab on October 6. And no sooner had the elections been announced Longowal, who had made sure that the Government acceded the Akali Dal's two additional demands of rehabilitating army deserters and granting general amnesty to detained Sikh youth, promptly expressed his view on the subject. "We are not in the habit to run away from the field," he said, clearly indicating that he was prepared to carry his party into the electoral fray.

"Like a steamroller," remarked *The Statesman* sardonically of the governor's subtle scheme working like a charm, "Arjun Singh has moved on with firm wheels and in a straight line to achieve what he feels is best under the circumstances."

But after Longowal's killing, with the threat of carefully targeted violence greater than before, it was imperative to ascertain how safe it would be to hold elections. Singh rapidly set his administrative machinery into motion: repeated high-level meetings were held with the chief secretary, home secretary and district officials; individual reports were compiled from every senior superintendent of police in each district; and Congress(I) MP Rajesh Pilot, the ruling party's troubleshooter in Assam, was rushed to Punjab to submit an independent assessment to the Centre of the feasibility of going ahead with the polls. Arjun Singh was himself shuttling back and forth from Delhi—he made three trips in less than 36 hours—to brief the prime minister. He was sitting in the visitors' gallery of the Lok Sabha when an impassioned Rajiv Gandhi emphatically declared that "a democratic election is the people's answer to the brute force employed by a small section to impose their will on the masses... what matters is that the lamp of democracy is not extinguished. What does matter is that India wins." Resolute though he had remained to push through the elections, Arjun Singh was hardly oblivious to the terrible hazards of terrorist attacks during the campaign. Even the most die-hard and reliable senior police officials in Punjab were willing to concede last fortnight that anywhere between 10 and 15 candidates could meet their end during the poll campaign, and Congress(I) observers were claiming that as many as 200 people could be victimised in terrorist violence despite the extraordinary precautions being taken. "Of course," conceded Governor Arjun Singh readily to INDIA TODAY after the election announcement, "there can be no absolute guarantee against terrorism though we will try our best that the election scene is not disturbed or the movements of the candidates vitiated for it to become a meaningless exercise."



While Barnala has no grassroots support he is nevertheless bound to gain a massive sympathy vote as Longowal's rightful successor and give Badal and his men a run for their money.

The election announcement had the desired effect on the Akali Dal. The intrigue-ridden party Longowal left behind had been made more disorderly by the fact that he was its sole dictator—there was no appointed successor or even a working committee supported unanimously by the jathedars (religious heads) of 25 Akali Dal districts as far apart as Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. Immidiately, the 19 jathedars representing Punjab assembled under tight security in Chandigarh along with a host of other invitees like Badal, Tohra, Barnala, former finance minister Balwant Singh, former speaker of the assembly Ravi Inder Singh and Amrinder Singh, the young maharaja of Patiala and former Congress(I) MP who had joined the Dal only the day before. Together they hammered out a compromise formula that chose Barnala to head the Dal with an ad hoc committee of all the jathedars; to satisfy the Badal-Tohra faction, Sant Ajit Singh was made head of the party's parliamentary board, its remaining members to be selected in consultation with Barnala. In effect, Barnala, backed by staunch Longowal loyalists like Balwant Singh and former education minister Sukhjinder Singh would have a clear head start over the other faction in selecting candidates for both the 13 parliamentary and 117 assembly seats.

For Arjun Singh and the Centre the papering over of frictions in the party and Barnala's supremacy came as a resounding victory. " Of all the Akali leaders today, Barnala alone stands out as a shining symbol of integrity, loyalty and an unblemished political track record. He

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THE ASSASSINATION

Unwinding Threads

SHORTLY after three o'clock in the afternoon on Tuesday, August 20, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President of the Akali Dal reached Sherpur, a large village about 90 km beyond Patiala in the rich paddy-growing district of Sangrur. He had rushed there after accomplishing an arduous mission in Chandigarh: that morning, after weeks of subtle negotiation following the accord, he had finally won over his two dissenting colleagues, SGPC President G.S.Tohra and former chief minister P.S.Badal, to fight the election together.

As he entered the village gurudwara, its compound packed with an audience of 4,000, and ascended the stage to address the meeting, he was not only well pleased at his accomplishment but also completely relaxed. Patiently, he set about explaining in minute detail to the congregation aspects of his accord with Rajiv Gandhi, the importance of reaching a compromise in Punjab and going to the polls. He elaborated the Government's keenness to end the crisis by referring to its decision to rehabilitate the army deserters and release Sikh youth in jails. He expatiated eloquently on the need for establishing major industries in the state, of providing employment to the young, and restoring peace in a long-troubled land. Jubilant shouts of *Sat Sri Akal* rent the air as the Sant rounded off his hour-long speech.

It was nearly 5.30 p.m. Suddenly shots rang out from somewhere in the front row, the bullets aimed at the seated Sant on stage but wide off the mark. Fired from a .455 revolver by a 22-year-old youth called Gian Singh, they seriously wounded an Akali worker called Jagmail Singh and injured four others. As volunteers surrounded the Sant in protection, there was no sign of either the twenty-odd security men placed around the stage, nor the handful of commandos in strategic positions. Ringed protectively by panic-stricken Dal workers, the Sant could barely breathe. "Let me breathe properly," he said. "I am quite safe." They were his last words.

The moment his protectors moved aside, Halwinder Singh, 24, the second assassin seated a few feet from the Sant, pounced forward and fired a single shot at point blank range. It pierced the leader's abdomen, badly rupturing his liver and large intestine and covering him in blood. But before Halwinder could fire again, he was caught and immobilised. "I grabbed him from behind and held down his right hand. He tried to get away but as I had caught his knot of hair with my other hand, he could not free himself," narrates Surinder Singh Garewal, a sturdily-built Akali volunteer from Malerkotla. Others helped Garewal pin down Halwinder who was shot at in that split second by the Sant's nephew Sher Singh before being handed over to the police. Several witnesses on the stage, including Bhagwan Singh, the *sarpanch* of Sherpur and Kundan Singh, another *sarpanch* from Nathumajra village, exactly corroborate this scenario.

Bleeding profusely, the Sant was rushed by car to Sangrur Hospital 30 km away, but by the time he got there, neither his pulse rate nor his blood pressure was recordable. The loss of blood proved fatal and within an hour of being admitted, Longowal was dead, long before the team of doctors from Chandigarh's Postgraduate Medical Institute arrived, or for that matter, before a Deputy Superintendent of Police in attendance who shared the same blood group as the Sant, could be called upon for a donation.

While the Governor security advisor, Lt General Gowri Shanker (Retd), is investigating the security lapses leading to Sant Longowal's assassination, there are enough eyewitness accounts that point to the ineffectuality of a dozen commandos and a total of two hundred security men within the compound and outside in saving the Sant's life. Three news reporters present at the meeting, Prem Goyal, B.C.Kamal and Mohinder Kaur, have all gone on record saying that there was enough time between the first and second shots for security guards to spring into preventive action. Instead, it was the Akali Dal workers who tried to intercede but, as it turned out, in vain.

The security lapses are more ominous in light of the fact, that given the political circumstances in the state, the Akali Dal president was a sitting target for Sikh extremists or other political vested interests opposed to the spirit of the accord. "These vested interests have been overactive lately," admitted Governor Arjun Singh to INDIA TODAY last week.

It is clear from preliminary interrogations of the two assassins as well as three other conspirators, Nirmal Singh, Darshan Singh Khalsa and Arvinder Singh, put under arrest that they may, in fact, have harboured connections with political leaders in the state. The interrogation last week, of SGPC Assistant Secretary Abnashi Singh and United Akali Dal leader Jagdev Singh Talwandi and the arrest of former MLA and United Akali Dal leader Ranjit Singh Brahmpura is aimed at unravelling precisely such a

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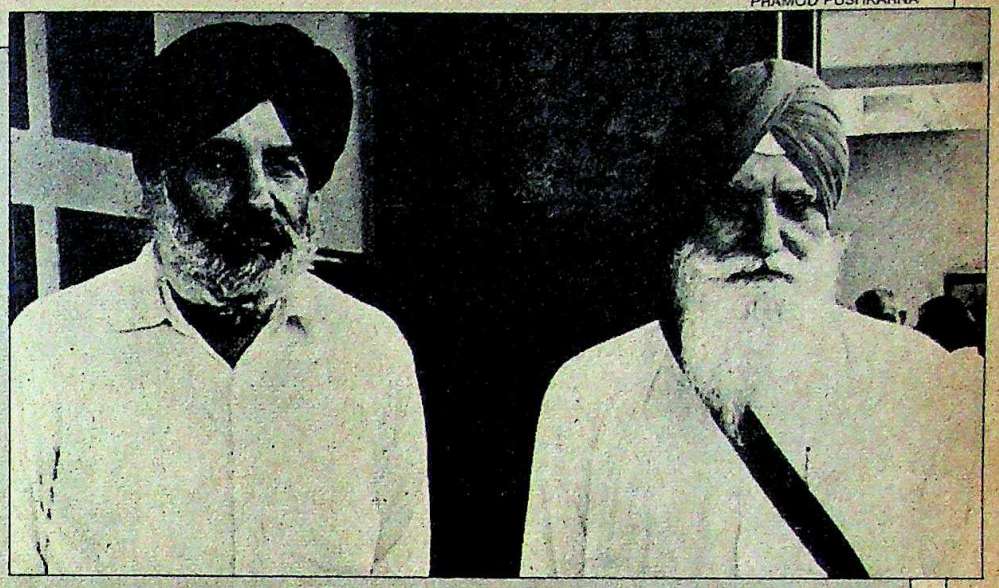
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Hours before his murder, Longowal had successfully managed to cement a serious rift in the Akali Dal by bringing back its two strongest dissenting members, Badal and Tohra, into the fold.

also represents a continuity of the accord signed by Sant Longowal," says a senior Congress(I) observer, well pleased at the result. The Akali Dal's official approval of Longowal's legacy was further emphasised by a resolution passed at the meeting saying that the party endorsed "every word" of the accord. Two days later it was declared that each party candidate would be obliged to sign a written statement affirming their acceptance of the accord before filing his or her nomination papers.

While Badal's faction has clearly been checkmated, it is the former chief minister himself who has come through the twisting negotiations of the last month in contradictory light, by first adopting a vituperative anti-accord posture, then being persuaded by Longowal hours before his death to present a joint front for the poll and, now, in the post-Longowal struggle for power losing out to Barnala and Balwant Singh in the race for cornering the maximum assembly nominations. Last week, when the decisive Chandigarh meeting ended, Badal was in an atrabilious mood again, huffily driving out and refusing to speak to the press. "He is a prisoner of his own indecision which has led to each ambition of his being frustrated," says an erstwhile confidante of his, now busy establishing an independent base in the party. But others say that Badal may be playing a convoluted game by depending on his massive support in the Malwa region to win a sizeable number of seats, and always remain in a dictating position owing to his hold on a powerful chunk of the party.

Akali Dal leaders counter such a view with the argument that while Barnala has no grassroots support he is nevertheless bound to gain a massive sympathy vote as Longowal's rightful successor and give Badal and his men a run for their money. Moreover, the Dal is still keen on employing the late Sant's proposed strategy of offering tickets to Punjabi Hindu, Muslim and Christian candidates. "It was something he had repeatedly proposed before his death," says a Dal leader, "not only to gain more seats and woo minority communities but to give the Akali Dal a secular image."

Meanwhile six of nine former MLA's who are with the United Akali Dal (UAD) led by Bhindranwale's father Baba Joginder Singh are Badal's men. They now face acute embarrassment since the arrest of UAD leader Ranjit Singh Brahmpura last week in connection with the Longowal assassination. Worse, one of the UAD's most outspoken, energetic leading lights, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, was closely interrogated for over four hours in Ludhiana at the same time and pressed to reveal his connections with Jarnail Singh (*see box*). These recent sensational developments combined with the

nexus if it exists.

While both the Central Bureau of Investigation and a high-level team headed by Punjab Armed Police chief K.P.S.Gill have been involved in scrutinising a possible political conspiracy, it is known that Longowal's killers came mainly from a single village called Leel in Ludhiana district. Once a pocket borough of the Congress(I), the area is now full of United Akali Dal followers.

The crime was masterminded by Jarnail Singh, a former votary of Bhindranwale with six police cases pending against him including the murder of a school watchman, and a registered medical practitioner in Leel called Dr Gurmail Singh. It was at the doctor's clinic that the seven conspirators had been meeting regularly to plan the assassination.

Of them, Gian Singh, one of Longowal's two killers comes from village Pohar near Ahmedgarh. A typical drifter uneducated after primary school, he had served as a part-time *granthi* before deciding two years ago to shave his beard and attempting to join the movies in Bombay. On his return to the village, he started writing poetry and singing at religious congregations. "My son has blackened the face of the faith," spoke his shocked father Gurdev Singh on hearing the news of the assassination, "he should be given the severest punishment for his terrible crime."

But it was Jarnail Singh, once a granthi at Bhindranwale's gurudwara in Chowk Mehta, who trained the two killers. He dropped them off at the Sherpur gurudwara after drugging them with heavy doses of opium. Still missing last week, he is the crucial link in the conspiracy that led to the assassination of Sant Longowal.

His recent past suggests that his violent scheme may have been abetted by his powerful political connections. He was picked up some eight weeks ago by the police but was suddenly released despite the cases against him. Not surprisingly, his release was engineered by a prominent United Akali Dal leader who pressurised the district police chief to let him go. Jarnail Singh's arrest may finally reveal what security and police sources in Punjab fear most: that the Sant's killing was not only a carefully planned and meticulously executed terrorist operation but that it was also politically motivated.

—GOBIND THUKRAL, with bureau reports

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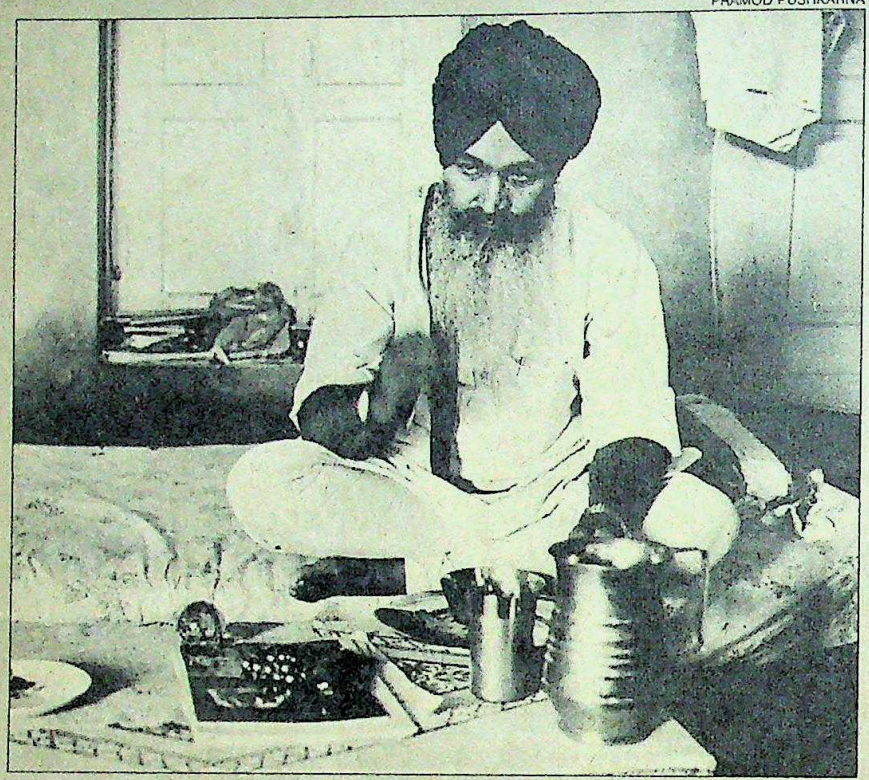
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Longowal at his last meal in Kambhowal gurudwara

HARCHAND SINGH LONGOWAL

A Symbol of Peace

HE STARTED out as a plain *granthi* (religious preacher) in a village gurudwara, and ended up being hailed as the Gandhi of Punjab. A far cry indeed, but that was the transformation wrought by fate in the life of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, a man who in his last days came to symbolise the hope that Punjab and its people would find peace.

In a world where such phrases are much abused, Longowal was a true man of God. Born on January 2, 1932 in Sangrur's backward Gadarhiani village, Harchand Singh was the youngest of four sons of a simple God-fearing farmer Mansa Singh. While his brothers helped till the fields, the quiet Harchand immersed himself in *kirtan* and religious discourses. At nine, he joined the *dera* of Sant Jodh Singh and grew up in the shadow of the old priest. Life at the *dera* was hard, much like a Buddhist monastery and the inmates were trained in total sublimation of the self. He never gave up his frugal life-style and simple habits. At the *dera*, he and other inmates learned humility by going out and begging for food. Till the end, his usual meal remained two rotis with a dal or a vegetable. A bachelor, he made his home in two rooms at the Kambhowal gurudwara which he had built. Harchand Singh soon earned renown as a gifted *ragi* (singer of religious hymns) in gurbani and brijbhasha. And at just 30 he became head priest of the Damdama Sahib Takht, one of the five sacred takhts of the Sikh religion. People started flocking to the gurudwara in the hundreds to seek advice and blessings from the ever-smiling "Sant" as he now began to be called. "Meeting Santji was a great solace and he should not have strayed from preaching," recalled Gian Kaur, 75, a resident of Longowal village after his death.

But the young Sant seemed predestined to be drawn into public life. A man sensitive to the needs of the poor, he never hesitated to organise morchas—whether it was a fight of tenants against landlords or the status of the non-elected government in PEPSU (before the formation of Punjab). Understandably, the Akali Dal asked him to fight the 1967 assembly elections—and he did, trouncing Congress stalwart and former PEPSU chief minister Brish Bhan. But he was a reluctant politician, and he went into hiding rather than follow the party's wishes to contest a parliamentary election. But he abhorred the Emergency enough to take a public stand against it. Said Longowal: "The Khalsa must fight to prevent democratic institutions, the judiciary, and the press from being destroyed by Mrs Gandhi."

Through all this, his religious training gave him the courage to say and do what he considered right and even to hazard his life if his conviction demanded. He was convinced that Punjab could not exist separately from India and the chasm dividing Hindus and Sikhs had to be bridged. Unmindful of threats by terrorists he set about creating an atmosphere of communal amity. "I have but one mission—to bring back the fraternal feelings between Hindus and Sikhs. My method is of love," he confided only hours before his death to Akali lawyer Gurnam Singh Tir who was drafting the party's election manifesto.

But Longowal had not always been as decisive. His early passiveness in the face of Bhindranwale's aggression had undermined his own position as head of the Akali Dal and dictator of its *morcha*. Though called dictator, he was at that time only one among equals. Some of his peers in the party, like G.S.Tohra and Prakash Singh Badal, were taller than him in stature. None of them seemed able to cope with Bhindranwale's terrorist challenge; the more they lost ground to the extremists, the less they seemed capable of doing.

It was only when he broke the shackles of collective leadership after his release from almost ten months in jail after Operation Bluestar that he came into his own. When he returned as party president after the formation of Baba Joginder Singh's rival Akali Dal, it was on the clear understanding that the party would endorse the platform of communal amity.

The diffident, reticent Sant had probably realised he was the Akali Dal's man of destiny, and that he would have to do something to allay fears about Sikh separatism in the minds of the majority.

To do this he travelled to Delhi and thanked the Hindu families who had

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helped save Sikhs during last November's riots. He openly rejected the demand for Khalistan and declared the Akali Dal's total commitment to the integrity and unity of the country. So it was not surprising that half the crowd which flocked to his funeral comprised Hindus. Ram Avtar, a Malerkotla tea stall owner who had trekked 25 kilometres in the heat to attend Longowal's funeral said: "He had our interest at heart and his passing is a grave blow to peace in Punjab."

Politicians saw the same integrity. "What struck you about him was his transparent sincerity", says Inder Gujral, who acknowledges having developed "an emotional bond" with him. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi publicly declared he found Longowal likeable and trustworthy, and the Sant reciprocated by describing the prime minister as *nisdhal* (straightforward).

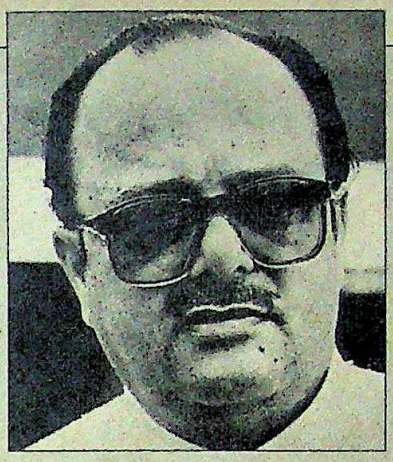
Longowal often spoke as if he had some presentiment of his end, as if he could feel the hotheads breathing down his neck. A day before his death he told INDIA TODAY at the Kambhowal gurudwara: "No one can browbeat me nor bullets deter me as I am truthful and honest before my Guru." In any case, he said, his death would be a "small price to pay for bringing *sadbhavana* (amity) to my brothers and sisters in Punjab". He once told journalist Kuldip Nayar: "Extremism will not end until it has taken my life."

Tragically, that proved all too true. Longowal began his last day as he did most others, rising at 3.00 a.m. and presiding over the early morning prayers. That morning he met Badal and Tohra in Chandigarh and climaxed his peace mission with an agreement to end their differences.

Obviously relieved, he told a news conference that morning: "I am very happy my brothers have finally overcome their differences to fight the elections and I appeal to all Punjabis to isolate and defeat the forces of terrorism."

His violent death may well contribute immeasurably to that defeat. Already his legacy of peace has begun to replace Bhindranwale's violent legacy. Small wonder that Punjab Governor Arjun Singh should have said: "Santji's martyrdom will achieve what a living Sant may not have attained."

—RAMINDAR SINGH with GOBIND THUKRAL in Longowal



For Arjun Singh and the Centre the papering over the frictions in the party and Barnala's supremacy came as a resounding victory.

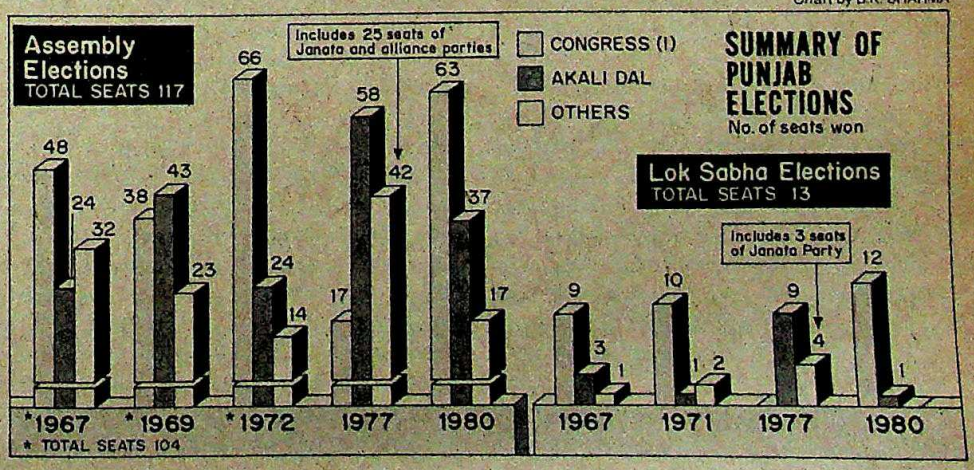
Six of the nine former MLA's with the United Akali Dal, led by Bhindranwale's father Baba Joginder Singh, are Badal's men.

pledge that prospective Akali Dal candidates are expected to sign standing by the Gandhi-Longowal accord to the letter is likely to make a seat adjustment impossible between the two groups, let alone a possible reconciliation. But a move in the direction had seemed a distinct possibility a few days earlier when at the UAD meeting held on the same day in Amritsar as the Akalis were meeting in Chandigarh, its leaders actually condemned Sant Longowal's assassination. UAD and All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) leaders also sank their differences and empowered Baba Joginder Singh to singly decide on participation in the elections.

While the Akali groupings and regroupings are likely to remain in flux till the very last, the Congress(I)'s election strategy is designed if not exactly to aggressively seize power from the Akalis, then at the very least to purge its own image in the state. Old, fractious ridden politicians like former chief minister Darbara Singh have been given short shrift in both selection of candidates as well as party affairs. The ruling party's emphasis is on fielding younger people, so long as they have a clean background and new-look style. Given the Congress(I)'s uninspiring record in Punjab (bitter dissident wrangling and four PCC(I) presidents changed in three years) the idea, according to a party official, is to break with the past.

Still, with the terrible toll the election may take in terms of violence, the number of ticket-seekers swarming at the party

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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headquarters in New Delhi the last few days has been amazing: at last count, there were at least 6,000, nearly 60 per cent of them Hindus, a marked increase from about 40 per cent Hindu applicants in the last contest in 1980. The increase is significant for two reasons: while it represents the growing unhappiness of Punjab's urban Hindus who are looking for greater political representation and finding it under the Congress(I) umbrella, at another explosive level it confirms the theory that, after VIP's, terrorists usually strike at Hindus in the hope of creating a communal backlash.

The most recent example of this is that on the day Sant Longowal was assassinated, terrorists struck at two Congress(I) leaders in Jalandhar. Gurdial Saini and B.K. Khullar, president and general secretary of the district Congress(I) committee, respectively. They were attacked as they sat discussing elections in Saini's living room. Khullar died on the spot; Saini is still in hospital recovering from the four bullets that were embedded in his thighs and knees. But city officials agree that were it not for the local news being overtaken by news of the Longowal murder, the attack could have incited a communal clash.

As the elections draw closer, Governor Arjun Singh and his team of advisers have drawn up a whole framework of precautionary measures to ensure a free, fair and so far as it is possible, a violence-free poll. Among the major security reinforcements suggested are:

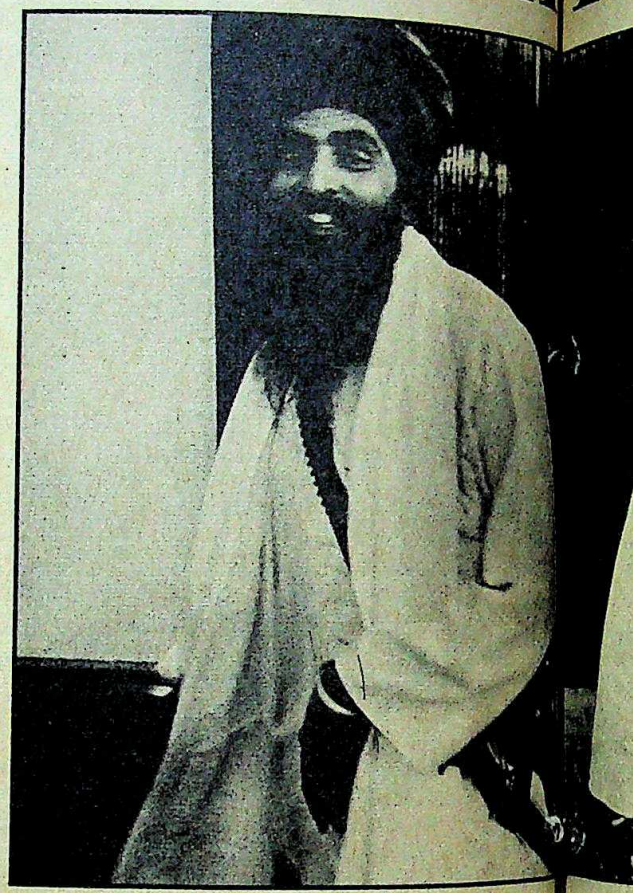
- Deployment of 60,000 additional police and CRPF recruits from outside the state;
- mobilising of six lakh ex-servicemen in the state to nominate at least 1,000 men per district who the Government will arm to protect voters;
- two gunmen to accompany each candidate and their offices to be patrolled round the clock by the police;
- particularly vulnerable areas to be patrolled by mobile guards;
- and the armed forces in the state to be kept on the alert.

"It's going to be a sizzling election," says Punjab Home Secretary N.N. Vohra. "We shall certainly try our best but the candidates do run a risk." So does Governor Arjun Singh who will face the biggest test of his career. "I draw my strength from the people's faith in peace and democracy," he confesses. And the price to be paid for both qualities which have eluded Punjab for so long could be heavy.

—SUNIL SETHI with GOBIND THUKRAL and bureau reports

COPING WITH T

THE IMAGES are still sharp and stabbing, like tombstones outlined ghost-like against the mists of modern Indian history. The hooded eyes and sinister smirk of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, silver arrow in one hand and a death list in the other. The roar of the motorcycles playing a deadly overture to the frenzied chatter of machine-guns. The flower-bedecked funeral hearses trailing each other with agonising regularity through the bloody streets of Punjab. The stark and sorrowful shell of the Akal Takht standing accusingly amidst the ruins. A glass case covering the bloodstained spot where a frail leader fell to the assassin's bullet. And now, a courageous apostle of peace cut down in his moment of solitary glory and quiet communion with his God.



Coming full circle, Bhindranwale, who symbolised the start of Sikh terrorism, with Longowal who finally became its latest victim

More than any of the others, it was the shattering assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal last fortnight that seemed to symbolise most starkly the spectre of terrorism that stalks the land with such arrogance and destructive power. It also, conversely, symbolised the frustrations and fears of a government engaged in a grim and gruesome battle with phantom forces. Once before, in the arid wastes of West Bengal, terrorism flared briefly but brutally in the hands of the Naxalites before it was brought to heel. In the remote redoubt of the north-east, gunshots still ricochet in the ravines where ambushers lie patiently in wait. But in the bloodied hands of Sikh extremists, terrorism has acquired the ominous permanency and deadly sophistication of a Beirut or a Belfast.

Since end-1981, when Bhindranwale and his hitmen cast their sinister silhouettes over Punjab, terrorism has succeeded in overshadowing all else. At its height, the toll was awesome. Between August 4, 1982 and June 3, 1984, when the tanks rumbled towards the Golden Temple, terrorist acts had claimed 410 lives and injured 1,180 others. Of those, 298 were killed in the six-month period prior to the assault on the terrorists holed up in the Golden Temple. Since then, the body count has come down except for sporadic bursts like the transistor bomb blasts in the capital earlier this year. Home Ministry files indicate that terrorist-related killings have been averaging about four a month. But that is no cause for comfort. The targets are no longer random but carefully selected, like that of Longowal and Lalit Maken, for optimum shock effect. A government which naively believed that Operation Bluestar had broken the back of Sikh extremism, now realises it is still as potent a threat. "Terrorism is here to stay as a serious problem and we have to learn to live with it. They are now better trained, better equipped and better motivated," says Union Home Secretary, R.D. Pradhan.

Tragically, the same cannot be said for the official agencies responsible for bat-

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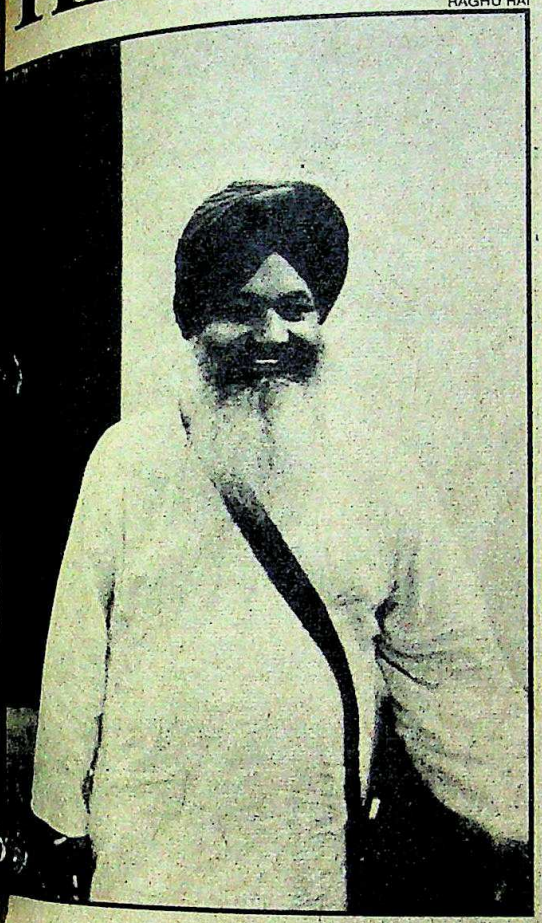
TERRORISM

RAGHU RAI



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ling the terrorist threat. An embarrassed government has admitted that the assassination of Longowal was a serious security failure and that the commandos provided for the Akali leader's protection faltered when it came to the crucial crunch, specially considering the fact that he was such an obvious target. In psychological terms, it represents a major victory for the terrorists as part of their traditional strategy of striking at moments when a breakthrough on the Punjab impasse is imminent. There are over 100 VIP's and politicians in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi who are currently being provided with special security guards as protection against terrorists with Arjun Singh and Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal heading the hit list. But officials engaged in dealing with the terrorist threat are convinced that the Longowal killing has also had a negative effect in the sense of further isolating the terrorists from the Sikh mainstream.

But mere isolation is a distant cry from actual identification and elimination. Security officials in Punjab and elsewhere are convinced that there is no individual or individuals masterminding terrorist operations as was the case in the nightmare days of Bhindranwale. "The terrorists are operating in several groups and on their own steam. This is true also outside Punjab as was proved in the transistor bomb blasts cases in Delhi," says one top security official. Further, no longer are the operational bases, hide-outs and safe houses confined to the sprawling rural countryside of Punjab, now under intense surveillance and infiltration by intelligence and police forces. The new terrorist sanctuaries are in the bustling urban areas where crowds provide a natural cover and anonymity.

In the twin bureaucratic monoliths of North and South Block, however, which houses the cavernous offices of the Home Ministry and the Cabinet Secretariat, the worry is tinged with a certain optimism. "We have made some major intelligence breakthroughs in the last three months," says a top intelligence official, "the intelligence we are getting now is much better than before. We have infiltrated to some extent, the key terrorist groups and now have a better idea of what they are up to and their likely movements." As evidence he thumps the bulky pile of files on his table dealing with intelligence and interrogation reports on terrorists and points to last week's arrest of Ranjit Singh, the third man involved in the assassination of Sant Longowal. Singh was captured after raids on 30 suspected terrorist hideouts which were under surveillance.

After extensive exercises, the Home Ministry has now evolved a system where information is exchanged speedily and anti-terrorist squads can move into action within hours. Last month, the Government opened three 'clearing-houses' in Delhi, Chandigarh and Jalandhar through which all intelligence and information related to terrorists from the various agencies dealing with the problem are routed. "We are now in a position to make intelligence operational," boasts an intelligence official.

An exhaustive list of suspected terrorists, their dossiers, likely areas of operations and known contacts has been drawn up by intelligence agencies and police forces for north India. Over 100 people on that list have been arrested in the last four months and officials claim that it is a result of the better coordination between various agencies involved in security. So far, of the 400 known terrorists with Bhindranwale who escaped during Operation Bluestar, 150 have been arrested or have been put under close surveillance. The bulk of the remaining terrorists are suspected to be operating from inside Pakistan from where they launch their hit and run raids. To combat this, surveillance on the border has been intensified and shoot at sight orders issued. In the past three months, say security officials, over 60 terrorists have been shot trying to cross the border. Home Ministry officials believe that there are less than 200 Sikh terrorists operating in the country split up into various groups whose size depends on the number of people they are able to recruit.

Meanwhile, intelligence and security officials of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh have been meeting once and sometimes twice a week to exchange notes and review procedures while their counterparts in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi meet once a fortnight to discuss interrogation reports and formulate appropriate strategy. These meetings are also attended by officers of the Border Security Force, Military Intelligence and the Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI). Core units have been formed to act on specific terrorist-related information which is being fed to them constantly from all other sources. Early next month, the chief ministers of Haryana, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and the governor of Punjab and chief executive councillor of Delhi are to meet in Manali to evolve a joint strategy to fight terrorism in north India. The meeting of Northern Zonal Councils chaired by Home Minister S.B.Chavan will also work out ways to strengthen inter-state checkpoints and finalise an agreement for the constant flow of information between the states and Union territories involved.

Home Ministry officials are also convinced that the terrorists are being increasingly isolated with fewer members of the Sikh populace in Punjab now willing to provide support and sanctuary, a trend they believe will accelerate once normal

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political activity returns to Punjab after the September elections. "The perceptions at the top are different now," says a senior intelligence official, referring to the new Government under Rajiv Gandhi which has issued instructions that harassment and questioning of Sikhs in Punjab is to be stopped unless there is definite proof of terrorist links. Punjab Governor Arjun Singh has also issued similar instructions to police and security agencies in the belief that this will push them to the wall and eventually force many of the less committed ones to surrender. One key terrorist arrested last fortnight, Sarabjit Singh *(see box)*, in fact, confessed to his interrogators that he was on the point of giving himself up when he was arrested in Amritsar. Says Punjab Governor Arjun Singh, himself a prominent terrorist target: "I think the important change is that there is very little difference now between the perception of the people and the Government in meeting the terrorist threat. There is now a widespread revulsion against the continuing violence."

Simultaneously, the Government is rapidly readying its key anti-terrorist agency, the National Security Guards (NSG) which will deal solely with terrorism on a long-term basis. The original idea of the NSG was floated by India's spymaster, Ram Nath Kao four months before Operation Bluestar. Mrs Gandhi ordered the Cabinet Secretariat to draw up a report on the proposal and its feasibility. The fall-out from Operation Bluestar bestowed the issue with added urgency and by the end of 1984, the incipient headquarters of the NSG had come into being in a nondescript office block in New Delhi's Ramakrishna Puram area under the command of R.T. Nagrani, a RAW officer.

LAST month, the force made its first public appearance on the streets of the capital outfitted in black dungarees, their faces blackened with anti-glare paint and armed with sophisticated West German Heckler and Koch sub-machine-guns. The NSG commandos were brought in to patrol the approaches to North and South Avenues where the MP's residences are located. However, their deployment had been strongly objected to by senior NSG officers who felt that reducing this crack force to routine guard duties was an abject waste of their talent. But it later transpired that the orders had come from the prime minister who wanted to instil a renewed feeling of security among the MP's after the recent murder of Lalit Maken. The NSG were removed after a fortnight to the Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh.

Though they are yet to be baptised by fire, the force nonetheless packs a powerful punch in terms of its assigned role. The men briefly on view in New Delhi were the *creme de la creme*, members of the Special Action Group (SAG), the strike arm of the NSG. Drawn mainly from various units in the army, these men have been trained extensively in specialised techniques at Sarsawa, near Saharanpur, by experts of the Special Frontier Force (SFF). They have been specifically schooled in anti-terrorist operations in large buildings, factories, cramped urban localities and even anti-hijacking operations aboard aircraft borrowed from Indian Airlines. Besides SAG, which is now almost fully operational, the NSG is going to add two larger groups called Special Ranger Groups (SRG) whose role will be to provide the manpower muscle to the NSG in instances like the Golden Temple action where a large strike force is required. The model they have based the NSG on is the West German Grenzschutzgruppe-9 (popularly known as GSG-9) raised from among the country's border police to counter the threat of the Baader-Meinhoff terrorist gang. They were later used in the successful raid on Mogadishu.

Officials of the Cabinet Secretariat and the Home Ministry express their satisfaction with the NSG and its formation so far and claim that initial infrastructural problems have been ironed out. The Home Ministry has bought 1,600 acres of land on the Delhi-Jaipur road near Maneswar village in Haryana's Gurgaon district where the NSG is currently building its own training facilities. Most of the equipment they will use, specialised weaponry, infra-red and thermal imaging equipment, bullet-proof clothing and stun grenades, have already been procured. For the first time, say Home Ministry officials, the country has a force mentally and physically honed for tackling terrorism.

Drastic changes have also been made in the security cordon around Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the wake

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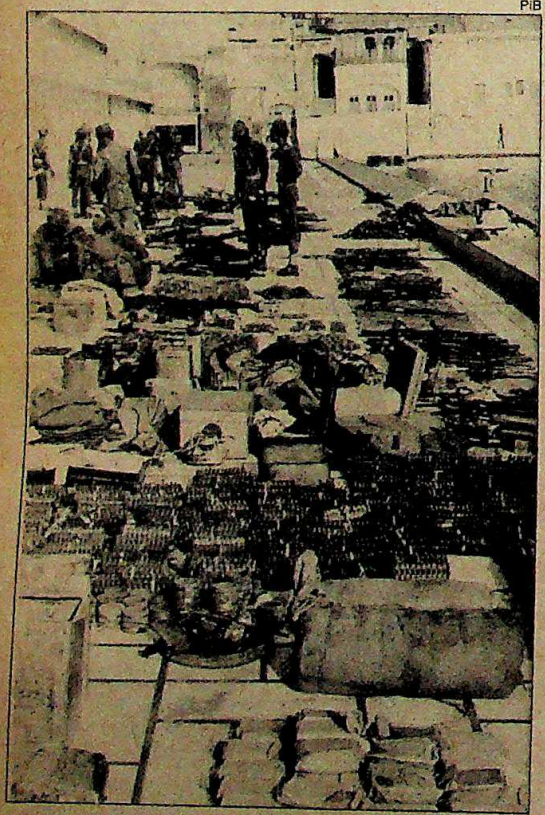

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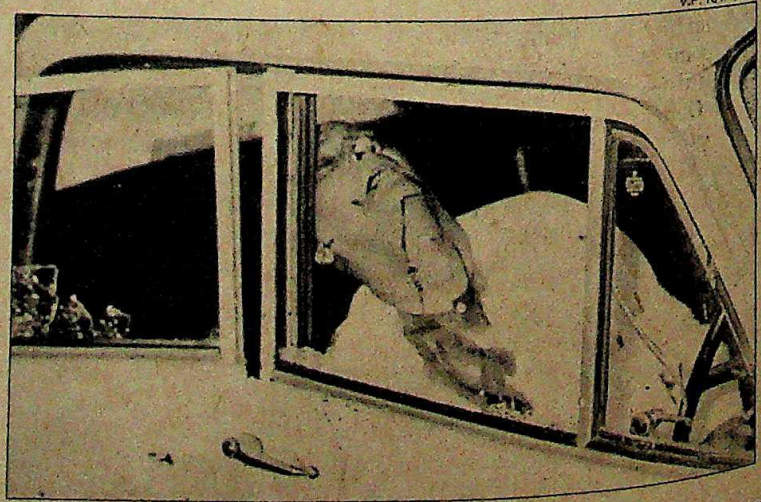

Weapons recovered from the Golden Temple after Bluestar (left) and the body of Ramesh Chander who was shot by terrorists in Jalandhar

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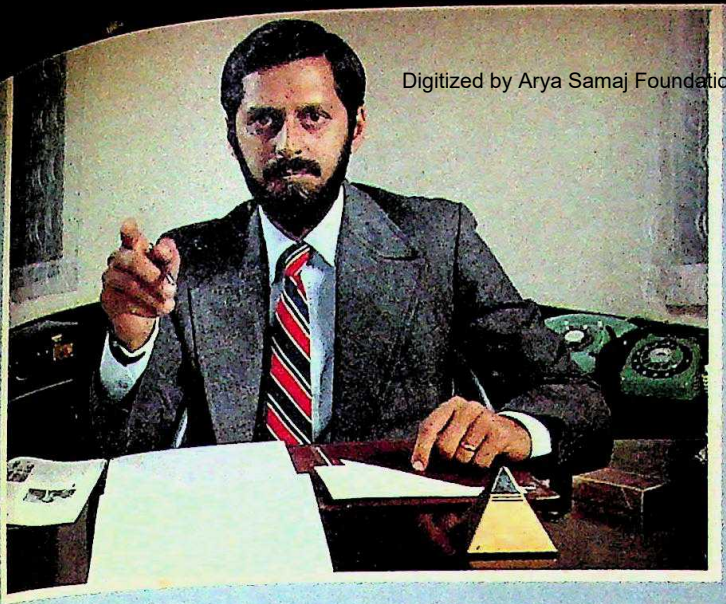

DUNLOP INTRODUCES THE NEW PROFESSIONAL

Tough. Uncompromising. On the fast track. A new breed that's going places. A new generation with professional drive.

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It's got resilience. A strong nylon casing to take the roughest going.

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Nylon Car Tyre

Because professional standards demand the best

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"Engineered like no other car in the world" say Mercedes-Benz. Even rival car makers agree!

Great Classics of Motoring presented by Engine Valves Ltd.

The arrogant Mercedes-Benz S had a mighty, super-charged engine of 6.8 litres.

When you stamped on the accelerator, the supercharger was engaged and an extra 60hp caused the car to leap ahead – and a howling, screaming wail joined the usual high-speed roar from its exhaust.

The 'S' was designed by the brilliant Ferdinand Porsche in 1927. These were some of Mercedes' finest years.
The SS and others that followed were fierce, rakish cars that were definitely not for the faint-hearted.

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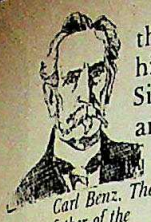
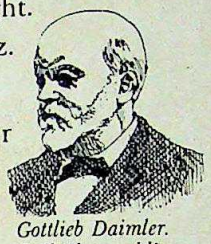
Have you heard of the man who collected his new Mercedes at Sindelfingen, Germany and drove off happily? Nothing strange there, except that he had left his wife behind. It's a true story – and the wife may have never forgiven him, though Mercedes lovers all over would have smiled indulgently at this minor oversight.



Carl Benz. The father of the automobile.

Mercedes-Benz. One of the finest examples of Germanic engineering. An evergreen yardstick for comparison. Few cars have the illustrious pedigree of a Mercedes, since it traces its ancestry to the father of the automobile, Carl Benz.



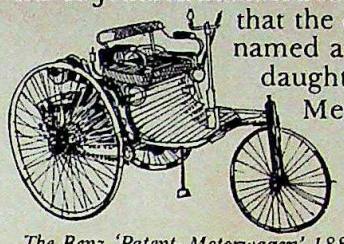
Gottlieb Daimler. Built the world's second practical car.

Carl Benz was born in 1844. He was fascinated by gas engines and set about making an engine and a car even though he'd never seen either. It was a historic occasion when his motorized vehicle took to the streets in 1885.

Mercedes Jellinek. The original Mercedes car was named in her honour.

Gottlieb Daimler became interested in using gasoline to power small portable engines when he was 23. At that time, gasoline was used only for dry cleaning! It was 1887 by the time Daimler installed his gasoline engine in a horse carriage.

Carl Benz and Daimler never met, though they lived only 100 kms from each other. While both businesses grew, Benz was more traditional and Daimler more enterprising. But it took an Austrian, Emil Jellinek, to inspire Daimler to produce a truly great car, in 1901. Its shape and performance revolutionised racing and travel. Jellinek made it a condition that the car be named after his daughter Mercedes.

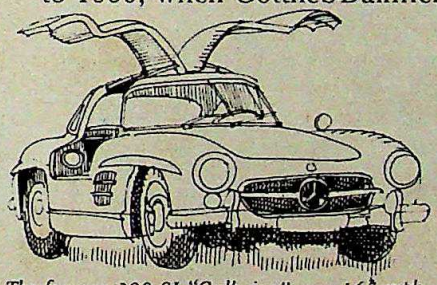


The Benz 'Patent- Motorwagen' 1886.

By 1905, Benz and Mercedes were directly competing on the roads, showrooms and race tracks. The first World War ruined Germany. With the economy shattered, it made more sense for Benz and Daimler to merge than to compete. That's how in 1924, the new German colossus was born : Daimler-Benz AG.

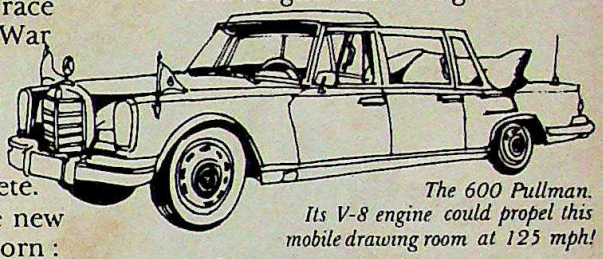
Mercedes musings

- Benz's 1886 3-wheeler was equipped with leather brakes and powered by cleaning fluid purchased from a chemist.
- The 3 pointed star dates back to 1880, when Gottlieb Daimler painted a star on a wall of his house and said, "A star shall arise from here and I hope it will bring blessings to us and our children".



The famous 300 SL "Gullwing" — a 165 mph projectile. The novel doors were not a design feature but a necessity. Its special chassis dictated very high door sills.

- The world's first long-distance motoring was by Frau Benz and her 2 children. In 1888 they drove the car from Mannheim to Pforzheim and back (147 kms).
- The 1903 Mercedes 60 had internally expanding metal-to-metal brakes. After each application, the brakes received a shot of cooling water!
- The famous Silberfeile (Silver Arrow) was the Mercedes-Benz W25 racing car with its paint removed. This remarkably successful machine was 2 lbs overweight when weighed before a Grand Prix race. Every atom of its white paint was sanded off and the weight reduction was sufficient to make it qualify.

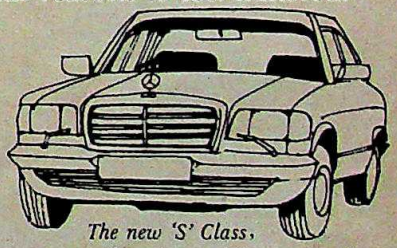


The 600 Pullman. Its V-8 engine could propel this mobile drawing room at 125 mph!

- The highest mileage ever recorded for a car is 1,184,880 miles — naturally a Mercedes.
- Mercedes-Benz crashes 100 brand new cars every year into concrete walls to test safety measures.

Oft-imitated

If imitation is the best form of flattery, Mercedes-Benz certainly has reasons to feel flattered.



The new 'S' Class, safe and incredibly sure footed.

Over the years, many a car has been unashamedly styled to resemble a Mercedes. (Some of them complete with stars atop look-alike grilles!) But the imitators miss the quintessential point : nobody, but nobody, ever buys a Mercedes for its looks.

World-famous cars use EVL valves

Did you know that EVL valves are used on cars like BMW, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot and Volvo? EVL, a member of the Rane Group, began operations in 1959, collaborating with Farnborough Engg of UK, makers of the famous Tranco valves. EVL exports mainly to UK, USA, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia. In India, EVL products are OE on every vehicle ... more recently on the Maruti- Suzuki.

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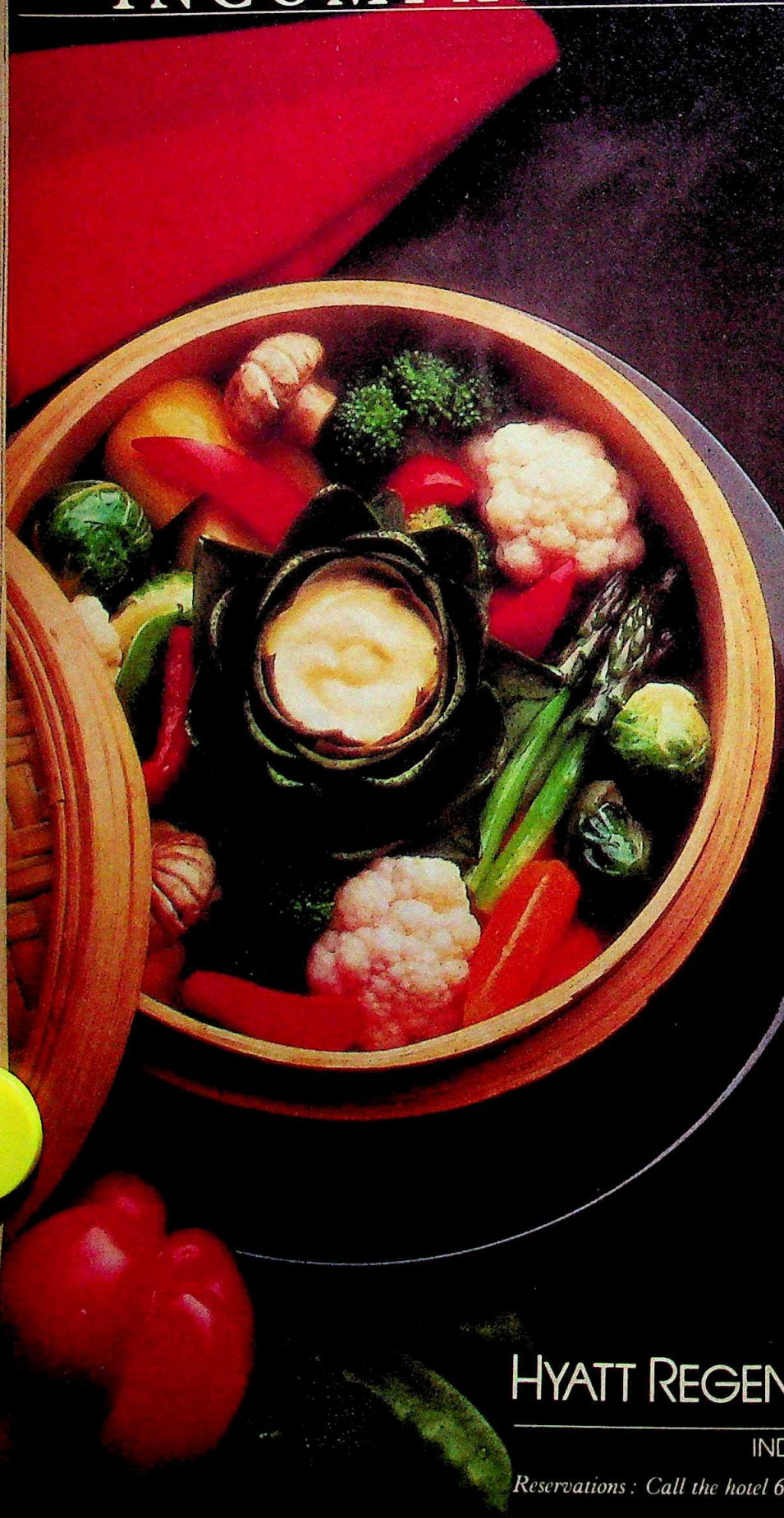

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of his mother's assassination. Preliminary inquiries and the initial findings of the Thakkar Commission have revealed the glaring loophole in that no one agency or officer could be held accountable for the prime minister's security with the Delhi Police and the Intelligence Bureau busy blaming each other for the lapses. To eliminate that overlap, a Special Protection Group (SPG) has been set up under the command of S.Subramanium, a joint director in the Cabinet Secretariat. The men who form the new force are hand-picked from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the BSF and the Indo- Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and are specially trained in VIP security operations. In the prime minister's house, all vehicles including those of chief ministers, are not allowed beyond a certain point. A 'ferry car' system is now in operation where all visitors except a designated few are transferred to specially screened cars and then allowed to proceed. Visitors have to pass through at least three metal detectors at the house and Rajiv's office.None of the security guards inside the prime minister's residential compound is allowed to carry Sten guns or even semi-automatic weapons. They are only armed with pistols as a measure to avoid a Mrs Gandhi-type situation where her security guards killed her with bursts from automatic weapons. All security personnel attached to the prime minister have to undertake firing practice every day. For additional protection, Rajiv wears a custom-tailored bullet-proof vest at all times.

BUT THE current terrorist threat, in its larger manifestation, is more external than internal. A voluminous top secret report prepared by RAW in 1984 after several months of investigation and data collection has detailed extensively the Pakistan connection in Sikh terrorism. The RAW dossier gives an accurate date-wise account of Pakistani involvement till the time of Bluestar. Since then, the dossier has been further supplemented by any number of statements made by Sikh terrorists under interrogation, the latest being that of Sarabjit Singh. Last May, Faqir Singh of Gurdaspur, arrested trying to cross the border, confessed that he along with two others had been in Pakistan for three months being trained by the Special Services Group, the Pakistan equivalent of RAW. He stated that he met a number of other Sikh youths under training and that they were given secessionist literature published by Sikh extremists abroad and finally given weapons and sent back with instructions to kill Hindus. Avtar Singh of Jammu, another prominent terrorist arrested, has confessed that he was trained in sabotage and told to set up an underground network in Jammu & Kashmir and recruit volunteers.

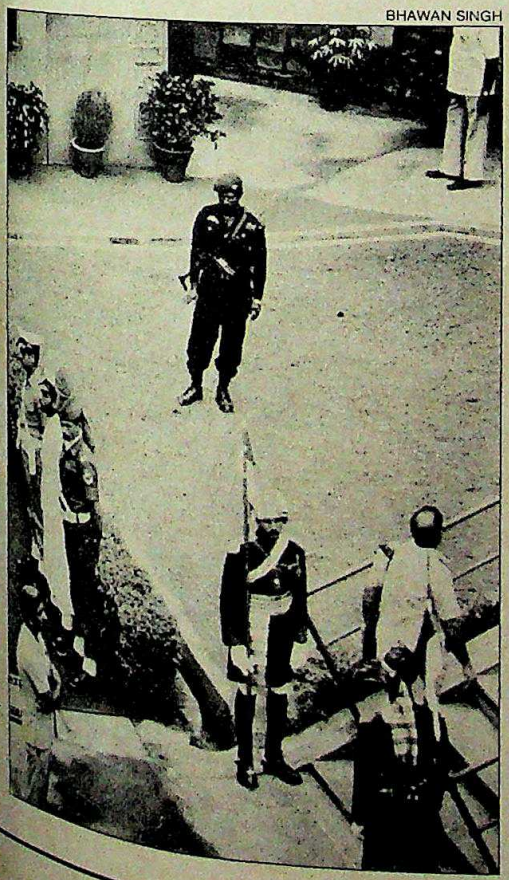
There are numerous such confessions which have been backed up by clandestine reports from Intelligence Bureau agents who have managed to cross the border and gain access to the training camps by posing as Sikh extremists. The steadily growing number of files on the Pakistan connection were shown to Pakistan Foreign Minister Sahebzada Yakub Khan during his recent visit to Delhi. But Home Ministry officials confess that much more pressure could be brought to bear on the diplomatic front but the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) seems to be playing down the issue. MEA officials say that they have done what they can in diplomatic terms but are handicapped by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's commitment to improve relations with that neighbouring country.

The real diplomatic thrust, consequently, is currently aimed at curbing the other external threat that emanates from Sikh extremist organisations abroad. The External Affairs Ministry and RAW have identified 27 separate organisations in active operation abroad in support of the Khalistan movement. The main ones are:

► The National Council of Khalistan, founded on April 12, 1980, by former student communist activist Jagjit Singh Chauhan in London. While Chauhan is the organisation's key propagandist, the action wing is headed by its General Secretary, Balbir Singh Sandhu. The organisation has branches in UK, West Germany, Canada and the US and draws its recruits mainly from Sikhs in these countries facing immigration problems. It maintains close liaison with the Nankana Sahib Foundation in Washington and the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Army which was responsible for the murder of an Indian diplomat in Birmingham last year. Chauhan's Indian passport was revoked in April 1981 and in August a case was registered against him in India for sedition;

► The Nankana Sahib Foundation in Washington headed by Ganga Singh Dhillon, a prominent lobbyist and public relations expert who has close contacts with prominent US senators and claims to be a personal friend of Pakistan's General Zia and other top Pakistan officials. He has visited Pakistan frequently and the organisation seems to have unlimited funds. Dhillon is aided in his propagandist efforts by another prominent Washington lawyer and lobbyist, Ralph Singh. The latter has been working in close coordination with another key activist of the Nankana Sahib

BHAWAN SINGH



YOG JOY/TRIBUNE

An NSG commando (in black) on security duty (left) and Jarnail Singh, one of the assassins of Sant Longowal

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SARABJIT SINGH

The Pakistan Link

WITH the arrest last fortnight in Amritsar of Sarabjit Singh, a Jammu-based All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) volunteer, and his sustained interrogation, the Indian Government has received final confirmation, about the involvement of Pakistan in training and motivating Sikh terrorists. By his own account, Sarabjit, who has a reward of Rs 50,000 on his head, stayed for about five months in Pakistan and was regularly in touch with some of the top extremists, including Attinderpal Singh, a key witness wanted in connection with the conspiracy behind Mrs Gandhi's assassination.

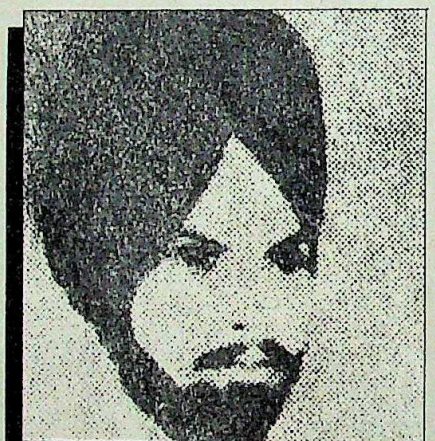
A prominent planner and recruiter for the terrorists, Sarabjit has made one of the most detailed and exhaustive disclosures about Pakistan's involvement starting from the time he was blindfolded and taken to Lahore and then to hide-outs and training camps in Pakistan. He has described Pakistani officials who trained him, and has furnished details about the crossing points along the Line of Actual Control.

The Sarabjit interrogation gives in some detail his transition from a goldsmith's son in Gurdaspur, to an AISSF activist during the Bhindranwale era and later to a prominent activist and planner. The transition was smooth: born in village Putligarh in Amritsar on March 5, 1958, the eldest of three brothers, Sarabjit was an intelligent student having passed MA in Punjabi with merit. But one crucial step led to another and Sarabjit's academic career ground to a halt when he became a member of the AISSF, as an activist of the outlawed organisation's Jammu unit. Sarabjit was slowly drawn to centre-stage by leaders like Harminder Singh Sandhu. He went underground after Operation Bluestar in June and with the Indian security agencies breathing down his neck, sought refuge in Pakistan where he was welcomed with open arms.

After his arrest last fortnight, he was subjected to intensive interrogation by various intelligence agencies. INDIA TODAY was able to obtain a portion of his interrogation report:

Initiation: "In 1978 I was baptised at the Anandpur Sahib gurudwara and after that I shifted to Jammu from Chandigarh and started organising the All-India Sikh Students Federation with the help of Avtar Singh. From '78 to '81 Avtar Singh and I were in the forefront, launching agitations and protest marches together. There were training camps in Jammu where training in the use of firearms was given. In one of them a young volunteer died of accidental gunshot wounds."

Morchas and agitations: Courted arrest several times in Jammu and also during the arrest of Bhindranwale.



Sarabjit: detailed disclosure

"During the Non-Aligned Meet I was asked by Sandhu to distribute some press releases to newspaper offices." Sarabjit claims that he had no idea what the releases related to. "In Delhi I met Virsa Singh and Sarabjit Singh Tony of Amritsar and distributed press releases. Virsa Singh later told me that he was responsible for the bomb blast at Palika Bazar." (INDIA TODAY, June 15).

Sarabjit is wary about admitting his involvement in any violent activity. In 1983, he was asked by Avtar Singh to carry arms to Amritsar several times. In June 1984, two Sikh youths confessed to him that they had bombed railway tracks. Sarabjit claims that by June 1984, he had completely stopped all his activity and gone underground.

Post-Bluestar and Pakistan: "In September I went to Srinagar and stayed in gurudwaras there. In the last week of November when I was in Singh Sabha in Raghunath Bazar in Jammu, two clean-shaved youths got in touch with me and offered to help me to cross the Actual Line of Control. I later received a message from Attinderpal Singh. On December 16, 1984, I took the help of these youths and crossed the Line of Actual Control from Devigarh village to a Pakistani checkpost near village Kharore. I reached at about 7 p.m. I told the ranger of the post to call military intelligence. After two-and-a-half hours, a jeep came and picked me up. I was taken to the next point which was a military guest-house in Sialkot. That was the day of the Pakistan referendum and no one talked to me.

"On December 21 a person named 'Malik' met me. I was taken to another place, a well-furnished house. Malik noted down my bio-data and asked for details about me. I was questioned for two to three days. I think Malik was a colonel in the Pak army. He was fair-complexioned, stout built, a mole on his left side cheek, about 35 years in age wearing a salwar kameez.

"I was taken to a well-furnished bungalow. The house was surrounded by a huge boundary wall about six feet high. I was kept indoors and my door was locked from outside. But I was looked after well. I realised that there were other Sikh youths staying in the same bungalow because I used to hear voices. One day, two Sikhs met me. One of them said his name was Faqir Singh and the other did not disclose his name.

"Malik asked me what I want. I told him that I want to meet Attinderpal Singh. Initially, he pleaded ignorance and claimed that he had no knowledge where he was. But two or three days later he promised to try and locate him. On January 5 I was shifted to another bungalow. We had to travel a lot in a jeep covered with curtains. We had to travel for about one-and-a-half hours. We then reached another bungalow again with high boundary walls. It was in a remote section of the city. Attinderpal Singh met me here.

"Others with him included S.Gurjit Singh (president, AISSF, Ferozepur) and Mohansingh Gardwai. In the bungalow, one Colonel Asif spoke to us. We told Asif that we wanted political asylum and financial help. Asif told us that our (the Pakistani) Government has yet to take a stand on the kind of support you (Sikh extremists) will get. But he promised to get guns. Our contention was that asy-

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lum should be given to us...we later learnt that some Sikh youths were in jail. We insisted that Asif take us there."

Planning and execution: "On February 17 we were all taken to another bungalow in the outskirts of Lahore. Asif took Attinderpal Singh and Gurjit Singh to jail where they met many other Sikh youths including Baldev Singh and Ajaib Singh.

"By March the political situation in Punjab had changed very fast. Attinderpal Singh and Gurjit Singh had differences. In spite of it we all sat together and discussed our strategy. It was decided that I would go to India with Baldev Singh. Pakistanis also liked the idea. By April we started receiving training from the Pakistanis. We were taught the use of revolvers and Sten guns and automatic weapons. We were also taught the use of chemicals.

"During our stay in Pakistan, Asif and Malik instigated the boys. We were repeatedly told that the Indian Government was crushing the Sikhs. We were also told to arrange for hide-outs and safe houses in Punjab. In Lahore, Amrik Singh of Akal Federation met us. It appears that there are approximtely 500 Sikh youths but I do not know whether all of them are receiving training. There are 300 to 350 youths in Kot Lakhpat jail and the rest have been kept in safe houses.

"On the night of April 12 and 13, Baldev Singh and I, with the help of Pakistani smugglers, crossed the Actual Line of Control. I do not know the name of the Indian post or the Pakistan post but we travelled for eight to ten hours... but I noticed that it was somewhere near Fazilka. Before leaving, Asif gave us one .455 revolver, 30 bullets and Rs 2,000 each for personal use. When I reached Amritsar I handed over the weapons to Baldev Singh. I began staying in the Golden Temple. On April 28-29, Baldev Singh came back with others, including Harminder Singh Kehlon and Dr Bagwan Singh.

"I told them of my desire to meet Baba Joginder Singh and in the first week of May, we—Kehlon, Dr Bhagwan Singh and myself—went to Rhode to meet Babaji. The talks were not encouraging. We demanded hide-outs but they refused.... Finally I was getting frustrated.... I was planning to surrender when I was actually arrested by the Amritsar police."

—RAJU SANTHANAM

Foundation, Lt-General Jaswant Singh Bhullar, head of the so-called World Sikh Organisation, to coordinate Sikh activities in North America;

► The Dal Khalsa, originally founded in India with one sole objective—the creation of an independent Sikh state. The UK branch was started in January 4, 1983 and a West German branch opened in June, 1983. The guiding light of the organisation was the late Giani Bakshish Singh, a Birmingham-based pro-Naxalite Sikh leader. Currently, the organisation is under the control of Jaswant Singh Thekedar, *mukh panch* of the Dal Khalsa, UK, who has issued statements like : "Only terror will help us to achieve Khalistan". He has been organising "education camps" for Sikhs in UK and West Germany and Vancouver, Canada. The Dal Khalsa was responsible for the hijack of an Indian Airlines Boeing to Lahore in September, 1983, and also claimed responsibility for the murder of Lala Jagat Narain and deputy inspector general of police, A.S. Atwal in Amritsar. The Dal Khalsa was outlawed by the Indian Government on May 1, 1982;

► The Babbar Khalsa: The organisation adopts the struggle of the Jews for the creation of Israel as a model for its activities. Mainly based in Canada, where it was established in 1981, it has lately extended its activities into the US, UK, Holland and West Germany. The Babbar Khalsa claims that Pakistan is the "natural and cultural neighbour of the Sikhs" and has launched an all-out effort to recruit Sikhs abroad for the creation of Khalistan through a Khalistan Liberation Army to be trained and armed abroad. In pursuit of this aim, in February 1982, the organisation hired Johan Vanderhorst, a veteran mercenary who had fought in Rhodesia, to train Sikh recruits in British Columbia. Vanderhorst hired fellow mercenaries by putting advertisements in Canadian papers offering them salaries of US $1,250 a month to train people in the use of weapons and combat techniques. In a later interview, Vanderhorst stated that he had been hired by a group of Sikhs to "help them take over the state of Punjab in India". The Indian Government obtained clandestine pictures of the training camp in British Columbia which had been handed over to the Canadian Government. In February 1984, Babbar Khalsa leader Sujan Singh Gill announced the setting up of suicide squads and issued warnings to all Sikhs who "showed weakness". The plot uncovered by the FBI of five Sikhs, including Lal Singh and Ammand Singh, to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi and Bhajan Lal in the US, is believed to have been organised by the Babbar Khalsa. The head of the organisation is Talwinder Singh Parmar. The organisation also seems to have unlimited funds and the FBI disclosed that the terrorists who they contacted had a 10-acre farm in Columbia, New Jersey, as a secret training base.

THE THREAT from Sikh extremist organisations abroad, as far as the Indian Government is concerned, is a serious one, specially in the light of the suspected sabotage of the Air-India jumbo, *Kanishka*, earlier this year. Recently, a clean-shaven Sikh, Gurmeet Singh Dhoot, was arrested by British police after being found target shooting in some woods outside Oxford. A search of his house revealed a mini bullet-making machine and a bullet-riddled, life-size cut-out of Rajiv Gandhi that had been used for target practice. The Indian Government has also confirmed reports of Sikhs frantically buying sophisticated arms in West Germany and Switzerland. The main buyers appear to be the US-based retired Sikh general Bhullar and his second in command, Rajinder Singh Purewal (Purewal was arrested in Vancouver some months ago with parts of an Israel Uzi machine-gun in his suitcase). Purewal is also known to have made two visits to Pakistan before his arrest in Canada.

Latest reports state that the Sikhs are also getting training from IRA veterans in sabotage techniques and the use of explosives for payment of large sums of money. The other source of finance is, of course, Pakistan agents abroad. The Havelock Road gurudwara in London, the most important gurudwara outside India and one frequented by Pakistani diplomats, had sent £1,00,000 to Bhindranwale in early 1984, according to Indian intelligence reports. Further, the Pakistan Embassy in London had set up a 'Khalistan cell' in 1981 manned by four army officers headed by a brigadier, which has been coordinating anti-India activities on behalf of the Pakistan Government. Beant Singh Dhatt, general secretary of the Shepherd's Bush gurudwara, has stated that he was contacted on numerous occasions by Pakistan diplomats who gave him secessionist literature and offered money to propagate Khalistan. Dhatt also alleged that the Sikh militants were also receiving money from the Chinese Embassy. Indian Government intelligence on external groups has increased dramati-

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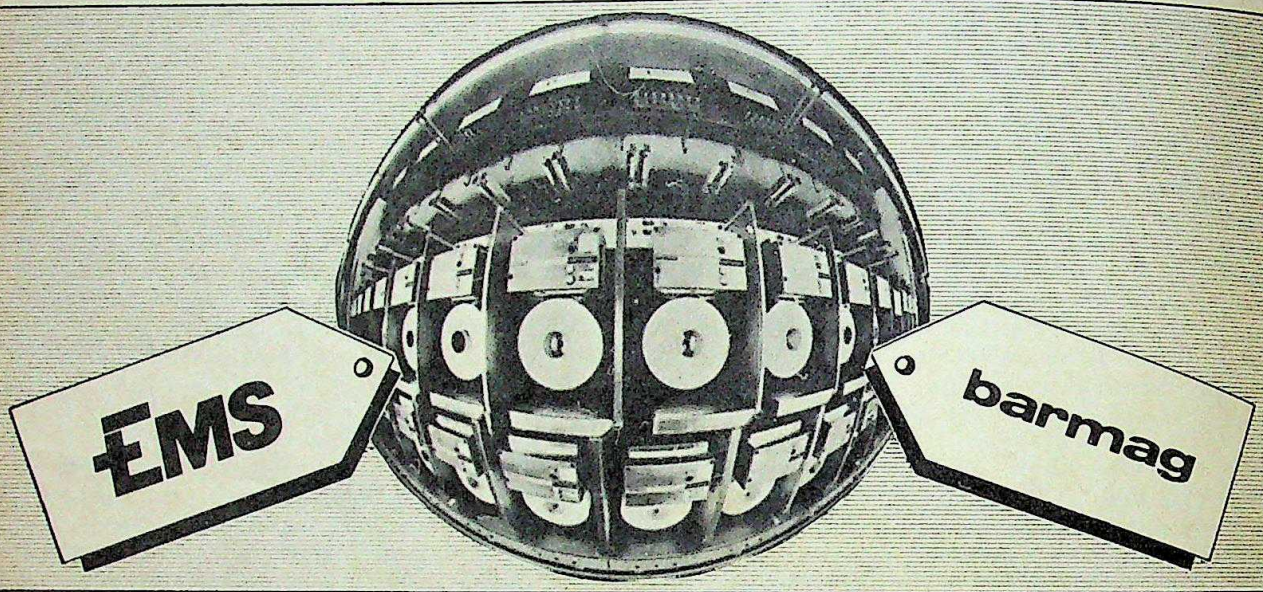

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The yarn of tomorrow

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PRESSMA

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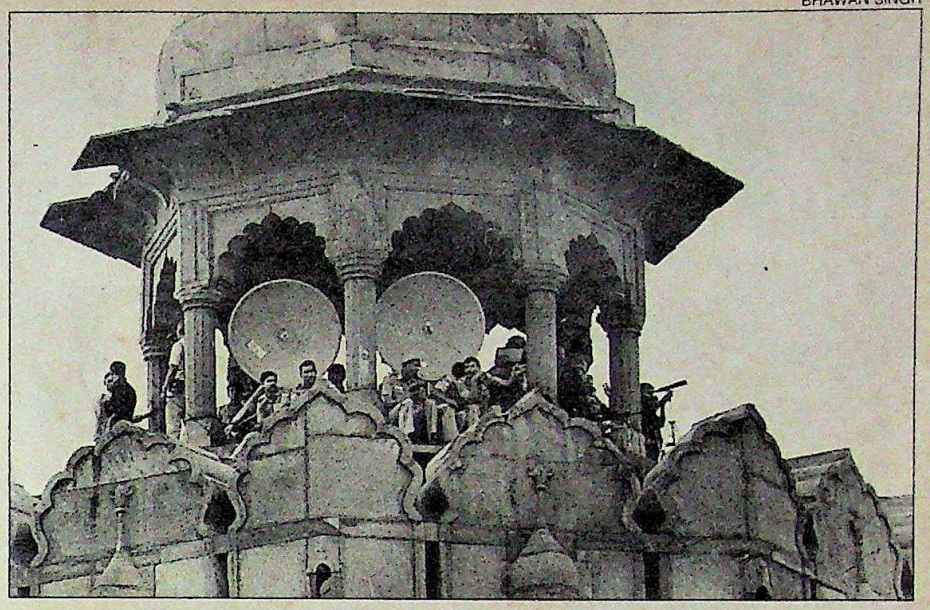
cally in the last two years, mainly because of the additional intelligence operatives from RAW and the IB that have been posted under diplomatic cover in key embassies like Toronto, Vancouver, London, Washington, New York, Bonn and Paris.

Europe and North America, however, are not the only centres of Sikh separatism. Two months ago, Indian intelligence agencies uncovered a complex plot involving a large racket in foreign exchange which was being collected from wealthy Sikhs in India and sent via Dubai to Mexico where an underground training centre for Sikhs is apparently operating. Investigations established that over Rs 6 crore had already been sent out through the conduit. But so far, the Government's knowledge of Sikh terrorist activities abroad has yielded little in terms of diplomatic results. At least ten prominent terrorists wanted for murder and sedition in India who have been arrested by foreign security agencies in the US, UK, West Germany and Canada, have had Indian extradition requests pending against them for months.

BUT THE strategy of the Indian Government is to now put additional pressure on governments that are not responsive to India's requests to crack down on Sikh extremism. One example is Britain, where the lucrative Westland helicopter deal was abruptly aborted when it was in its final stages and government sources say that this practice should eventually pay dividends, specially in the case of European countries with large business and financial stakes in India. Inside the country, the strategy is to tighten up borders and entry points to deny access to Sikh terrorists entering from Pakistan or abroad and all border forces have been issued shoot at sight orders. Though the border with Pakistan is physically impossible to seal, the BSF and other border organisations have been supplemented with additional forces at known crossing points so that surveillance at least is maintained at peak level. But that will not be easy considering that terrorists have started entering from Nepal and Bangladesh as well. Last month, the Ministry of External Affairs was in possession of a top secret report from Nepal which indicated that Sikh terrorists are being trained by Chinese agents at certain locations in that country for infiltration into India, thus adding a new dimension to the problem.

BHAWAN SINGH



Special security personnel on duty at Red Fort on Independence Day

Government officials involved in tackling the problem, however, are confident that the terrorists currently operating within the country, at least, are on the run. "They now have little chance of regrouping or coordinating their activities since we have a better and clearer idea of their movements now," says a senior police official in Punjab. The general belief is that local terrorists are split up into a number of small mobile groups operating independently of each other and mainly confined to northern India. In that belief, intelligence agencies are currently engaged in the most extensive and concerted operation ever to track down the main groups and eliminate them from the scene. "In its entirety, the operation is massive in scale and in terms of the coordinated inputs we are getting and we are hopeful of success," says a senior IB official.

According to conservative estimates, there are currently a total of 10,000 security personnel including officers and men engaged full-time in tackling terrorism, most of them in Punjab. This is apart from the para military forces like the CRPF and the BSF who are also involved in terrorist-related activity. In Punjab, four battalions (approximately 4,500 men) of the Punjab Armed Police under the command of a Jalandhar-based Inspector General of Police (operations) K.P.S.Gill who was involved earlier in curbing the Assam agitation, are solely involved in anti-terrorist operations. For the coming elections, this force will be considerably supplemented by some 17,000 additional CRPF personnel.

But in the long run, coordinating officials are convinced that a return to normalcy in Punjab will prove the main deterrent for terrorists. The Punjab Government has already released over 3,000 people held in jail after Operation Bluestar and more releases are expected soon, including those of AISSF activists against whom no specific cases are registered. Arjun Singh has also issued an appeal to all Sikh youth who are underground to give themselves up and pledged that they would be dealt with leniently under the due process of the law. Already, the response to the appeal has been surprisingly satisfactory and Punjab administration officials feel that more will come forward after the elections in September.

Ultimately, however, officials realise that terrorism is going to be a permanent problem, perhaps not on the scale it has been earlier, but still capable of major upheavals in terms of the selection of targets. The crucial test of both the Government's confidence and the terrorists' disruptive capability will be in the coming elections in Punjab. Government sources say that security will be the tightest-ever for any election held anywhere in the world and that with the obvious targets—the candidates—identified, they are confident of countering the threat with minimal loss of life. That of course, is still the ultimate irony, that the moment of truth for Indian terrorism and the forces ranged against them will be in an election in Punjab, where it all started in the hands of a minor but mesmeric village priest.

—DILIP BOBB with
RAJU SANTHANAM and SHEKHAR GUPTA

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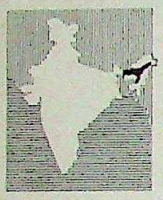
ASSAM

Celebration of Peace

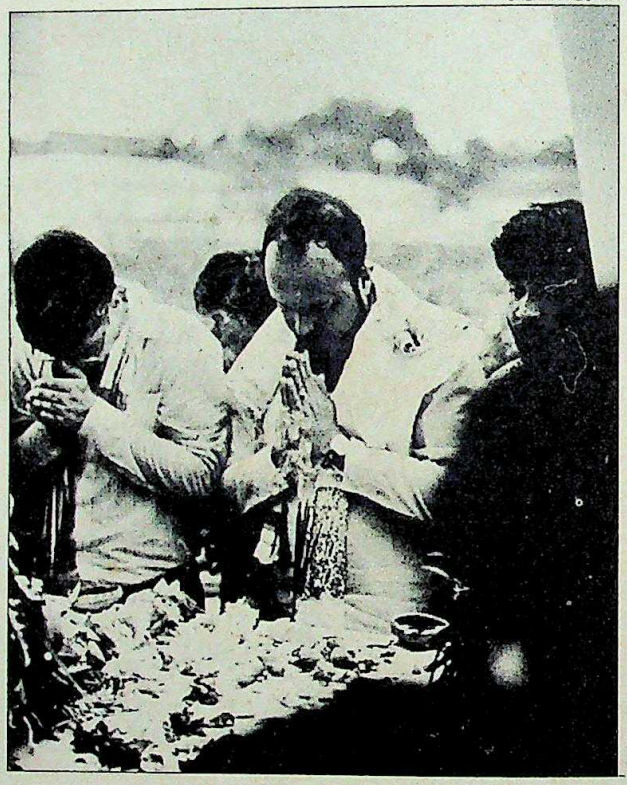


RONGALI Bihu is the premier Assamese festival of rejoicing and merrymaking. And this year, it seems, it came four months later than usual. Armed with the copy of the accord signed with the Centre, as the 50-odd leaders of the six-year-old anti-foreigners agitation landed at Guwahati's Borjhar airport last fortnight, the ethnic Assamese population suddenly found itself in the kind of frenzy it had not known for years. From the airport, to the Judges' Field, in the heart of the town 22 km away, over three lakh people, men, women and little children, burst into spontaneous dancing and slogan-shouting. For once, it seemed, even the agitation leaders had failed to gauge the popular mood as an AAGSP leader realised on walking out of the airport lounge and doing a little Bihu jig. Within a minute he was being pushed back by the policemen as the stampede began and thousands lunged forward to get a glimpse of the returning heroes. "They were so desperate to touch them only I know how difficult it was to bring them out of the airport safely," said Guwahati police superintendent Rajiv Mehta, ruing the loss of his name-plate and his trousers torn in the melee.

The convoy inched forward and the scenes of frenzied rejoicing were repeated en route at the Guwahati University Campus, for many years the nucleus of all agitational activity in the state. Girl students showered flower petals, boys burst crackers, many shouted "Hiteswar Saikia we will bury you alive" and then in one solemn moment the agitation leaders got off the shoulders of their supporters and prostrated themselves before the stately martyrs' column with a chorus of *mekhala chadar* clad girls singing *"Hey swahid tomak sahasra pranam"* (O martyr a thousand salutations to you.) Said Jonai Rehman, one of the chorus girls, later: "This is a moment of celebration. Now we have to make it complete with a victory in the elections".

That indeed was also on the minds of the movement leaders as they strode the podium at Judges' Field where it had all begun six years ago on the call of 'Glory to Mother Assam', building up to the kind of mass movement the country had never seen, not even in the days of Gandhi.

SHEKHAR GUPTA



Mahanta at martyrs' memorial

Arising out of the Assamese fear of losing their cultural identity and political power because of the unbridled influx of Bengali-speaking infiltrators from the bordering districts of Bangladesh, the movement had the state administration paralysed for four years, and for a substantial period the agitators blocked the supply of the state's oil and plywood to the rest of the country. What began as a by and large peaceful movement found a violent catharsis in the February 1983 election which, in the face of a boycott by the ethnic Assamese, cost thousands of lives. But today the agitation leaders were, for a change, looking forward to an election. "We have had to make compromises but we have won a victory," said All Assam Students' Union (AASU) President Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and then added the tell-tale observation: "We were not going to walk into Dispur stealthily. We will go there after winning the election." Shortly afterwards, AASU leaders and activists were making it clear that Mahanta and AASU General Secretary Bhrigu Kumar Phukan were planning to launch a new, regional political party, perhaps amalgamating Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal, a constituent of the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and sundry other regional groups. Almost immediately efforts began to work out new political alignments to forge a front against the Congress(I), obviously the Assamese elite's *bete noire*. Even more than the Congress(I), in fact, the ire was now directed at Hiteswar Saikia, frail Ahom chief minister who had kept the agitators at bay for over two years now, burrowing into their organisation's soft underbelly—the Muslim students—in his relentless, cruel quest to split it from within.

'High on cannabis, Saikia is lost in his long slumber', was the favourite slogan of the throng, but the wily Ahom from Sibsagar is hardly the kind to be caught unawares. Making good use of the week-long gap between the signing of the accord and the agitators' return to Guwahati he had already stolen a tactical march over them, claiming the agreement as something he had achieved for the Assamese and minorities and accusing the AASU and AAGSP for "running such an expensive movement for so long to achieve so little". In an audacious move Saikia, who had hung on to his chair by the skin of his teeth, printed the text of the accord as an Assam Government document carrying a cleverly-worded foreword signed by him, offering "all cooperation to the Centre in implementing the accord." Said he: "This accord is my victory," arguing: "This is the best possible thing for the minorities. Earlier the Government officials could harass any poor Bengali who did not have a citizenship certificate. Now all those who came before 1966 have been regularised. I will obviously seek people's mandate on the accord."

For a man who had just dissolved his state Assembly and converted his cabinet into one with mere caretaking responsibilities, Saikia today presents a remarkably tenacious exterior. "What has the AASU gained if the next election is going to be held on the basis of the 1971 electoral

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rolls?" he asks. He rules out all possibility of the disenfranchisement of the 1966-71 infiltrators before the forthcoming election, saying that will take at least a year.

This, indeed, is the movement leaders' Achilles' heel. Over the years, and through endless rounds of negotiations with the Centre, the movement leaders have maintained that as far as the presence of foreigners on the electoral rolls is concerned they will make no compromise. But now they face the paradox of fighting the next election with the names of all the 1966-71 entrants on the rolls. It is a strange anomaly, for it is theoretically possible that a person from this stream may be elected chief minister in the forthcoming election and may then be disenfranchised under the accord. The agitators accept that it is inconvenient to analyse this paradox but plead that there was no way out.

But this kind of realism does not detract from the fact that the implementation of the accord is likely to involve insurmountable practical problems. No one yet believes that people who came into the state almost two decades back could now be effectively identified and there are specific problems such as:

▸ The 1967 electoral rolls, which will form the basis of the identification of the 1966-71 entrants are available only for 57 of the 126 constituencies. Partial rolls are available for 40 constituencies and none for the rest.

▸ The accord implies that all those who were expelled in the '60s under the Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan (PIP) scheme and returned subsequently will have to be identified and deported all over again. Their numbers are likely to be over 2.5 lakh and for their identification the government agencies will need to go behind 1966, leading to additional complications.

▸ Since the foreigners of the 1966-71 stream will be voting in the next poll it will be legally difficult to disenfranchise them subsequently. In fact according to many legal experts they could later go to the courts and easily get their disenfranchisement struck down.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"This is the best possible thing for the minorities ...Now all those who came before 1966 have been regularised. I will seek the people's mandate on the accord."

HITESWAR SAIKIA
chief minister of Assam

Government officials in Delhi and Dispur, however, say this will not look all that different once the new machinery to handle this task is constituted. But as of now no one even wants to talk about the specifics of doing this. Says V. Ramakrishnan, deputy chief election commissioner: "As far as we are concerned the Election Commission has nothing to do about this yet. For any action, as a matter of fact, the accord will have to be first translated into legislation."

Besides implementation, the accord will also add substantially to the existing ethnic and communal tensions. Minority leaders rightly point out that once the entrants of the 1966-71 stream are identified and their names put on a list for disenfranchisement they will always be open to harassment. This is also expressed by the Left-Front CPI(M) leaders in neighbouring West Bengal.

In fact within 24 hours of the announcement of the accord the West Bengal Government ordered a special alert along the Assam-Bengal border to prevent a refugee influx. And even though nothing really happened, Jalpaiguri's Forward Bloc leader and state Industries Minister Nirmal Bose argued that large numbers of non-Assamese families were bound to trickle into the state, creating "intolerable tensions in north Bengal as land availability shrinks and prices soar." West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu personally led the chorus of protest calling the award "absurd and improper" and after a meeting held on August 21, the Left Front decided to launch a movement

THE ACCORD

No Losers

ADDRESSING a rally in Guwahati on August 12 the prime minister promised an accord on the Assam problem that will leave no winners or losers. And true to that promise the authors of the accord have performed a remarkable balancing trick. For example:

▸ The accord lays down January 1, 1966 as the base year for detection of foreigners. While for the agitators it reads better than the 1967 offer made to them by former governor L.P. Singh five years ago, it changes nothing effectively as the 1967 electoral rolls will still be the basic document for the identification of foreigners. Also, from the minorities' point of view it protects the large number of Bengali Hindus who came in the wake of the 1965 India-Pakistan conflict. Besides, the names of people who came in between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, will be deleted from electoral rolls for only 10 years and those who entered Assam after March 25, 1971 will continue to be identified and expelled.

▸ Special steps to protect the linguistic, cultural and social identity of the Assamese people have all along been promised by the Centre. But the accord is unspecific on the steps though the movement leaders say they are supposed to nominate a small sub-committee to hammer out the details with the Government. In any case, the package does not contain anything as drastic as a ban on outsiders buying property in Assam which had been widely anticipated.

▸ An obvious sop to the agitators is the promise to reconsider sympathetically the cases of disciplinary action and criminal cases, except those for heinous crimes, filed in the course of the agitation. For the relatively harmless kind of agitator the Government has offered to raise the upper age limit in public services. Most Assamese students lost two to three academic years in the course of the agitation.

The package effectively seals a long-standing controversy without involving any major concessions on government policy or loss of face by the agitators. The minorities in Assam differ with it but even for them the accord could mean a positive change if it achieved its main objective, of bringing about lasting ethnic and linguistic peace.

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ELECTORAL ROLLS

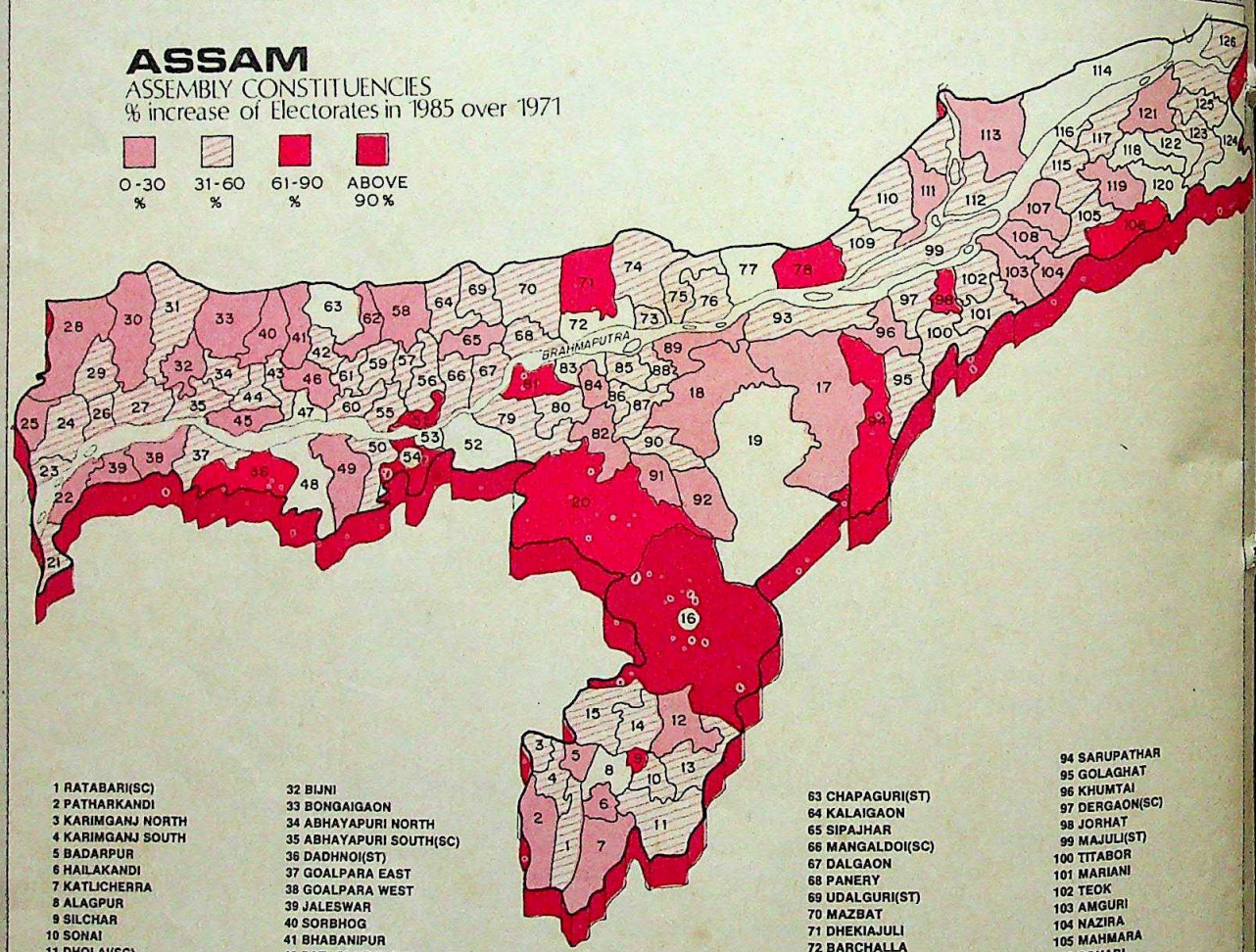
New Problems

FOR OVER six years now, an agreement on a cut-off year was considered the key to the solution of the Assam riddle. But last fortnight, as that landmark was reached, officials and politicians realised that the cut-off year was only the beginning of what promises to be a whole new problem.

Officials say the task of cleaning up the electoral rolls beginning with 1966 is daunting, if not impossible. The crux of the problem is numbers. The agitators have always argued that the electoral rolls contain the names of at least two million foreigners. The Government maintains that the numbers are much lower. To find out the truth the election officials have conducted an intensive door-to-door enumeration all over the state and the Election Commission is finalising electoral rolls updated backwards to 1971.

The list compiled by the enumerators was compared with the 1971 electoral rolls. The 70 lakh names that figured in the 1971 rolls were retained in the new rolls and so were their direct descendants. Intensive, individual investigations were then carried out on the antecedents of the remaining three million listed in the course of the enumera-

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



1 RATABARI(SC)
2 PATHARKANDI
3 KARIMGANJ NORTH
4 KARIMGANJ SOUTH
5 BADARPUR
6 HAILAKANDI
7 KATLICHERRA
8 ALAGPUR
9 SILCHAR
10 SONAI
11 DHOLAI(SC)
12 UDHARBOND
13 LAKHIPUR
14 BORKHOLA
15 KATIGORA
16 HAFLONG(ST)
17 BOKAJAN(ST)
18 HOWRAGHAT(ST)
19 DIPHU(ST)
20 BAITHALANGSO(ST)
21 MANKACHAR
22 SALMARA SOUTH
23 DHUBRI
24 GAURIPUR
25 GOLOKGANJ
26 BILASIPARA WEST
27 BILASIPARA EAST
28 GOSSAIGAON
29 KOKRAJHAR WEST(ST)
30 KOKRAJHAR EAST(ST)
31 SIDLI(ST)
32 BIJNI
33 BONGAIGAON
34 ABHAYAPURI NORTH
35 ABHAYAPURI SOUTH(SC)
36 DADHNOI(ST)
37 GOALPARA EAST
38 GOALPARA WEST
39 JALESWAR
40 SORBHOG
41 BHABANIPUR
42 PATACHARKUCHI
43 BARPETA
44 JANIA
45 BAGHBOR
46 SARUKHETRI
47 CHENGA
48 BOKO(SC)
49 CHAYAGAON
50 PALASBARI
51 JALUKBARI
52 DISPUR
53 GAUHATI EAST
54 GAUHATI WEST
55 HAJO
56 KAMALPUR
57 RANGIYA
58 TAMULPUR
59 NALBARI
60 BARKHETRI
61 DHARMAPUR
62 BARAMA(ST)
63 CHAPAGURI(ST)
64 KALAIGAON
65 SIPAJHAR
66 MANGALDOI(SC)
67 DALGAON
68 PANERY
69 UDALGURI(ST)
70 MAZBAT
71 DHEKIAJULI
72 BARCHALLA
73 TEZPUR
74 RANGAPARA
75 SOOTEA
76 BISWANATH
77 BEHALI
78 GOHPUR
79 JAGIROAD(SC)
80 MARIGAON
81 LAHARIGHAT
82 RAHA
83 DHING
84 BATADRAVA
85 RUPAHIHAT
86 NOWGONG
87 BARHAMPUR
88 SAMAGURI
89 KALIABOR
90 JAMUNAMUKH
91 HOJAI
92 LUMDING
93 BOKAKHAT
94 SARUPATHAR
95 GOLAGHAT
96 KHUMTAI
97 DERGAON(SC)
98 JORHAT
99 MAJULI(ST)
100 TITABOR
101 MARIANI
102 TEOK
103 AMGURI
104 NAZIRA
105 MAHMARA
106 SONARI
107 THOWRA
108 SIBSAGAR
109 BIHPURIA
110 NAOBOICHA
111 LAKHIMPUR
112 DHAKUAKHANA(ST)
113 DHEMAJI(ST)
114 JONAI(ST)
115 MORAN
116 DIBRUGARH
117 LAHOWAL
118 DULIAJAN
119 TINGKHONG
120 NAHARKATIA
121 CHABUA
122 TINSUKIA
123 DIGBOI
124 MARGHERITA
125 DOOM DOOMA
126 SADIYA

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tion. Now, with the rolls more or less finalised for 113 of the 126 constituencies, Election Commission officials confirm that over five lakh names have already been struck out. The chopping will be greater in the remaining constituencies and finally, after the claims and objections are sorted out, the fresh electoral rolls could have about seven lakh voters less than the adults enumerated earlier this year. This will also contribute later to making the process of detection and deportation of the post-1971 infiltrators easier. The list can serve as a basic document for detection and deportation.

But election officials admit that even their present task, of rectifying the rolls with 1971 as the base year for holding the forthcoming elections in the state is far from easy. After a series of meetings with the Assam agitation leaders Chief Election Commissioner R.K. Trivedi conceded their demand for a thorough review of the enumerated list and draft rolls in the 13 constituencies spread all over lower and central Assam. Seven of these, expectedly, fall in the Goalpara region bordering Bangladesh and the rest from the regions of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong dominated by immigrant Muslims. The Election Commission has now appointed a senior officer in each of the 13 constituencies to act as additional chief electoral officer (ACEO) and supervise the review. "This is being done most thoroughly, at the level of senior officers. We have even got officers of commissioner's rank as ACEO's and from the police side we have deputy inspector-generals. This process is not being handled by constables any more," says Assam Chief Electoral Officer P.C.Mishra. The Assam agitators, however, are still sceptical.

At the other end of the spectrum, the minorities have the opposite view. They argue that the Election Commission's demands on an individual to prove his Indian citizenship are too exacting. "How many poor people in Indian villages possess birth or citizenship certificates?" asks Amit Kumar Nag, the Guwahati-based correspondent of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The leaders argue that such documents as school certificates, ration cards and radio licences should be considered proof of citizenship. Even Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia sent a letter to Trivedi, complaining about the attitude of the commission. But Trivedi was not impressed by the chief minister's arguments.

against the award.

Ironically, irritating though it was, the protests from West Bengal also brought unexpected relief to the Assam agitators. "If the accord brings us nothing new, as Saikia has been claiming, why has it got Jyoti Basu so upset?" they asked their audiences at a series of mass contact meetings in the Brahmaputra valley last fortnight. But they were not underestimating Saikia's capacity to exploit the compromises made in the accord later at the hustings.

PRIVATELY, they also admit that they are awed by the kind of defiance Saikia has been able to put up before the party high command. At the talks, it seems, the Government had agreed to retaining Saikia as the head of a three or four-member caretaker cabinet. But Saikia retained 17, explaining it away to the prime minister in the light of his "political compulsions". This was also his way of slighting the agitation leaders. But even Saikia realises that he cannot take this defiance too far, for his future depends on whether the high command lets him lead the party in the poll.

And he has already had his little brush with authority. On August 12, as Rajiv Gandhi visited Guwahati in connection with the party centenary celebrations, Dharanidhar Basumatari, the state Congress(I) chief loudly asked at the public meeting: "Today, let me ask where is AASU, where is AAGSP?" The prime minister later sternly pulled up Saikia for having allowed that on the eve of a possible accord with the agitators. It is thus not for no reason now that Basumatari finds his head on the chopping block. The high command is likely to choose a new party chief for the state within the next few days.

The Centre, it is obvious will not allow the precious gains in Assam to be frittered away, for the stakes are high. An accord in Assam, sources in North Block say, should promise peace not just in the state but in the rest of the north-eastern states surrounding Assam. For example, in Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur, the insurgencies by themselves are incapable of causing widespread trouble, barring the odd ambush here and there. So far the malcontents had looked up to Assam to maintain a disturbed atmosphere in the region, straining the security forces' resources. The accord changes all this. Intelligence sources reveal that feelers have already begun to come in. While Mizoram is already on the verge of a solution with Laldenga making highly conciliatory statements at Aizawl last fortnight, clear signals are also being perceived in Tripura. The Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) guerrillas have killed over two dozen policemen in the past six months and have not conceded any ground to the security forces despite repeated induction of fresh paramilitary troops. But last fortnight TNV sympathisers were circulating pamphlets in the tribal areas, containing a tell-tale message from Bejoy Hrangkhawl, the TNV supremo, saying: "If the Government can negotiate across the table with the Mizos, what is wrong with doing the same with us?" This is obviously an olive branch.

Interestingly, intelligence men place the two recent ambushes by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in similar perspective. "That is their own way of reminding the Government of their presence, of saying that we are also around," says an officer. But the possibility of a thaw with the NSCN, by far the most belligerent and militarily the strongest of all the north-eastern insurgent groups is not merely a matter of conjecture. Nagaland Chief Minister S. Chubatoshi Jamir has been frequently sending mediators to the NSCN hideouts in Burma. Says he: "Yes, we are in touch with the NSCN including its leaders Muivah and Isaac Swu. They are keen to have talks with the Centre and we think that it is the best course to peace even if it takes slightly longer."

Clearly, on the north-eastern front the Centre is now looking for permanent gains and the crucial question is the kind of price it is prepared to pay for this. There is talk already of the possibility of some kind of an electoral adjustment between the Congress(I) and the movement leaders who have nothing against the Central Government. "Rajiv Gandhi is a dynamic leader. We have nothing against him or the Central Government," says AASU executive member Gagan Dutta. In fact over the past fortnight Guwahati has seen the strange spectacle of people shouting *zindabad* for Rajiv Gandhi and *murdabad* for Saikia. That leaves the Centre with a tricky problem.

In the course of the talks, as the deadlock on Saikia's fate entered the early hours of Independence Day, Rajiv Gandhi clinched the issue with a disarming: "Be reasonable. I cannot cause a revolt in my party." That dilemma still exists. If Saikia goes there will be widespread protests within the party. If he stays, the movement leadership and Congress(I) will continue to be ranged on the opposite sides, accord or no accord.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Guwahati

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NATIONAL ANTHEM

Jana Gana Mana

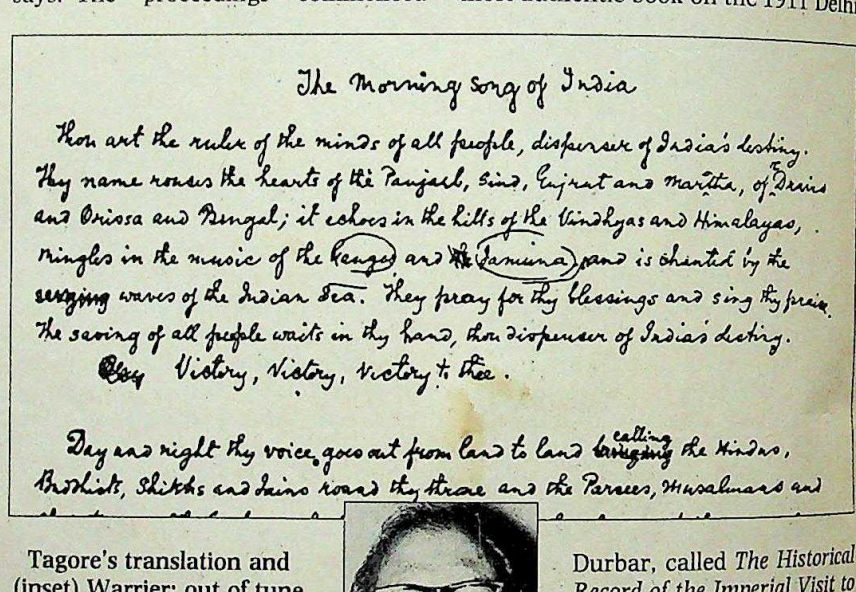
WAS INDIA'S national anthem composed as a patriotic song—or did it celebrate the visit of King George V, Britain's monarch who arrived in India in December 1911 when Rabindranath Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* was first sung? The controversy is about as old as the song, having recurred at periodic intervals even after the Constituent Assembly formally adopted it as the Republic's national anthem in 1950. Now, M.V.Krishna Warrier, headmaster of an obscure Sanskrit school at Palazhi near Trichur, has given the controversy a new currency. He has sought to substitute it with a Sanskrit verse of his own—a kind of mellifluous lullaby with a patriotic content so obtrusive that even the staunchest patriot flinches with embarrassment.

Warrier had recently banned the national anthem from his experimental school where all the 49 students read, write and talk in Sanskrit. But the Union Education Ministry intervened last fortnight, threatening to dub the substitution of the national anthem as a criminal offence. Warrier promptly complied with the government order by lifting the ban on *Jana Gana Mana* in his school. But the debate smouldered on, this time with editorial patronage from *Janmabhumi*, the Malayalam organ of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Warrier himself told INDIA TODAY he had a great deal of respect for Tagore but that *Jana Gana Mana* was not worthy of being the national anthem because it was written to herald the arrival of George V in India.

The allegation drew predictable flak from Visva-Bharati, the university founded by Tagore at Santiniketan in West Bengal. Its historian Vice-Chancellor, Nemai Sadhan Bose, wrote off Warrier's-charge as "ill-informed gibberish". The views of the Visva-Bharati establishment, including those of Bose and Prabodh Chandra Sen, a widely acclaimed Tagore scholar who authored a book on the national anthem, centred on the poet's own disclaimer in a letter written to a friend in 1939. Tagore wrote: "I should only insult myself if I cared to answer those who consider me capable of such unbounded stupidity as to sing in praise of George the Fourth or George the Fifth as the Eternal Charioteer...."

The charge, as it were, sprang from a discrepancy in newspaper reports of the proceedings of the 28th session of the Indian National Congress, held in Calcutta on December 26 and 27, 1911. *Jana Gana Mana* was first sung on the second day's session. The Congress, at that time, was dominated by the moderates who were grateful to the British for having annulled the 1905 Bengal partition. Tagore's sympathies clearly lay with the moderates led by Gokhale and S.N. Bannerjee as opposed to the fire-spewing radicals dominated by Tilak. The official report of the 28th session of the Indian National Congress, which Sen quotes, says: "The proceedings commenced with a patriotic song composed by Babu Rabindranath Tagore, the leading poet of Bengal...then a Hindi song, paying heartfelt homage to their Imperial Majesties was sung by the Bengali boys and girls in chorus".

Sen thinks that the Anglo-Indian press of the times was merely interested in reporting the "loyalty resolution" and had therefore adopted a cavalier attitude with regard to actual details, such as which song was sung when and for what. At any rate, the official report of the Congress gives the lie to the speculation that Tagore's song had anything to do with the royal visit. Significantly, the most authentic book on the 1911 Delhi Durbar, called *The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India, 1911*, written by John Murray in 1914, has no mention of any Bengali song.



The Morning Song of India

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny. Thy name rouses the hearts of the Punjab, Sind, Gujrat and Maratha, of Dravida and Orissa and Bengal; it echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of the Ganges and Jamuna and is chanted by the surging waves of the Indian Sea. They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise. The saving of all people waits in thy hand, thou dispenser of India's destiny. Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land calling the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round thy throne and the Parsees, Musalmans and

Tagore's translation and (inset) Warrier: out of tune

Sombre, slightly repetitive around the opening but marked by vivacity and pace when played by military bands, *Jana Gana Mana* was adopted as the national anthem following tough competition from *Bande Mataram*, the theme song of India's struggle against colonialism. Mahatma Gandhi called it "not only a song but a devotional hymn". Nehru defended it at the Constituent Assembly when he called it "distinctive and different". Finally, on its formal adoption on January 24, 1950, all members of the Constituent Assembly sang it in chorus, with both Nehru and Rajendra Prasad, joining in.

Warrier and his supporters will obviously be hard put to find enough arguments against the historical, and musical, sanction for what Tagore himself later described as "the morning song of India".

—SUMIT MITRA

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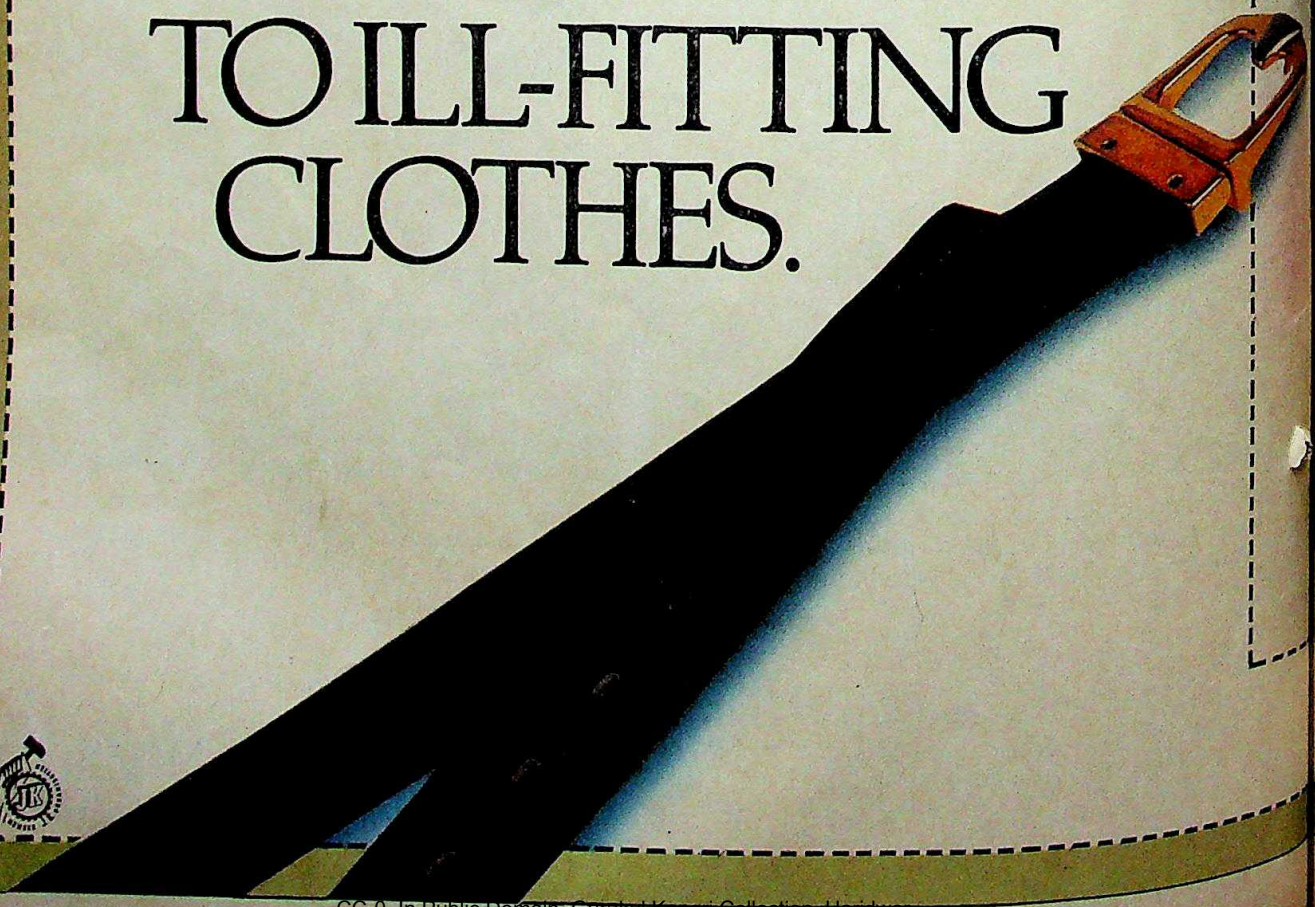
EVER SINCE I DISCOVERED RAYMOND'S READYMADES, IT'S GOODBYE TO ILL-FITTING CLOTHES.



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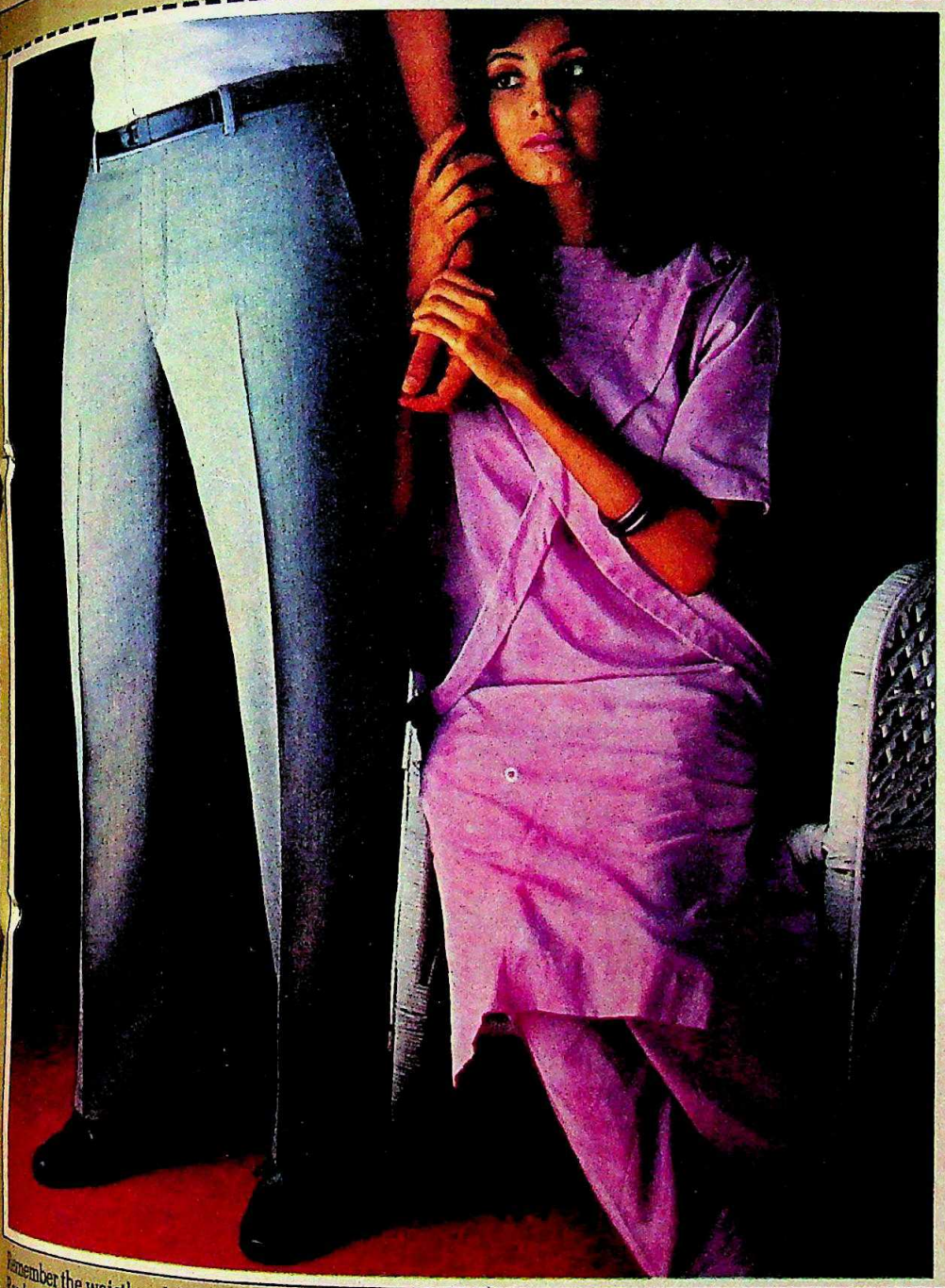

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Trousers
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Safaris
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•
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Location courtesy: The Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay.

Raymond's Mens Wear

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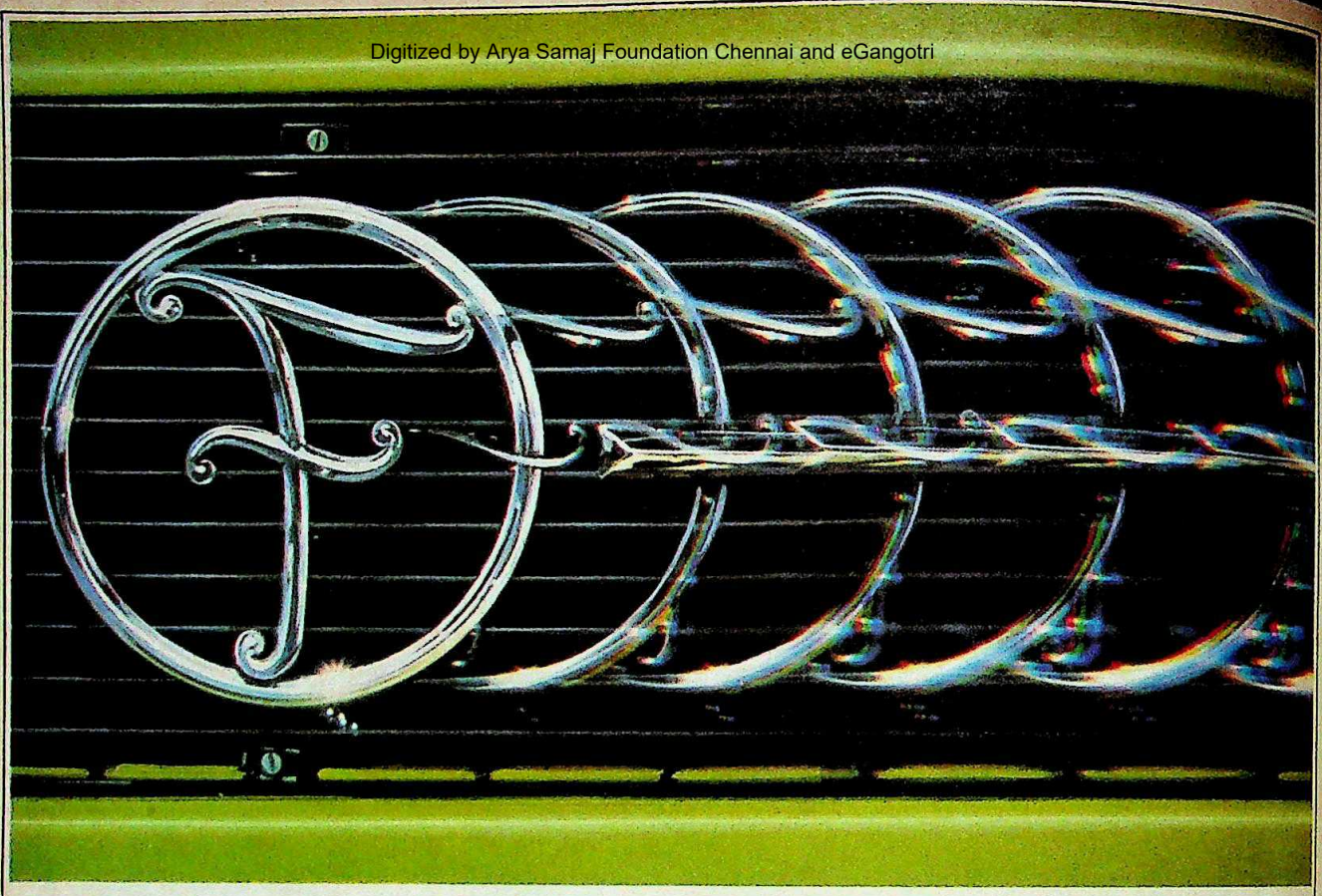

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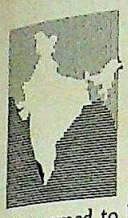
KERALA

Point of no Return



HIS DETRACTORS have often likened the brash Balakrishna Pillai—sarcastically—to Napoleon. But last fortnight the once invincible gadfly of Kerala politics seemed to have met his Waterloo. Even after a full bench of the Kerala High Court dismissed the by now famous "Pillai case" the former electricity minister found himself unwanted by the ruling United Democratic Front. The case involved a petition filed by K.C.Chandy, a Congress(I) functionary, against Pillai seeking a writ restraining him from continuing as a minister. The petitioner had contended that by making a seditious speech at Cochin during his party's convention last May Pillai had violated his oath of office and therefore had absolutely no right to remain a minister. Pillai had resigned when the writ petition was admitted by Justice Radhakrishna Menon.

However he had been banking on returning to the Cabinet once the case was dealt with. Indeed, soon after its disposal K.M.Mani and P.J.Joseph, his Kerala Congress bosses, demanded his reinstatement. But Chief Minister K. Karunakaran and his Congress(I) MLA's were far from welcoming. Congress(I) MP's from Kerala too have requested Karunakaran to keep Pillai out of the Cabinet. Party sources point out that the court had not exonerated Pillai, it had only said that the question of whether a minister had committed a breach of privilege was not within the scope of judicial review. And G.Karthikeyan, the state Youth Congress(I) president and MLA who is very close to Karunakaran, must have been echoing his master's sentiments when he said: "The chief minister is well within his rights in having a closer look at the case. The question here is whether Pillai—a man against whom there are serious charges involving the integrity of the country—should be taken back."

The Congress(I) has good reason to be wary of rehabilitating Pillai whose controversial image has been further tarnished in the period that he has been out of power. *Mathrubhumi*, a leading newspaper of the state, came out with a story soon after he quit about his lavish life-style and personal wealth which included four luxury mansions. Pillai says his father was the richest landlord in Quilon district and he had inherited his wealth. But said a Congress(I) minister: "What Pillai forgot to say was that he had five sisters and as per the Nair family partition system all his sisters should have got an equal share. Today he is definitely a hundred times richer than any of his sisters."

The next scandal to hit Pillai concerned leaks at the Edamalayar hydroelectric project (INDIA TODAY, August 31). The contractor responsible was Pillai's own partyman and allegations were aired that Pillai as the then electricity minister was hand in glove with him. Suspicions were strengthened when K.M.Mani, who had taken over the electricity portfolio after Pillai's resignation, refused to institute a judicial enquiry into the Edamalayar leaks. And to top it all, last month a close relative of Pillai who was an agent of the electricity board had his premises raided by income tax men. They discovered unaccounted money as well as promissory notes and foreign exchange in violation of Reserve Bank rules.

It seemed the ex-electricity minister's travails were never-ending. Days after the high court judgement, Malayankil Nair, an advocate, filed a petition before the three-man commission set up under the Kerala Public Men Prevention of Corruption Act alleging that Pillai's Cochin speech was a wilful contravention of the laws of the country. And not to be left behind, K.C.Chandy decided to approach the governor for action. Said he: "If Pillai is allowed to become a minister once again without any further enquiry it will amount to a contemptuous disregard of the judgement of the high court."

For a man who gained notoriety by speaking his mind at any opportunity, Pillai was being remarkably reticent even as the issue picked up momentum. As he told INDIA TODAY: "I am more sinned against than sinning. Regarding the latest developments it is better for me to keep my mouth shut." But his party, which values Pillai as the only prominent Nair leader in a party of Christians, was solidly behind him. Said P.J.Joseph, revenue minister and chairman of the Kerala Congress: "It is a basic principle that is involved—that the chief minister should accept any person suggested by a constituent unit as a minister in a coalition set-up." Joseph, clearly seeking to force Karunakaran's hands, gave an ultimatum to him to make his decision known before the Assembly is reconvened on September 3. Kerala Congress leaders even sent an urgent message to party

Pillai (left) Karunakaran (right); and (bottom) Kerala Congress demonstration: feuding partners

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strongman Mani, who was away in the US, to return immediately. Admitted Joseph: "We are in a tight corner; Pillai should be reinstated because the prestige of the party is involved."

Karunakaran, on his part, made it clear that he would have no objection to any other person belonging to the Kerala Congress being sworn in as minister. He maintained that he was still studying the legal implications of the judgement. But it was clear Karunakaran was stalling for time. The four-day Onam festival, during which the feuding front partners called a ceasefire, gave him welcome reprieve but time was running out for the chief minister. There was little chance that the 15-member Kerala Congress group would pull out of the front but it was clear that Karunakaran's Government would yet again be brought to the brink of a break-up before a compromise was worked out.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

ALLEPPEY

Storm at Sea

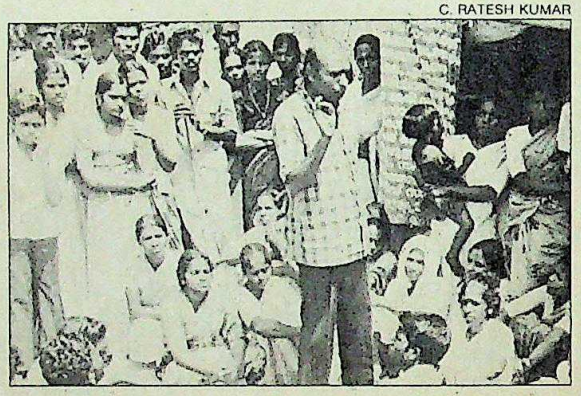
WITH a regularity that has become predictable, the harvest season in Kerala is when non-mechanised fishermen renew their agitation for the implementation of marine fishing regulations. The issues remain the same; for no concrete steps have been taken to resolve the problem. The only noticeable change in the pattern of agitation this year is that the fishermen have shifted from their usual post outside the state secretariat in Trivandrum to the collectorate in coastal Alleppey.

The shift was not without a reason. A few weeks ago a trawler roaming the inshore waters near Alleppey at night ploughed through a boat of traditional fishermen, killing four men. "The Government has failed to apprehend the killer trawler, so as a symbol of our struggle against mechanised boats, we chose Alleppey as the focal point of our agitation," explained Father Thomas Kochery of the Redemptorist Fathers order, the informal leader of the five-year-old fishermen's agitation (INDIA TODAY, August 15,1981).

This year too the protestors led by militant Catholic priests and nuns used the weapon of hunger strike to focus attention on their grievances. Sister Rose, a 43-year-old nun of the order of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, went on an indefinite fast in a thatched hut outside the collectorate. The police swung into action and arrested and hospitalised her. But Sister Rose was not alone in her effort, and Father Dominic George, director of the Socio-religious Centre in Calicut, took her place. Obviously the fishermen are not going to be frightened off for as M.G. Shobana, a fisherwoman who is supervising the struggle in Alleppey district, said: "The Government keeps on playing hide and seek with us. This time if there is no permanent settlement we will go out into the sea and burn all the trawlers."

As before, the Government has chosen to be unsympathetic to the agitators.

C. RATESH KUMAR



Father Kochery addressing fishermen: inspiring battle

To focus attention on this indifference the fishermen brought out posters which showed a collage of newspaper headlines of the unimplemented promises the Karunakaran Government has made in the last four years. In its defence, the Government pointed out that two commissions had been set up over the last four years to look into the problems.

But the agitators have no difficulty in punching holes in the Government's argument. The first commission, headed by Babu Paul, a senior civil servant, had submitted its report in 1982. It had conceded some of the fishermen's demands but ruled out a ban on trawling. Yet the Karunakaran Government had put the report in cold storage without assigning any reason. Last year the fishermen renewed their agitation demanding the implementation of the Paul Commission's report and a ban on trawling during the monsoon. Strangely Karunakaran chose to set up another commission to look into the problems.

The Kalwar Commission, which arrived at more or less the same conclusion as the Paul Commission, presented its report to the Government early this year. This time, Father Kochery decided he would try and outfox Karunakaran. He dropped their demand for a ban on trawling and is now asking only for the implementation of the 30-odd resolutions of the Kalwar Commission. These include a ban on night trawling, ensuring adequate supplies of kerosene for outboard engines, and a lump sum grant to fishermen's children. The commission has also suggested that the number of trawlers in inshore waters should be reduced from 3,500 to 1,500.

The Government by delaying implementing the commission's findings is only exacerbating the problem. Trawling in inshore waters is "depleting the ocean's marine wealth and depriving the traditional fishermen of their means of livelihood," explained Father Dominic George. Adds E.J.Peter, a local fisherman: "Due to trawling, the shrimps have disappeared. But more alarming is the fact that the common man's delicacy like sardines and mackerals found in inshore waters are also fast depleting." Over the last five years there has been a 200 per cent increase in the fish catch of mechanised boats while the traditional fishermen's catch has decreased by 50 per cent. "Today more than anything else we want a conservation of fish resources," said Father Kochery.

To further complicate the issue, the chief minister recently alleged that the agitation was "foreign funded". He raised more eyebrows when he refused permission to British film maker Edward Milner to shoot in the state a film *Faith Under Stress* on developments inside the Catholic church on the grounds that the matter was 'sensitive'. "Karunakaran has unleashed vicious propaganda to suppress the fishermen's movement in Kerala," charged Father Kochery. He and many others involved in the agitation are wondering what the chief minister was finding so sensitive about the fishermen's struggle.

There is, as yet, no end to the struggle but the fishermen are now looking to Delhi for a solution. Their hopes soared when word got around that the prime minister during his visit to Kerala will be visiting coastal fishing villages to study the situation for himself. They see the visit as their best opportunity in the last five years of getting a fair deal.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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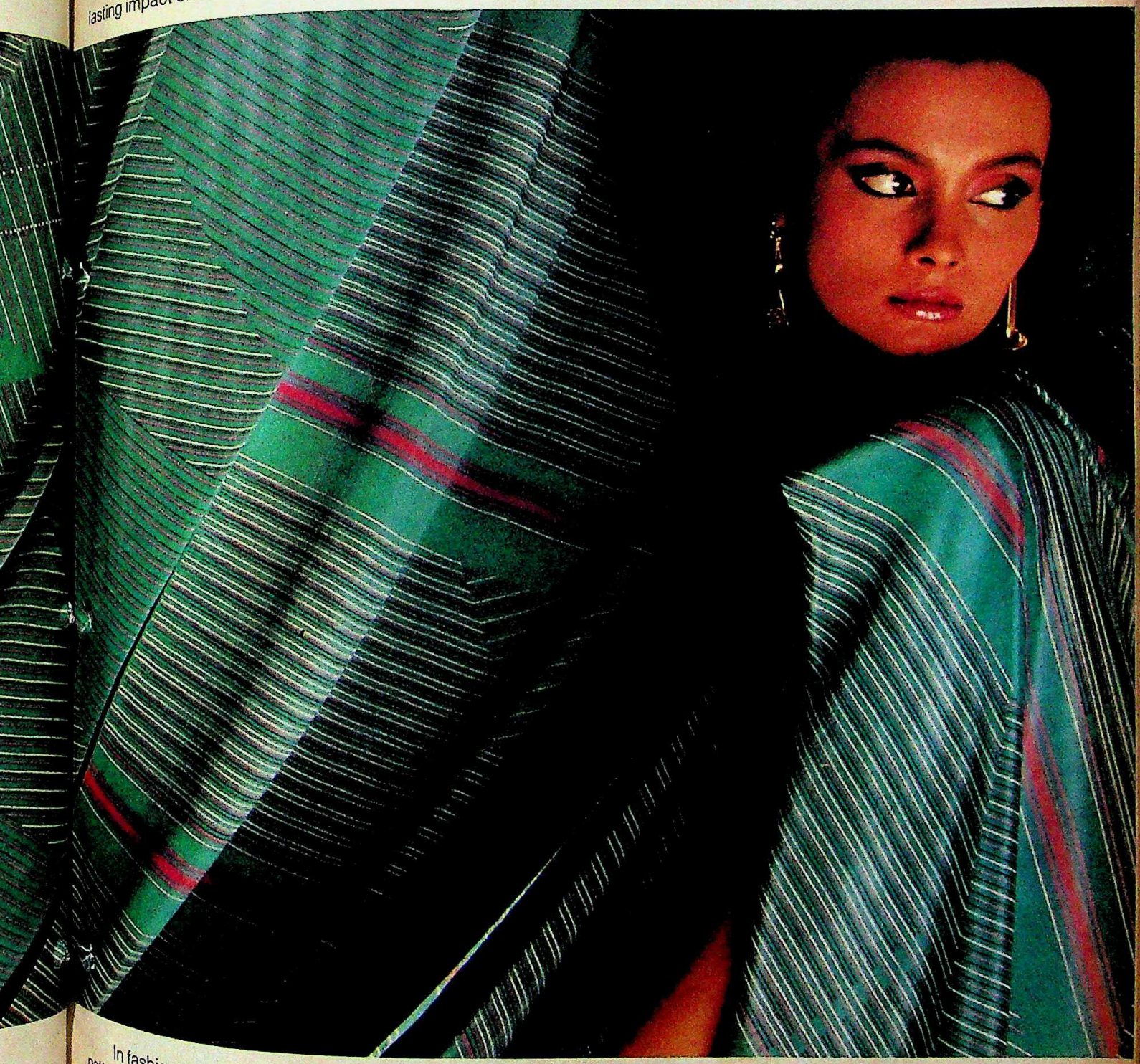

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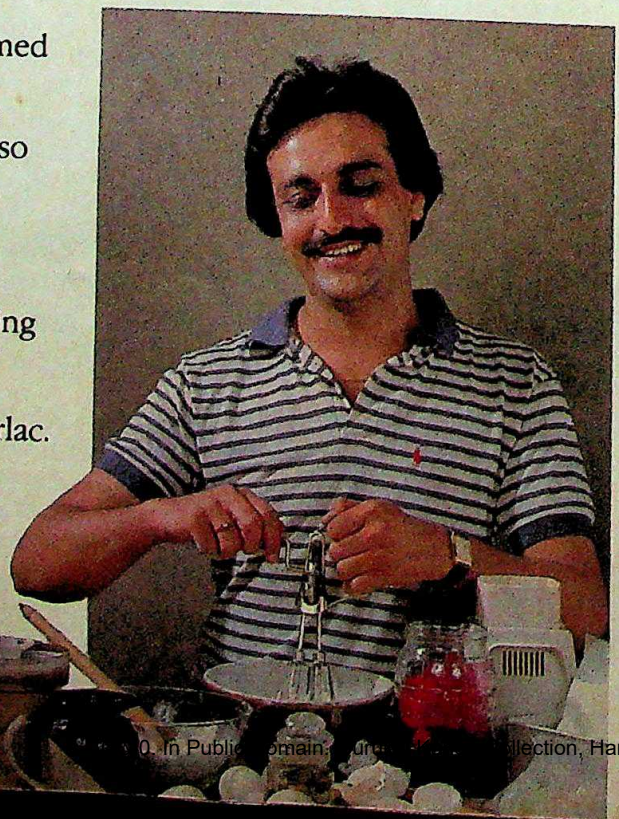

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UTTAR PRADESH

Gift-Wrapped

DOES a state government with almost two-thirds majority in the Assembly need to woo MLA's with expensive gifts and sumptuous lunches daily to ensure their support for its annual budget proposals? The answer in Uttar Pradesh is 'yes', where the Government recently spent approximately Rs 1 lakh every day a minister presented his budget to the Assembly.

At the end of the budget session last fortnight, over 20 ministers including the Chief Minister Narain Dutt Tiwari had liberally distributed to the state's 425 MLA's, about 30 journalists and 100 officials a wide variety of gifts ranging from VIP suitcases to flasks. In addition, five course lunches specially ordered from Lucknow's more famous restaurants were served daily, the 20 days the budget was presented. Defending the practice, the chief minister said: "We have to ensure the presence of MLA's in the House during the budget session. If they go home for lunch, they may not return to the House due to the pressure of the people from their constituencies."

Tiwari had found an effective if unconventional way out of an impasse. The state Government came up with its novel solution when it found that often the attendance in the House was less than the mandatory 50 per cent required to approve a budget proposal. Since the majority of the MLA's usually returned home after signing in their presence, it was decided to serve lunch — an attractive bait — in the lobby so that they could be relied upon to be present when the quorum bell rang.

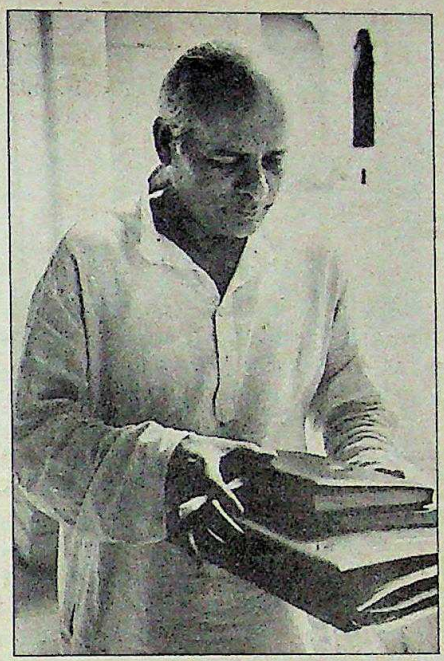
Trying to explain away an awkward situation, state Parliamentary Affairs Minister Hukum Singh said: "It is not that the MLA's can't take care of their lunch. But the Government has shown this small gesture for their long stay in the House. There is nothing wrong or illegal about it." The Government's munificence did have a salutary effect in the Assembly. Almost all the budgets were passed without any major fiasco and MLA's who were usually offensive in the House cheered the ministers for presenting bold and innovative budgets.

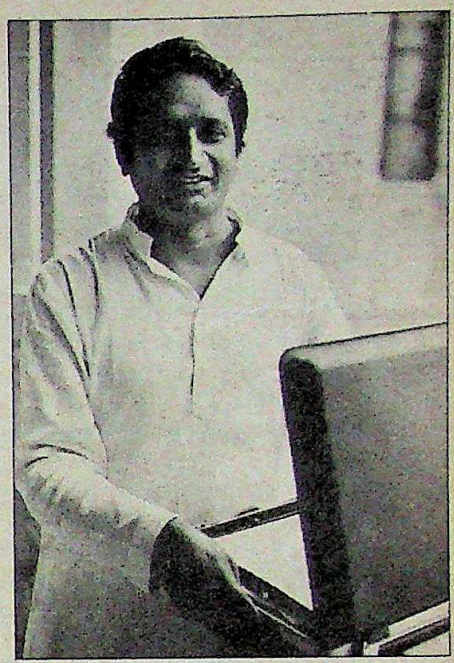
But the manner in which 'operation hold-them-back' was conducted reflects the Government's desire to keep the affair secret. While the gifts were deposited in the ministers' rooms in the dead of night, the lunch packets were brought in through the back-doors of the stately Vidhan Bhavan. Each MLA was told to send either his or her guard or any other trusted person to collect the gifts, and despatch it home immediately. In a few cases, the gifts were delivered at home. In fact, some MLA's even prepared a detailed list of every gift received to double-check and ensure that they'd not been left out of anything.

To add to the cloak-and-dagger confusion, even the ministers went about choosing the gifts—which together cost over Rs 16 lakh—in great secrecy. Two days before the budget was presented, each minister invited senior officials of his department to seek their cooperation in supervising the operation. With ministers vying with one another to provide the better gifts, their suggestion-lists were as closely guarded as state secrets.

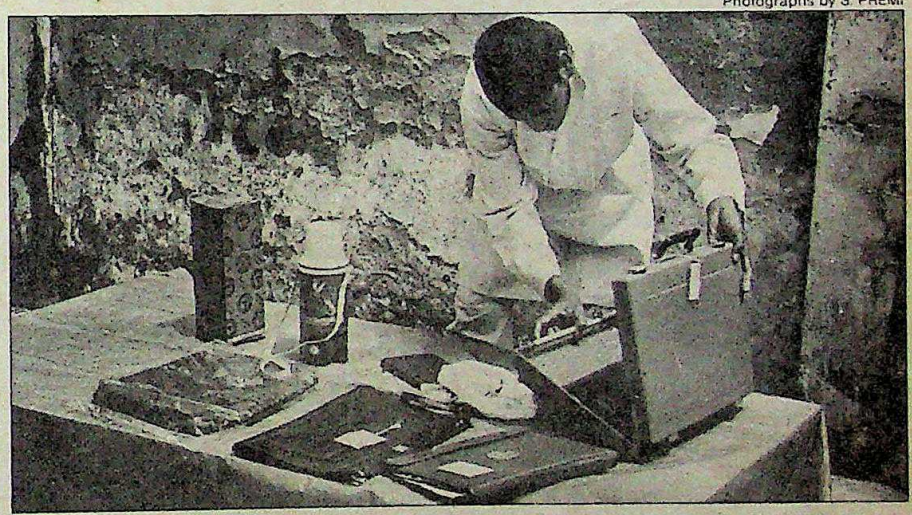
Even then some ministers had to suffer the wrath of the MLA's for presenting gifts that disappointed them. While Health Minister Lokpati Tripathi presented a brief-case to each MLA, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh gave a suitcase. Much to Tripathi's chagrin the MLA's were happy with Singh—the suitcases were of VIP make—but indignant with the brief-case which was of a local make called BIP.

The gift was quickly dubbed: 'Bungling in Purchase'. And a visibly upset Tripathi promised them a genuine VIP brief-case later on. To add to his discomfiture Tripathi discovered that his arch Thakur rival in the cabinet, Irrigation Minister Veer Bahadur Singh, had





Photographs by S. PREMI



MLA's Mool Chand (left) and Satish Ajmani and the gifts for MLA's

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delivered an expensive VIP skybag at each MLA's home.

Surprisingly, none from the opposition benches rose to criticise the state government's new project to ensure full attendance in the House. On the contrary, some opposition MLA's criticised those ministers who refused to fall in line. When Civil Supplies Minister Vasudev Singh expressed his inability to provide lunch at his department's cost, he was censured not by his own party men but by the Opposition. "How can a food minister feed the state's population if he can't provide us food in the House?" asked Manohar Lal of the Lok Dal.

But outside the Assembly some newcomers and ministers expressed their annoyance to the chief minister. Over a dozen MLA's drawn both from the ruling and the opposition parties have questioned the Government's decision to force the losing state government-owned corporations to bear this extra financial burden. This year there was a deficit of over Rs 178 crore in the state's annual budget, and all the 60-odd corporations have suffered an accumulated loss of over Rs 2,000 crore.

Promilla Badhwar Mehra, a Congress(I) MLA, said piously: "I have distributed all the gifts to my *aya*, servant and guard. But it would have been better if this extra money spent on us could have been given to our constituency." Pretending helplessness, H.C. Srivastava, a BJP MLA, added: "I am really ashamed of accepting all this. I am going to raise it in my party's meeting and will try to put an end to this evil practice." Bhagwati Singh, an independent MLA, admitted that "this is a corrupt convention. But I can't really explain why none of the major opposition parties has opposed it."

The MLA's feel that the ministers were forced to accept this practice due to the pressure from the bureaucrats who are in league with the suppliers. Since the same dealers and restaurants supply the goods every year, the bureaucracy they feel have a vested interest in the continuation of the practice. But state government officials dismiss these allegations. Asserts Arun Kumar Singh, cooperation minister: "We have adopted all the procedures. And in my case, there is a budgetary provision also. I have a cooperative federation which has a separate budget for commercial promotion and publicity."

Uttar Pradesh's elected representatives it appears need juicy add-ons to their basic wages to help them discharge their duties.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with S.PREMI in Lucknow

GUJARAT

Back to Work

HAPPY days are here again for Snehal Lakhia, the sole distributor of Telco vehicles in Gujarat. He used to sell 150 trucks on an average in a month but with unrest sweeping the state in the last five months, he could sell a bare five trucks in that period. But now that peace has returned business is back to normal, and last fortnight Lakhia was again selling some four trucks a day. The anti-reservation stir was defused in July itself and the only remaining confrontation ended last fortnight when the Amarsinh Chaudhary Ministry signed an accord with state government and panchayat employees who were on strike. Lakhia's joy was widely shared: the end of the strike was greeted with the bursting of firecrackers in all major cities of the state. The saddest chapter in the 25-year-old history of Gujarat, which took over 200 lives and had threatened to derail the rapid progress of India's second-most industrialised state, is now over.

The strike was truly historic: over four lakh government and panchayat employees stayed away from work for 73 days demanding abolition of the roster system. No other strike has gone on for so long in independent India. The accord came after the Government decided to stop soft-pedalling the issue and served termina-

Government employees offer sweets to Chaudhary: jubilation

AHMEDABAD

Green Success

CAN AN informal group succeed as a pressure group and force the Government to retract on a careless, insensitive decision? A group of concerned citizens of Ahmedabad did just that through a colourful campaign that won the support of a large number of the people in the city and forced the state Government to revert a decision to set up a five-star hotel in one of the city's most beautiful green areas.

The battle to save 2,700 sq m of land in the Law Garden area began last September when two professors, M.G. Parekh and Pravin Sheth, learnt that the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation (GIIC) was collaborating with a leading hotel chain to build a five-star hotel. Ironically the site chosen had been earmarked by the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority as "one of the lungs of the city" with 710 trees ,3,000 shrubs and over 300 plants. Parekh and Sheth, members of a local environment group wrote to the editor of *The Times of India* protesting against the move and arguing that the city which was getting more and more polluted every day could not afford to lose so many trees in one go. Theirs was not an isolated cry of alarm as

Demonstrators at site: effective protest

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tion notices on 70 employees, including some association leaders. The leaders were already under pressure from the employees who were getting impatient—over 10,000 of them had already resumed work—and they capitulated without holding out for their main demand. However, they did succeed in getting the government to agree to remove some anomalies in the implementation of the roster system. The Government was content that it had succeeded in guarding the basic interests of the backward classes.

Typically, both sides were claiming a victory. Said Finance Minister Arvind Sanghvi, who was one of the mediators: "We have moved in the right direction. We have managed to strike a healthy balance between the need to maintain the roster system so as to uplift the backward classes and the need to remove the anomalies which were causing concern." Similarly, Sandeep Dave, secretary of the Gujarat Corporations' Employees' Federation, also claimed: "Our strike was worthwhile after all. We got 90 per cent of our demands met."

People, by and large, were not interested in who won and who lost; they are just relieved that they could get back to work. Specially relieved were businessmen. Trade and industry has suffered a staggering loss of over Rs 2,200 crore since the anti-reservation stir erupted in mid-February. Said Girish Bhagwat Prasad, president of the Maskati Cloth Market Association: "The accord will help restore peace which is so essential for the progress of the state." Even the Congress(I)'s detractors were happy: former chief minister Babubhai Patel hailed the agreement and called upon all concerned to help the administration to implement it.

But there were some ominous signs of protest from employees belonging to the backward classes. The police opened fire in Gandhinagar when a rally organised to protest against the accord turned violent. The pro-roster employees say the agreement violates their constitutional rights. The rally featured armed tribals shouting slogans like 'don't tease the sleeping lion'.

The Government, however, is looking ahead. Soon after the accord was signed Chaudhary flew to New Delhi to seek a massive loan of Rs 63 crore to implement a plan to modernise textile mills in the state and take over 12 closed textile mills. His success will bring an end to the misery of the families of over 30,000 workers who are in dire straits. Already half a dozen workers have committed suicide after being driven to the brink of starvation. Chaudhary also took the opportunity to address newsmen in the capital: his first press conference after he took over. The timing could not have been better. When he took over his appointment was greeted with widespread skepticism. Today, Chaudhary is being hailed as the architect of a peace that seemed impossible to achieve under Madhavsinh Solanki.

—RAMESH MENON

in the days that followed the newspaper published 27 letters saying virtually the same thing.

Their letter was followed up by a door-to-door campaign seeking support from people normally indifferent to such issues. Working without resources on a purely voluntary basis, the 12-odd members of the group demonstrated the seriousness of threat to the environment by showing that green space per person in New York was 22 sq m, in London 20 sq m, New Delhi 18 sq m while in Ahmedabad it was only half a sq m. They calculated that the total value of services rendered by a 50-year-old tree worked out to a staggering Rs 19.7 lakh by way of production of oxygen, pollution control, prevention of soil erosion, recycling of water, control of humidity and shelter for birds and animals.

At one time it seemed all the effort had been in vain. On July 2, days before Madhavsinh Solanki was replaced as the chief minister, the Government issued a notification converting the green space into a plot for commercial use so that the construction of the Rs 9-crore hotel could be started. The Government claimed that the environmentalists were exaggerating the problems as there were only 70 trees in the plot. To disprove the claim, Parekh and Sheth got botany students from the university to identify and count the trees (their figure of 710 was proved right). "It was obvious that some vested interests were at play. Otherwise the Government would not have been so enthusiastic to push this project so hastily," Sheth recalled.

All seemed lost when on July 9 the secretary of housing and urban development called for objections on the project. Desperate by now, the group hit upon the novel idea of fighting their case with the help of posters. Helped by young people in schools and colleges, bright posters with evocative messages were plastered all over the city, even on trees. "I am a pipal tree. Why do you want to cut me?" read one such poster. The press and leading citizens like Jnanpith award winner Uma Shankar Joshi, Magsaysay awardee Ela Pathak came out in favour of the protest.

The writing on the wall was clear. The new Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary met members of the group and without any argument asked the GIIC to look for an alternative site. H.K. Khan, additional chief secretary and chairman of GIIC, candidly admitted later: "The environmentalists had reason to be upset. There was no point in confronting them."

—RAMESH MENON

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YOUTH CONGRESS(I)

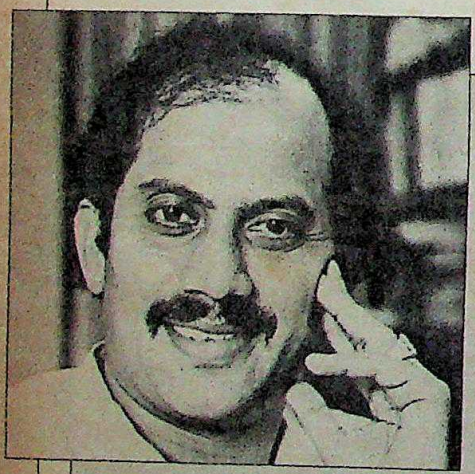
Indecent Exposure

NOT SINCE the rumbustious days of Sanjay Gandhi has the Youth Congress (I) witnessed the kind of fireworks it did last fortnight when the battle for control of the ruling party's youth wing exploded into the open. The fireworks began with Gurudas Kamat, the abrasive Maharashtra state YC(I) president, quitting the body, but not without washing a lot of dirty linen in public view over organisational matters. Ostensibly, Kamat's abrupt resignation followed colourful reports of unruly behaviour by YC(I) delegates at the World Youth Festival in Moscow last month. Accusing YC(I) President Anand Sharma of soft-pedalling on the episode, Kamat launched a virulent personal attack by saying: "We saw a completely different Anand Sharma — someone whose arrogance was to be seen to be believed—someone who relished humiliating others by heaping insults or denigrating them before others."

Kamat followed up by dashing off a strongly-worded letter to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi complaining not only about YC(I)'s performance at Moscow but also about its overall functioning. Evidently, Kamat was also using the occasion to settle scores with Sharma, who was catapulted to the youth wing's top post early this year after Rajiv ignored the pressure from a powerful pro-Kamat lobby within the Congress(I). Soon after taking over, Sharma had rubbed salt into the wound by ignoring him for the post of one of the YC(I)'s general secretaries.

The animosity between Kamat and Sharma boiled over in the selection of the YC(I) delegates for the Moscow festival. While Kamat reportedly wanted some of his favourites included, Sharma declined to accommodate them on the plea that he could not ignore the claims of other meritorious candidates recommended by party VIP's. However, Sharma did include Kamat's nominees from Maharashtra. But the selection of delegates was bound to pose a few problems for Sharma: a bare 300 had to be chosen out of 40,000 claimants. In the process he obviously made more enemies than friends. Said Sharma: "For one selection I had to reject at least 100 other people who were also deserving ones. Some of them might have been hurt and others were waiting to exploit the situation."

That situation was not long in coming. No sooner had the 500-strong Indian delegation landed at Moscow, than differences surfaced between the YC(I) and other youth organisations in the contingent like the CPI(M)'s Students' Federation of India, the CPI's All India Students' Federation, the Janata Party's Yuva Janata and the Youth Congress of the Congress(S). But as it happened these differences were largely buried behind the headlines resulting from the fall-out of the dissension within the YC(I). Two unforeseen factors combined to fuel the controversy: routine surveillance by Soviet authorities of the 20,000-odd youth assembled in Moscow and Sharma's apprehensions of how his flock would behave. Soviet authorities, he learnt, were scouring the wooded 500-acre park in front of one hotel in which many Indian delegates were staying. They were looking for three Russian youths peddling drugs. Sharma used this as an opportunity to bring his flock to heel: he directed his trusted aides and friendly journalists to spread the fictitious story that Russian police had caught 17 Indian youths in compromising positions with girls—both Indian and Russian—and that he was going to send all of them back to New Delhi. The ploy worked in Russia—all the delegates were on exemplary behaviour



"We saw a completely different Anand Sharma (in Moscow)... someone whose arrogance was to be seen to be believed."
GURUDAS KAMAT
ex-president, Maharashtra YC(I)

Indian delegates dancing at the festival

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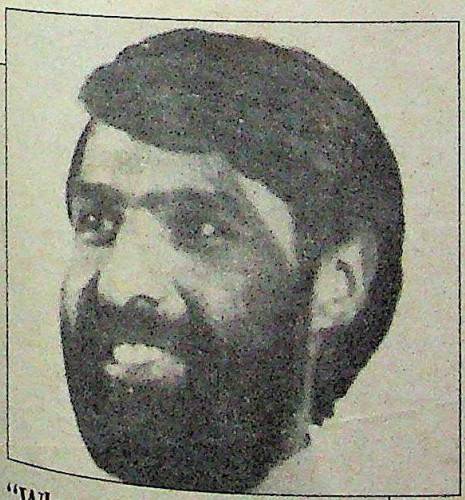
thereafter—but boomeranged on the inexperienced Sharma once the delegates got back home and Kamat announced his dramatic resignation.

According to Congress(I) insiders, Kamat's resignation symbolises the growing dissension within the Congress(I) which started when a new president had to be chosen last year to replace Tariq Anwar, who had crossed the age-bar of 35. Since the YC(I) was Rajiv's and Power Minister Arun Nehru's favourite front organisation, various interests within the Congress(I) took an active interest in the selection of a new chief. While one faction led by AICC(I) Treasurer Sita Ram Kesri and one of the prime minister's political secretaries backed Kamat, outgoing president Anwar supported Madhu Kant Shukla from Bihar. But Rajiv picked on Sharma who was not sponsored by any of the lobbies. Kamat, however, continued his efforts to gain the confidence of Rajiv and his aides. In his resignation letter he emphasised that he was one of Rajiv's loyalists and also disclosed that he had collected over Rs 1,20,000 from sources in Bombay for inserting adulatory ads in local newspapers on the eve of Rajiv's visit to Maharashtra during the Vasantrao Patil crisis. He also claimed to have risked his political career in Maharashtra by favouring Rajiv against Patil.

While Sharma has been more or less non-committal over Kamat's outbursts in public, though his resignation was promptly accepted, two dozen young MP's from Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and over a dozen YC(I) leaders have requested Rajiv to take disciplinary action against Kamat. In a memorandum to the prime minister, they have warned that Kamat represents that section of the ruling party which is determined to blow up intra-party differences and damage Rajiv's position as the party's boss. Says Sharma: "What surprised me was not his resignation but the publicity which he gave to internal organisational matters. He could have discussed them at various party forums and even with Rajivji." Added Bhubaneswar Kalitha, MP and YC(I) general secretary: "It is an open revolt against the party's discipline. In the garb of attacking Sharma individually, he has thrown a challenge to the party's leadership. One should find out who are behind it and why the name of the prime minister has been dragged into this controversy."

However, Kamat says he has reason to include the prime minister's name. "All that I was trying to convey through that reference was the fact that we had successfully managed to keep ourselves independent of any influence of the state leadership and had displayed part of that independence by welcoming our leader through advertisements without help from any state leader," he said in defence.



"What surprised me was not his resignation but the publicity he gave to internal organisational matters."
ANAND SHARMA
president, YC(I)

Sharma, during a brief meeting with the prime minister, said that he was being attacked because of his determination to cleanse the YC(I) of controversial people patronised by powerful chief ministers and other regional satraps. During the last four months Sharma has reorganised over a dozen state YC(I) units and sacked, with the prior approval of the prime minister and the AICC(I), those against whom numerous complaints were pending. In a few cases in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, he was pressurised to appoint nominees of some MP's and PCC(I) presidents but the prime minister's office rejected all of them.

Currently, however, the party rank and file is waiting expectantly to see what action the prime minister takes against Kamat's rebellion. If Kamat becomes a rallying point for all the dissidents in the youth organisation, it will encourage other low-lying dissidents to join the fray. And that could only mean that the recent round of mud-slinging is only the start of the battle. —PRABHU CHAWLA

BIHAR

Isolation Ward

FIVE months ago, when 70-year-old trade union leader Bindeshwari Dubey was selected as the "consensus" chief minister of Bihar with the open backing of the irrepressible Jagannath Mishra, the deposed leader Chandra Shekhar Singh was so humiliated he flew off to Delhi without formally handing over to his successor. But last fortnight, Singh performed an abrupt about-turn and, in the course of a significant two-day trip to Patna, claimed publicly that he and Dubey were now the firmest of political allies. Different motives were attributed for his sudden volte-face but one thing is clear: the newly forged Dubey-Singh axis has the sanction of the party high command. Mishra's men, who viewed the development with barely concealed disfavour, are convinced that it is part of Delhi's devious strategy to isolate their leader.

The Dubey-Singh rapprochement had all the ingredients of classic political drama. They had not shared a public platform after Dubey took over but now they chose a meeting of a small faction of the Momin Conference, itself a Singh creation, to shower praise on each other. Barely two months ago, when Dubey completed 100 days in office, Singh had been non-committal when asked for his opinion on how he rated the performance of the new ministry. But now Singh called Dubey a "good chief minister and administrator" and said his government was "working in the right direction". A smiling Dubey in turn praised Singh and called him an "old friend and colleague". Then followed three rounds of talks between them in circumstances in which they behaved like long-lost brothers whom fate had reunited. Dubey rang Singh up at the state guest-house, expressing his desire to go over but Singh instead rushed to the chief minister's house to meet his new-found friend even though newsmen had already assembled for a press conference he had called. At the delayed press conference, the normally taciturn Singh was again fulsome in his praise for the Dubey Ministry.

But what made the newsmen's wait worthwhile were his views on the fate of Mishra. Said Singh: "Mishra has been isolated from the mainstream of the Congress (I). But we (Dubey and Singh) are in

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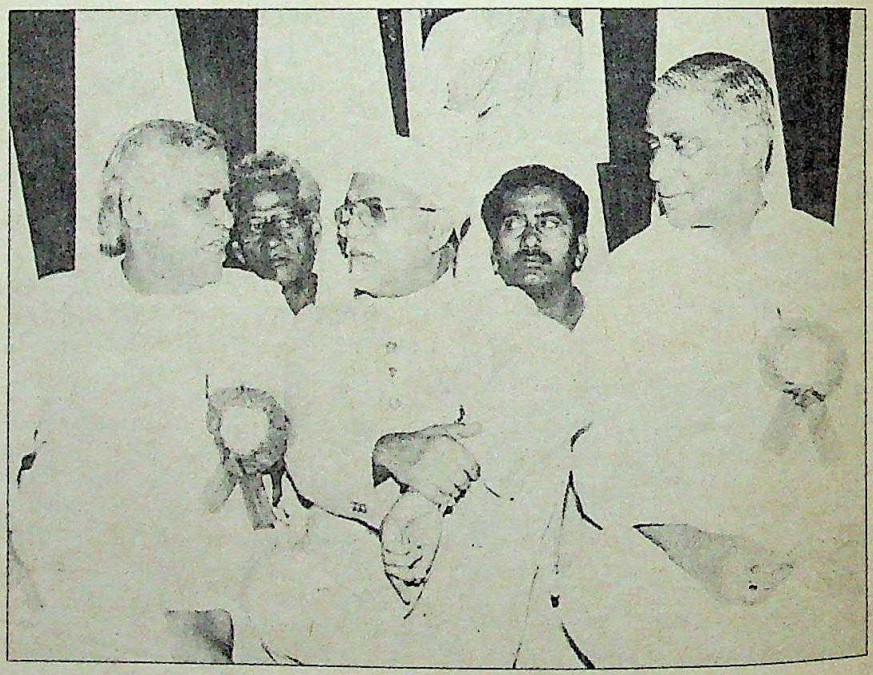
the mainstream, the stream of Rajiv Gandhi. (If) someone inside the party wants to defy him (Rajiv) he is bound to be isolated." Singh and Mishra have been known to be at loggerheads ever since Singh replaced Mishra in September 1983 but this was the first time that either of them made public their mutual antipathy. Political observers feel it is unlikely that Singh would have been so openly critical of Mishra unless he had the tacit approval of the high command.

Dubey, however, pleaded ignorance about any attempt to establish a new axis or isolate Mishra. As he told INDIA TODAY: "Singh came and saw me and we discussed the state's problems. Old misunderstandings were removed and he assured me and my government his full cooperation." Similarly, regarding Mishra, he maintained: "My relationship with Mishra is just as good as with any other party colleague. When we are all in the same stream, the same party and under the same leader, how can there be any conspiracy or an attempt to isolate any colleague ?"

But Singh's statement had clearly irked Mishra. Lashing out at Singh, the Union minister of state for textiles, Mishra said: "Who says I have been isolated? I am doing Congress (I) politics, Rajiv Gandhi's politics, which is the mainstream. I am more in this stream than anybody else. The only difference between me and others (meaning Singh) is that I am working for the party and the people while others have vested interests in remaining in power here or in Delhi." It was strange, he added, that even though he was not in power, people were trying to create controversies around him and cast doubt on his dedication to the party and loyalty to Rajiv Gandhi. Such statements (as Singh's), he felt, were attempts by disgruntled elements to create a rift between Dubey and him. This, he concluded, would never succeed as "my support to Dubey is without preconditions."

Mishra's disclaimer notwithstanding, the party high command is known to regard his support for Dubey with suspicion. It has lost few opportunities to impress on Dubey that he should distance himself from Mishra. To help Dubey, party sources point out, the high command has repeatedly suggested to Mishra that he should accept a governor's posting and move out of Bihar. But Mishra has been consistently turning down the offer. Though Mishra asserts that he has learnt about such offers only through newspaper reports, he told INDIA TODAY: "I am not going to leave Bihar as I have some personal problems. I cannot afford to leave the state." His supporters say that they claim Mishra's opponents want their "popular" leader out of the state so that they can then get at Dubey, who lacks the "mass base" that Mishra enjoys.

But Mishra seems to have accepted that it is in his political interest to



Mishra (top); Dubey (left) and Singh (right) at convention: new alignments

distance himself from Dubey. There is increasing evidence that Mishra has initiated the process. In the recently-concluded Assembly session, six out of the nine *dharnas* offered in the well of the House were reportedly at Mishra's instigation. *Pataliputra Times*, a Hindi daily owned by Mishra which virtually ignored the Singh press conference and instead ran a story on the "fate" of Singh, has lately started front-paging stories critical of the Dubey administration, a marked departure from the past.

Singh's motives for making up with Dubey are still not clear. His dilemma is known: if he is to continue as a Union minister he must get elected to either house at the Centre by the end of this month when the six months' grace period expires. Till late last month, no solution was in sight for Singh, who continues to be an MLA even though he has yet to take his oath. His supporters were spreading the word that the high command wanted Singh to join the Dubey Ministry as the deputy chief minister so that the Dubey Ministry could gain from Singh's varied experience as a minister at the state and Centre. Singh himself declined comment, saying that his future was "the worry of the high command", and Dubey maintained that "everything would be decided by the prime minister". But Singh's critics said the former chief minister had hurried to bury the hatchet because Dubey had, on Mishra's promptings, threatened to order an enquiry into some decisions taken by Singh when in power. But Dubey denied this with alacrity, saying: "We discussed nothing except the state's various problems and various development programmes."

Though Dubey's pious clarifications found few takers, the full implications of the fresh alignments were still unclear. What Singh's outburst, and Mishra's replies, did establish is that factionalism in the Bihar unit of the Congress(I) is now out in the open. And that cannot make matters any easier for Dubey.

—FARZAND AHMED

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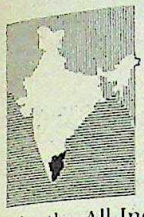
TAMIL NADU

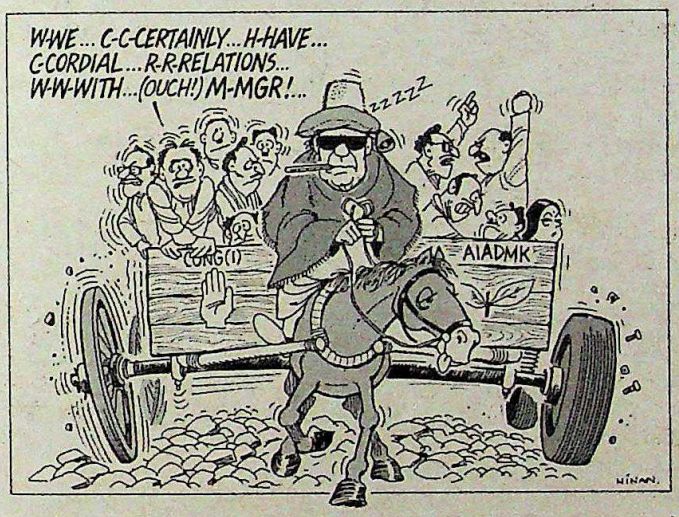
The Waiting Game



THE CONGRESS(I) has a dream in Tamil Nadu: to return to the power it last enjoyed in 1967. Understandably, then, it hopes to capitalise on every weakness of its ally, the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (AIADMK). Last fortnight, even as the ailing chief minister, M.G. Ramachandran, wound up a trip to Japan and the United States, infighting in the party again erupted into the open and it seemed the Congress(I) had finally decided it should assert its independence. The timing was opportune: there was speculation again about the actual condition of MGR's health and it was not clear if MGR was in total control of the party and government.

There was nothing covert about the Congress(I)'s moves. Fourteen of the 25 Congress(I) MP's from the state, who were led by S.Singaravadivelu, met in New Delhi and sought an appointment with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to complain about the AIADMK Government's partisan manner of implementing development schemes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP). Most of these MP's belong to party General Secretary G. Karuppiah Moopanar's faction in the state Congress(I). Said one: "Our major serious complaint is that while we have been involving the AIADMK in all the Central Government's programmes, the representations made by local Congress(I) leaders have been ignored by the agencies of the AIADMK Government in the carrying out of these rural development schemes."

However, state Congress(I) leaders also took pains to deny any cracks in the political equation between the two parties. Observed Congress(I) MP and Moopanar's close aide G.Ramamoorthy: "The fact that we are taking up these issues should not imply that we are breaking up with the AIADMK." Added Moopanar: "The Congress(I) continues to have the same cordial relations with the ruling AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. You should not attach any special significance to the meeting of MP's in Delhi." However, the AIADMK Government was not as sanguine about the meeting. Observed Local Administration Minister P.U. Shanmugham: "I can only express my regret that the MP's concerned do not have adequate knowledge of the actual position regarding the state Government's implementation of anti-poverty programmes. We are implementing all these programmes with great zeal and interest."



But the Delhi conclave was not the only thorn in the AIADMK's flesh. By a suspicious coincidence, Tamil Nadu Legislative Council member and former TNCC(I) chief M.P. Subramaniam, who is a prominent leader of the anti-Moopanar group in the state, has also recently submitted a memorandum to the prime minister. It is reliably understood that this memorandum also suggested that the Congress(I) should capitalise on the present weaknesses of the AIADMK. As Subramaniam told INDIA TODAY: "The present leadership of the state Congress(I) has been ineffective in cashing in on the weak points of the present AIADMK Government. For one thing, Chief Minister MGR does not seem to be enjoying sound enough health to be in full command of his party and the state Government. There is very little action on the state Government's part in their third term in office. And there are serious internal dissensions within the AIADMK, all of which the Congress(I) can take advantage of."

But does capitalising on the AIADMK's weaknesses mean that the Congress(I) should snap its alliance with MGR's party? Subramaniam makes a very telling comment: "The alliance was entered into only for the purpose of the elections. Where is the question of any alliance after the elections are over?" Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself told journalists when he was in Madras last month: "Our relations with the AIADMK are certainly cordial. But it should be the aim of every political party to build itself up independently."

Factional infighting in the AIADMK is undeniably serious. The tussle between Information Minister R.M.Veerappan on one side and Food Minister S.Thirunavukarasu and Rajya Sabha MP Jayalalitha Jayaram on the other is quite old. But while Jayalalitha is keeping a low profile now, the Veerappan and Thirunavukarasu factions have been sniping in the open. At a public meeting organised by his faction, Thirunavukarasu said: "All AIADMK ministers are zeroes and gain value only because they appear after the figure of one, which is MGR." He was indirectly hitting out at Veerappan's image-building exercise after MGR entrusted him with the powerful police portfolio when he went abroad. Retorted P. Musiriputhan, a Veerappan camp MLA: "What is this statement that all ministers are zeroes? Did MGR make zeroes ministers?" Veerappan himself chipped in at another meeting: "How can all ministers be equated to zero? There are senior ministers with experience and there are others who are juniors." Thirunavukarasu's reply, delivered at yet another meeting was: "I don't distinguish between one zero and another." Even otherwise, AIADMK leaders talk openly of the strengths of their respective factions.

The infighting in the AIADMK fits in with the Congress(I)'s intentions. Although they would not openly admit it, Thirunavukarasu and Electricity Minister S. Ramachandran are known to have close links with the Congress(I). The Congress(I) may not be planning any immediate toppling game, but it certainly wants to keep its options open. The fact that MGR does not seem to be in full control goes to its advantage. MGR had reportedly promised to rehabilitate

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Managing Time

How to put more time into your executive life.

By A.V. Deshmane
Management consultant, Bombay

For today's executive, time is an important resource. "I want to do it, but I don't find time" is a common complaint. The solution to this problem is hidden in the sentence itself. You cannot 'find' time. You must 'reserve' and 'protect' it.

The top ten time wasters

According to R. Alex Mackenzie, author of 'Time Management Notebook', the top ten 'time wasters' are: (a) Telephone interruptions (b) 'Drop-in' visitors (c) Ineffective delegation (d) Meetings (e) Lack of objectives, priorities (f) Crisis Management (g) Attempting too much at once (h) Cluttered desk/disorganisation (i) Indecision/Procrastination (j) Inability to say 'no'.

It is these time wasters that lead to the paradox of time management: the higher the level, the more the working hours. This paradox is now compelling executives to explore and adopt techniques of effective time management.

How to analyse time

Divide your time into three categories: 1. Time controlled by me. 2. Time which I must spend in response to the demands made by others. 3. Time for unpredictable events. By including your daily activities in the above analysis, you will find that although the percentage of time controlled by you is more than that controlled by others, the nuisance value of interruptions and distractions is too high.

Maintain an Achievement Diary

Most diaries maintained by executives only show 'activities' i.e. what they will do on what date and at what time. Instead, the entries should be listed as under:

Time	Activity	Objectives	Preparation required	Achievement

This record will help you know whether time was used productively or unproductively. Also the sheer compulsion to state the objectives clearly will help you work in an unhurried manner and yet achieve more satisfying results with less time being spent.

Also, this diary will help you distinguish the important from the urgent. Because the trouble is, the urgent cannot wait and the important cannot be postponed. For example, streamlining management information and control systems is important. Submission of the weekly or monthly report is urgent. This listing of activities will also prevent time lost in 'fire-fighting'... running from one important job to another... and ending up frustrated and exhausted from trying to do too much in too little time.

Having outlined these few basic rules of effective time management, I would like to now present some practical tips.

1. Batchwork vs Patchwork

It pays to have fewer discussions of longer durations with your boss, colleagues, subordinates, suppliers, clients etc; after collecting all the necessary papers and writing down all the points for discussion. You will find that sitting for half an hour or an hour at a stretch and finishing everything at one go takes much less time in the long run than frequent 'just-a-minute' meetings.

2. Meetings and appointments

The normal practice is to say "meet me at 11 a.m." Consciously develop the habit of saying "between 11 and 11.30" etc. This will go a long way in shortening duration of appointments and also enable the other person make intelligent use of his time. Make sure that meetings start in time and the discussion centres around topics on the agenda. This again will save a lot of your time.

3. Telephone conversations

Keep them brief and to the point without sounding curt. Tell your secretary to screen your calls. Those that are passed on to you will cut into your time, so the trick is to keep an ordinary sand bowl on your desk and turn it upside down when the conversation starts. When the upper bowl is empty, the time limit for conversation is over.

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4. Paperwork

Routine correspondence can be eliminated, standardised or simplified. If possible write the reply on the original letter itself. Take a xerox copy, if necessary, and return either the original or copy. Effective delegation can also take a mountain of paper off your desk. Before you deal with a paper put a ☑ tick mark in any one of the following boxes printed on a small covering chit: ☐Please do whatever you think right ☐Please do whatever you think right but only tell me what you have done. ☐ Please study this and let me have your recommendations. ☐ Please study this and give me only facts/figures. ☐Please attach previous papers.

5. Indecision/Procrastination

Time management experts —Alan Lakein and Edwin Bliss— suggest that you avoid the perfectionist trap. You must be able to know how good the job should be and when you reach that level, move on.

6. Learn to say 'no'

Inability to say 'no' is a major time waster. Lack of confidence or assertiveness, or the need to be 'nice' to others results in your saying 'yes' when you want to say 'no'. Result: visitors you don't want to see. Work that you can't handle. End result: waste of time. Learn to decline tactfully and firmly.

Conclusion

"Managing time is everybody's No. 1 problem" said Peter F. Drucker. "Those who really get things done, don't start with their work. They start with their time". Effective time management not only helps you get your work done faster and more of it, it also helps you lead a balanced life and allows you to have enough time for rest, relaxation and a happy family life. It does not matter whether you work for 8 hours or 24 hours. What counts ultimately is the result. As you go along you will find that you can come up with many more ways of saving time than those mentioned above. The best time to start ... you guessed it ... is now.

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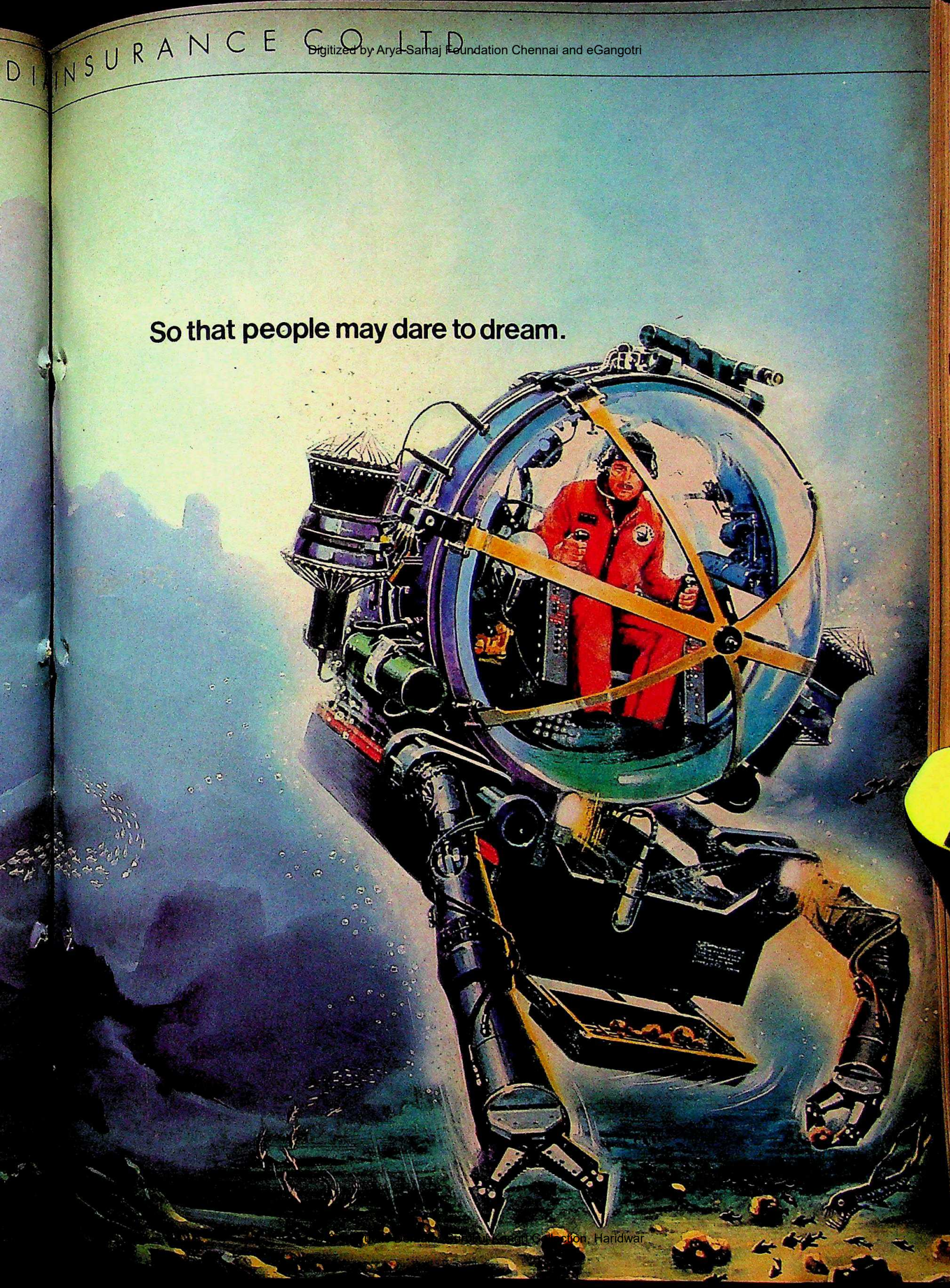

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Jayalalitha after his return from the US early this year. But seven months have gone by and Jayalalitha still continues to be out in the cold. Veerappan has also used his clout to have Thirunavukarasu removed from the leadership of the party's youth wing.

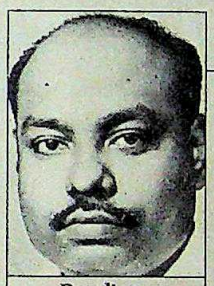
However, there is no possibility of a split in the AIADMK just yet. Thirunavukarasu certainly does not seem to have any intentions of quitting the party. Says he categorically: "MGR is all right and in full control. The Congress(I) cannot indulge in any topping game here. All of us are solidly behind MGR and he is here to stay." But of course, the Congress(I) does not need to topple the AIADMK Government. It is content to wait for its ally to drain its strength.

—S.H.VENKATRAMANI

P.H. PANDIAN

Telling Tape

THE NORMALLY pugnacious speaker of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, 40-year-old Paul Hector Pandian, found himself last fortnight in an unusual situation: on the defensive. But the constellation of forces ranged against him was truly formidable, even for Pandian. First, Governor S.L. Khurana reportedly pulled him up. Then came reports that several ministers of the ruling All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) are known to be unhappy with his behaviour. Cho Ramaswamy, Janata Party leader and editor of *Tughlak*, turned the heat on him by producing a tape in which Pandian is supposed to have talked of taking "revenge" against him. And Pandian's slate was full when the city's journalists, upset with some offensive remarks he reportedly made against a reporter, started a signature campaign against him.


Pandian

Ramaswamy

Paulraj

Ramaswamy's allegation was the most startling. He claimed that the tape was a record of a telephone conversation between the editor of *Vaniga Ottrumai*, A.M. Paulraj, who was sentenced to a couple of weeks' imprisonment by the Assembly, and Pandian. In the course of the conversation Paulraj says to Pandian: "Our people say that you have taken revenge against me to teach a lesson to the *Tughlak* magazine." Replies the voice on the other side: "Revenge on him will take a different form (*avanai pazhi vera mathiri*)." More evidence followed that somebody was indeed gunning for Ramaswamy. Posters suddenly sprouted all over Madras accusing Ramaswamy of being involved in a blue film scandal.

Typically, Pandian was aggressive even in defence. He refused to comment on what transpired between him and the governor but maintained that the AIADMK was "solidly" behind him. The tape, he said, was a "fraud" and an attempt at "blackmail" and added: "I must point out that recording of telephonic conversations is an offence under the Indian Telegraph Act." As for the posters, he said categorically: "I am not responsible for the appearance of the posters."

However, Pandian has clearly come off second best in the Paulraj controversy, whom he ordered arrested but who got a stay order from the court and is still a free man (INDIA TODAY, August 15). Much has happened with Paulraj; he claims to have been kidnapped by uniformed policemen (Pandian has denied involvement) from whose clutches he then escaped. But the limelight has been on Pandian's inability to get his order carried out. And it is obvious that Pandian is now chafing and fretting at the impasse. As he asked INDIA TODAY combatively: "Why don't you try and interview the chief justice of the Madras High Court on legislative privileges?" And when a group of journalists met him in the course of all the drama around Paulraj's disappearances and reappearance, he allegedly hurled unprintable epithets at the reporter of a Tamil daily, *Dinakaran*. Pandian subsequently sought to make amends by claiming that he had actually spoken to the reporter in "affectionate" terms but the journalists are unconvinced and have launched a signature campaign against him. More than a hundred pressmen had signed on by last week.

Tughlak editor Cho Ramaswamy turned the heat on by producing a tape in which Pandian is supposed to be talking to Paulraj of taking "revenge" against Cho.

Controversy is nothing new for Pandian, a post-graduate in criminology and a vitriolic DMK-hater. In a remark in the Assembly, which he himself expunged later, Pandian had once said that M.Karunanidhi, the DMK leader, did not know his father's name. Even though he is a third termer, he has made several such remarks which he himself has expunged later and has often participated in mayhem inside the house, even after occupying the speaker's chair. Once he had even challenged DMK MLA A. Rahman Khan to a duel outside the Assembly.

Expectedly, Pandian arouses strong likes and dislikes. It may not be entirely unrelated to the governor's talk with him that as many as 13 state ministers who were in town failed to show up for the governor's Independence Day reception. Raj Bhavan sources refused to term it a boycott. Said a source close to the governor: "Normally, the chief minister attends. So all the ministers come along. But this time the chief minister was not in station. A few ministers who could not come had expressed regrets earlier." However, the nagging doubt remains: Is there more to this than meets the eye?

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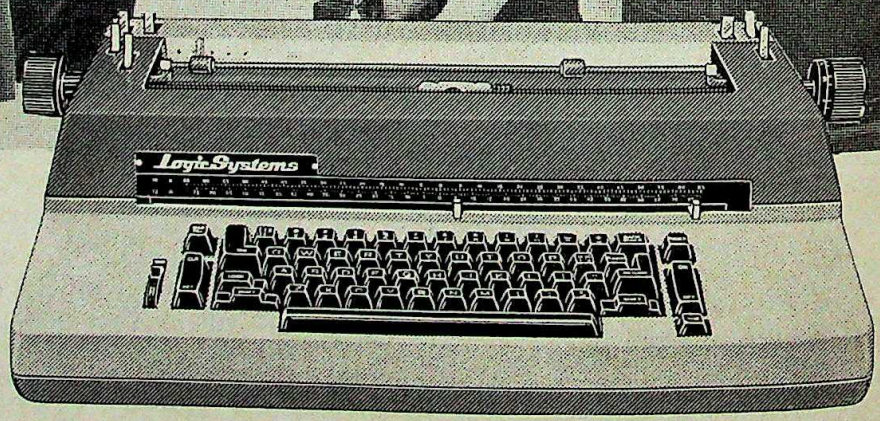

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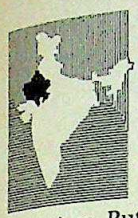
RAJASTHAN

Bigamy Blues



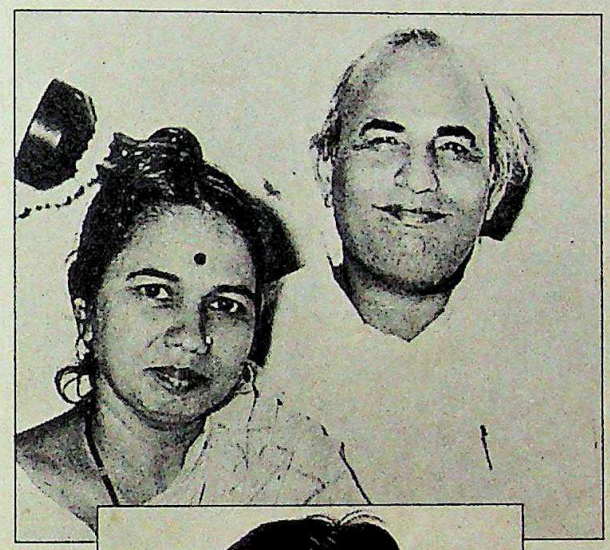
WHAT does Rajasthan Education Minister Rampal Upadhyaya have in common with film stars Raj Babbar and Dharmendra? The answer: they all have two wives. But while the actors have managed to get away with it, the minister may end up paying dearly for his double marital status.

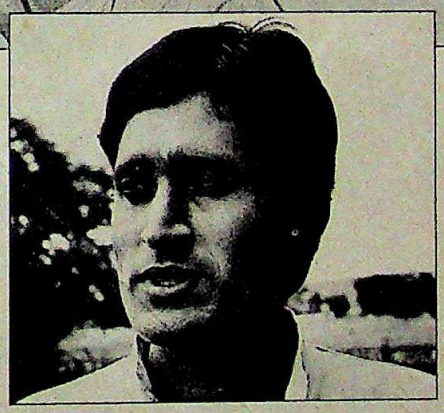
The matter, ironically, came to a boil because of a heart ailment which has been troubling Upadhyaya for the past few months. Fifty-year-old Upadhyaya, who was earlier also a minister for eight months, decided to go to Houston, USA, for bypass surgery in July. The government order of July 12 sanctioning Rs 3.5 lakh for his trip and treatment said the minister could be accompanied by his wife. Upadhyaya duly left for Houston on July 26 accompanied by his doctor and a middle-aged lady called Taramani, who claimed to be his wife.

The matter blew up last fortnight while Upadhyaya was still abroad. Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Nathu Singh went to the press and wrote to Chief Minister Harideo Joshi alleging that Taramani was not Upadhyaya's legally wedded wife: she was in fact married to a teacher of an Ajmer college. He went on to say that the minister's wife was Kamla, who stayed in Upadhyaya's native village Gangapur in Bhilwara district. Moreover, Singh said, she was the mother of Upadhyaya's five children.

Says Singh, a former member of parliament, now in his early 30s: "The government order expressly uses the term 'wife'. But the minister's wife is Kamla; then how could Taramani go with him? She even filled up her passport application form claiming to be Upadhyaya's wife. It is a clear case of impersonation, cheating, criminal conspiracy and misuse of state funds." He concluded by saying: "If the chief minister is serious about providing a clean administration, he should immediately drop Upadhyaya from his cabinet."

Upadhyaya was recuperating in Canada and so was not available for comment. However, Taramani's 90-year-old father Badri Narain Sharma, when contacted, added yet another dimension to the whole affair. According to him, it was not a traditional love triangle with just the minister, his wife and the other woman. This one, he said, had five angles. Badri Narain admits that Kamla is indeed Upadhyaya's first wife and that Taramani was married to some other man. But he says Taramani's husband maltreated her and threw her out after an "oral" divorce and went on to marry another woman. This was more than 20 years ago. Taramani then took up the job of a teacher in a government school. It was then that she gradually came close to Upadhyaya, who used to know her husband.





Upadhyaya with Taramani (above); and Nathu Singh: serious charges

It is well-known in Jaipur that the two have been living together for years. Badri Narain claims that while Upadhyaya continued to maintain and look after Kamla and the children, he married Taramani in a Jaipur temple in 1965 according to Arya Samaj rites. Badri Narain adds that Upadhyaya had taken Kamla's consent in writing for the marriage. He points out that this matter had also been raised during Upadhyaya's previous tenure as minister but he had satisfied the party high command about his second marriage.

There are others also who argue that there is nothing amiss in Upadhyaya's marrying a second time. Says one of them, Rajas than High Court advocate G.G.Sharma, who is handling some cases for Upadhyaya: "Taramani was free to marry because her earlier husband had married another woman and had children by her. On the other side, Upadhyaya had obtained his first wife's consent. Thus under the law, his marriage with Taramani is perfectly valid and no one should have cause for complaint."

Taramani's father accuses former chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur, who also belongs to Bhilwara district, of having engineered this controversy. Says he: "This is an attempt to defame Upadhyaya and discredit the chief minister." Mathur was quick to deny any involvement but with a cabinet expansion imminent, the controversy around Upadhyaya could not have come at a worse time for him. What makes Upadhyaya's position all the more precarious is the fact that he has not exactly covered himself with glory in the past few months. Instead of ordering the routine number of annual transfers, Upadhyaya personally ordered more than 3,000 transfers, according to an education department official. This has led to a peculiar situation in which some schools have far too many teachers and administrators, while some others do not even have the bare minimum.

Due to a ban on all transfers ordered between July 29 and August 13, most of these transfers were not effected. Chief Minister Joshi, who is looking after Upadhyaya's portfolio in his absence, is not particularly enthusiastic about implementing them even though the ban is over now. That may be some indication of the rapport between the chief minister and Upadhyaya.

While Upadhyaya recuperates in Canada, his fate hangs in balance back home. Whether his recuperation will be coupled with a political recovery is something that defies diagnosis. However, the fact remains that at the most sensitive point in his political career, this controversy is hardly what the doctor could have ordered.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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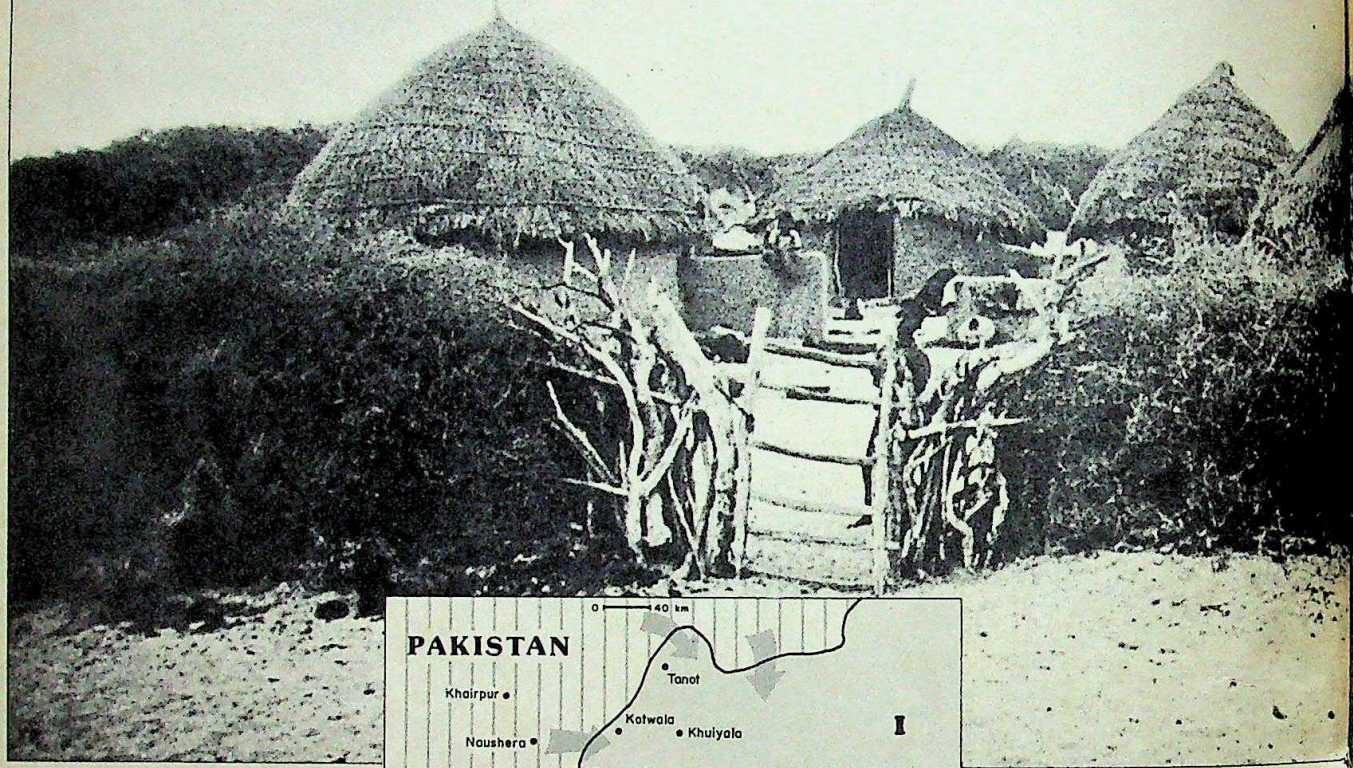
INFILTRATORS

A Quiet Invasion

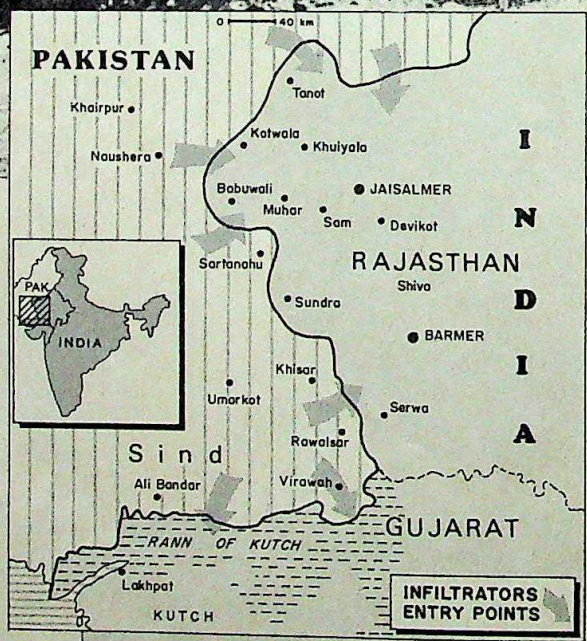


ONLY recently have Indian intelligence agencies woken up to the fact that the porous Indo-Pakistan border adjoining Rajasthan and Gujarat has become a major security threat. Over 800 Sikh terrorists have reportedly crossed the border in recent months and returned after a spell in training camps armed with bundles of currency and sophisticated weapons. But the threat of infiltration in these areas has over the years acquired wider and more dangerous dimensions. Thousands of Pakistani nationals have also infiltrated into the area making it a happy hunting ground for smuggling and espionage. The influx also threatens to upset the demographic balance in the region since many of the infiltrators have acquired local political godfathers against whom police officials are helpless to act. To investigate the extent of the problem, Ahmedabad Correspondent RAMESH MENON *toured the affected areas extensively. His report:*

FOURTEEN years ago, Halim Misri left his home in Barmer village in Rajasthan and crossed the border to settle down in Meghe-ka-tala in Thakarpur district of Pakistan. He recently returned to his village, only to be arrested by the police as he was now a Pakistani citizen. But, as it turned out, he had remained an Indian citizen too. His name was still on the voters' list and the records showed that he had even cast his vote in the last Lok Sabha elections. The court released him but the police maintained that he had not been in India and someone else had voted for him.

Sajjan Khan, who migrated to Pakistan in 1965 from Longewala in Jaisalmer, was caught in Indian territory in November 1982, without any passport or travel documents. After his arrest, Sajjan somehow managed to have his name entered in the electoral rolls of the Shiv constituency of Barmer. He also got the sarpanch of a Rajasthan village to testify in court that he was a resident of that village. The court released him with the police again helpless to act.

Halim Misri and Sajjan Khan are just two of the 242 Pakistani infiltrators arrested in Rajasthan over the last three years. Police officials say that even this



Government apathy has encouraged infiltrators to cross the border with impunity. The sparsely populated desert terrain also helps them to settle down without being noticed

Map by B.K. SHARMA

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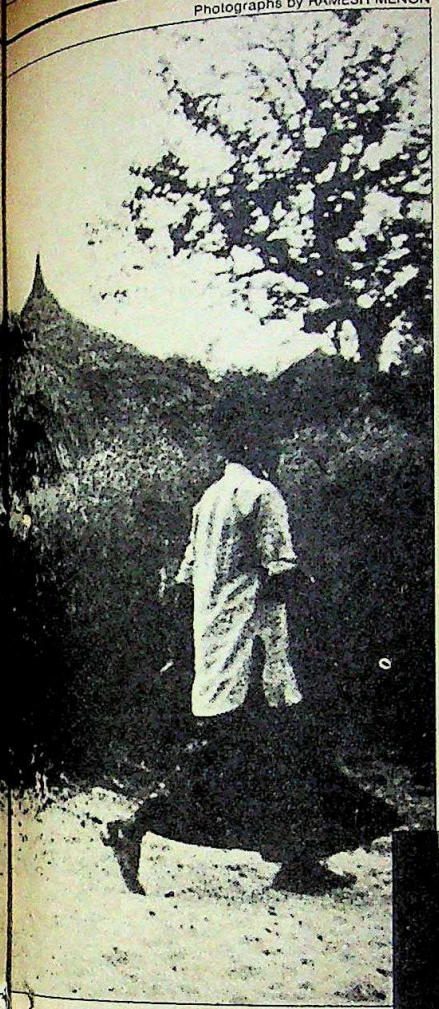
Photographs by RAMESH MENON



Amin-ka-paar village at the Barmer border: a haven for aliens

figure is a mere fraction of the actual number and point to the rise in population figures—the population country-wide registered an average increase of only 20 per cent between the 1971 and the 1981 census, the growth rate for Barmer alone was 44.41 per cent, for Jaisalmer 44.84 per cent, for Bikaner 48.02 per cent and for Ganganagar 35 per cent. While none of the district collectors assigns a definite reason to this aberration, most of the local populace strongly believe it is the increasing number of infiltrators sneaking into India from Pakistan.

After the 1965 war with Pakistan, as many as 17,598 Indian Muslims migrated to Pakistan. Of these, 930 chose to come back later while the others opted for Pakistani citizenship. All this while their names had remained on the voters' lists and votes continued to be cast in their names. So those who returned had no problems in slipping back quietly into the mainstream. While the police insisted that they were now Pakistani nationals and had illegally entered India, the electoral rolls eventually proved to be evidence to the contrary.

Though the Rajasthan and Gujarat government have repeatedly denied the existence of any infiltrators in the two states, the fact that thousands have slowly and steadily crept into India is only too well-known. Equally well-known is the fact that this has more often than not been possible with the secret help of ruling party leaders and other influential persons. Corrupt panchayat officials also help legalise the infiltrators by procuring documents to prove their presence in the area for the past many years. Police and intelligence men privately admit that this is still continuing.

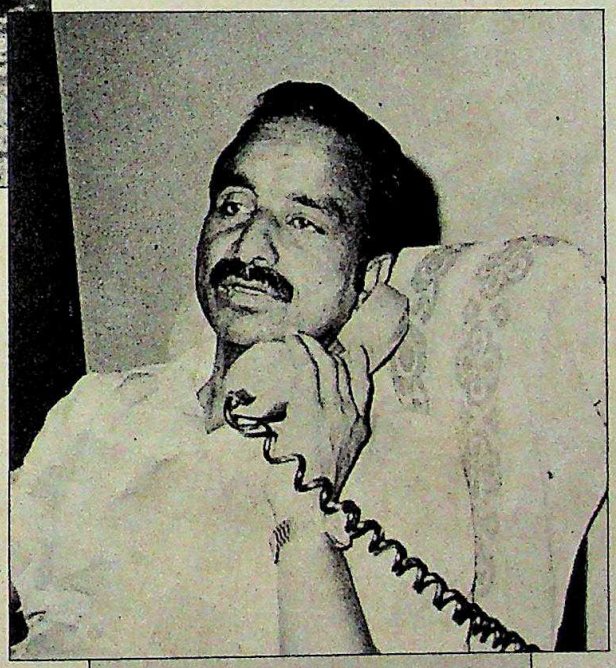
Natives of border villages are alarmed at the unexplained increase in population. In the relatively short span of 1971 to 1981, the population in Rajasthan's Bandha village has gone up from 172 to 5,888, in Muhar village from 9 to 247, in Kuldar from 32 to 240, in Modana from 422 to 1,198, in Mota Kilon-ki-dhani from 48 to 540 and in Madasar from 446 to 1,171. That this is largely due to infiltration is borne out by the sudden rise in the number of Muslim-dominated villages along the border.

Bureaucrats and police officials do not rule out the possibility of Pakistani nationals having come over and used names of migrated Indian Muslims to gain legitimacy. Says Rajasthan's Director-General of Police Raghunath Singh: "It is extremely difficult to spot out Pakistanis settled here as border villages are remotely situated." As many as 352 Pakistanis who came to Rajasthan on valid passports in the last three years have not gone back. The police have not been able to trace even one of them. What they are up to is anybody's guess.

The infiltrators have their own specific purposes ranging from simply coming back to their roots to smuggling and espionage. Many of the infiltrators are said to be trained *mujahideen* (rebels and religious fighters) living in secret exile in the border areas for obvious reasons. Some infiltrators are specifically sent across by Pakistani intelligence agencies or the army to collect information or to draft informers, say intelligence sources.

One such case is Umar Dagara, a Pakistani, who sneaked into India through Kutch and stayed with Juma Vali Mohammed, a known smuggler. He reportedly drafted Madhu Maheshwari, a deck-hand on the Indian Navy training ship INS Valsura, to pass secret information for a monthly payment of Rs 2,500. Maheshwari was taken to Pakistan on camel-back across the Kutch desert and shown detailed close-ups of various parts of INS Valsura. He was then instructed to gather and send some specific information about the ship. He was also told to shelter Pakistani spies and if needed, smuggle them aboard the ship. The details came to light after Maheshwari was arrested for spying.

In Jaisalmer itself, there are at least 6,000 cases of Indians who had crossed over to Pakistan in 1965. There is no way to prevent them, or others impersonating them, from coming back unless their Indian citizenship is cancelled. And their return can only have unpleasant implications as a Bikaner police official points out: "After living in Pakistan for 20 years, it will be difficult for them to identify with India. And in case of conflict, this may



"Pakistanis should be identified and sent back. Otherwise innocent Muslims will suffer in the propaganda against infiltrators."

G. KHAN
additional collector, Jaisalmer

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even lead to disastrous consequences."

Both the state governments and the Centre pretend that the problem doesn't exist. They have chosen not to publish the break-up of the majority and minority communities in the latest census of these areas. This ostrich-like attitude stems from the fear that official acknowledgement of the abnormal rise in the number of Muslims along the border might trigger off a strong adverse reaction and compound the villagers' feeling of insecurity.

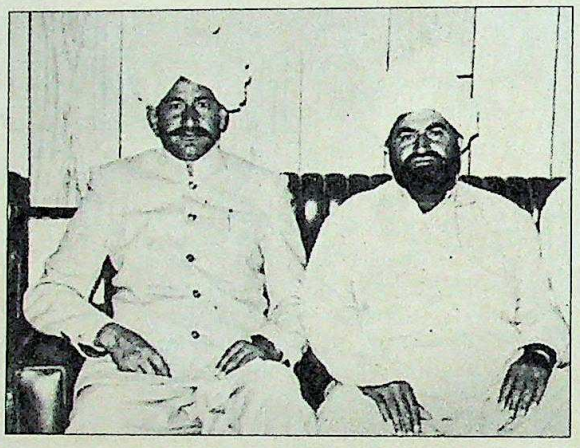
More than this, some sources attribute it to the ruling party's desire to maintain its Muslim vote bank despite all odds. Says a senior bureaucrat posted at Jaipur: "Removal of these migrated Indians from the electoral rolls may change the ruling party's political fortunes and so the Government is not ready to risk it."

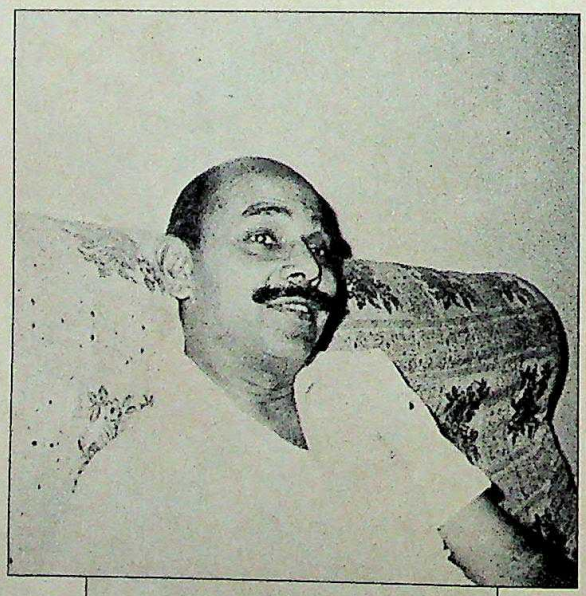
Years ago, the then Jaisalmer district collector, M.K.Vyas, had put it on record that one of the Government's prime concerns should be to tackle the problem of infiltration as it was assuming alarming proportions. He had even indicated that some of the infiltrators were trained *mujahideen*. Vyas had launched a move to delete the names of all migrants from the Jaisalmer electoral rolls. But he met with stiff opposition from the then law minister, Ahmed Bux Sindhi, and other political bigwigs in Jaipur. Eventually, Vyas was transferred to the backward Dungarpur district and the proceedings died a silent death.

The apathy of the Government has encouraged infiltrators to cross the border and settle down in Indian territory with impunity. Many people from Khanpur, Dharikhipro and Zol in Pakistan have come over and settled down in Jaisalmer villages like Kunjadi, Bhagu-ka-gav, Khodiasar, Devikot, Khuiyala, Seeamber and Chatrel. The sparsely populated desert terrain also helps them to settle down without being noticed. Since they do not look any different from the local people with their bright lungis and kurtas, they merge easily into the environment of any Muslim village.

Police stations and outposts are far from the villages and the border too is unmanned for long stretches. For an area of 1,547 km along the border, there are only 149 Border Security Force (BSF) outposts, leaving large gaps unattended. And anyway, most of the BSF strength is channelled off and on to deal with internal disturbances, leaving little of it for effective border vigil. In fact, in certain parts, there is just one BSF outpost with merely a dozen men to look after an area of 50 km. In Sam area of Jaisalmer, a police station with just 12 men takes care of an area of 800 km.

Congress(I) leaders of Jaisalmer, Talib Khan (left) with Ghazi Khan: dubious loyalties





"We have to stop infiltration and smuggling on the border. If they can carry goods, they can also carry information."
S.K. SHARMA
DIG, Jodhpur range

Once inside India, it is quite some time before the infiltrators are found out. By the time they are, they have already acquired the necessary papers to prove that they are Indian nationals and are beyond the pale of any action. As Jaisalmer police chief Mahendra Nath Dhawan points out angrily: "Our laws are oriented to help criminals. They are so lax and liberal. Ninety per cent of the offenders caught for infiltration, smuggling or spying get away without any punishment." In February last year, the then Barmer district collector, C.K. Mathew, arrested Mustaq Ahmed of Burran-ka-tala under NSA. Though an Indian, he was carrying a Pakistani identity card. Records showed that he had earlier been convicted in 1975 for crossing over to Pakistan and again in 1979 under the Official Secrets Act for possessing classified documents.

It was found that Mustaq had undergone training at Lahore for espionage. When arrested, Mustaq sneered at the police saying that they would not be able to hold him for long. Sure enough, his words came true when the police had to release him under pressure from top Congress(I) leaders in Jaipur. Admits the former collector of a border district: "Infiltration can be stopped and so can espionage if district collectors on the border do not have to contend with political interference."

The concentration of Muslims in certain areas along the border has also aggravated communal differences. This was amply borne out in the last assembly elections when the Congress(I) candidate Amin Khan, a sitting MLA from the Shiv constituency of Barmer, lost to the Janata Party's Rawat Umaid Singh as the voting pattern had clearly swung to the lowest denominator of caste politics. Election slogans in Barmer were unabashed in their exhortations of *"Hindu ko vote do."* Khan in turn played on the religious susceptibilities of his own community by asking Muslims not to cooperate with the intelligence men who were dealing with the cases of infiltrators.

In fact, Khan is known to have sheltered Pakistani nationals himself in the past. He has even been arrested

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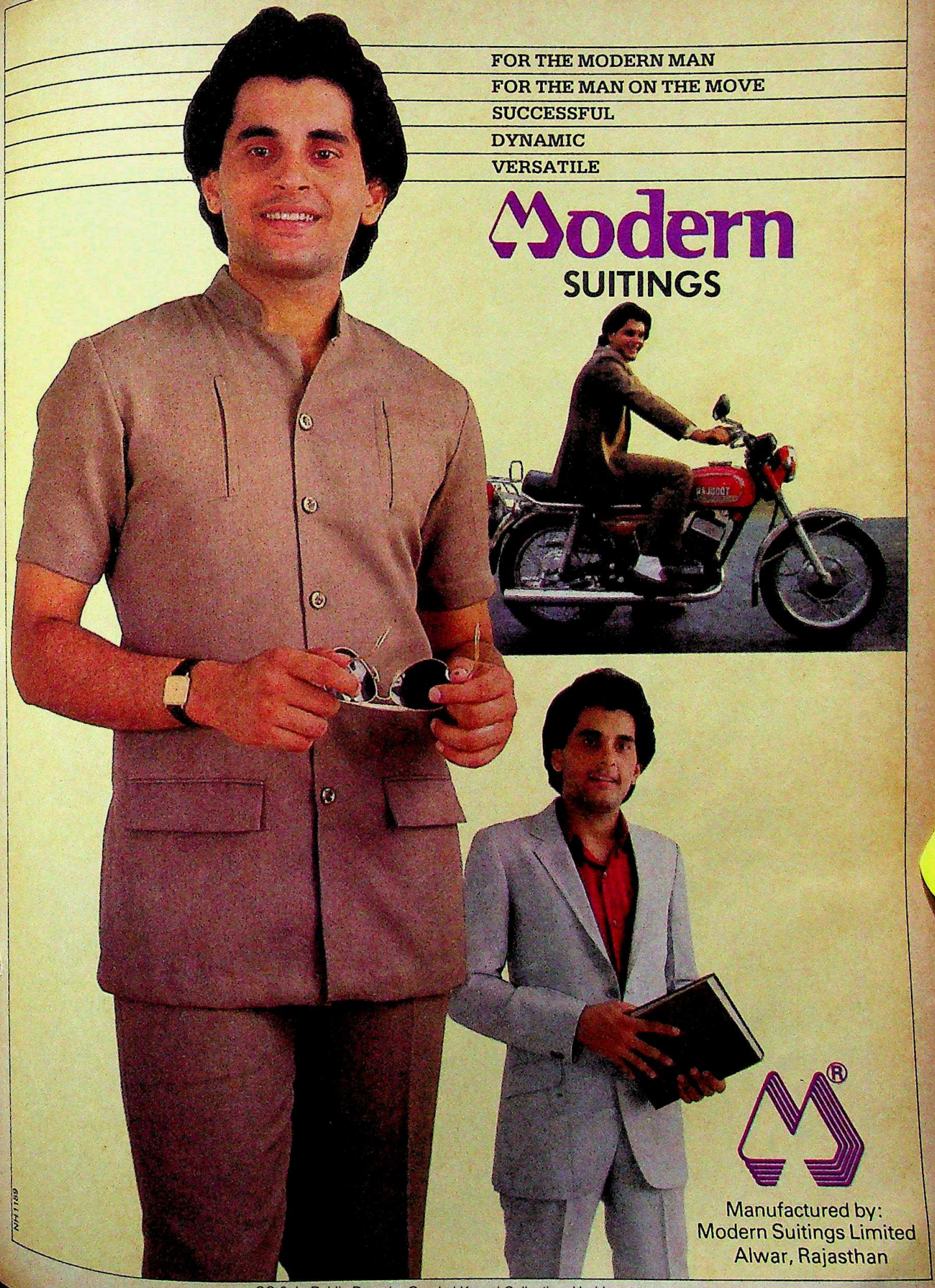

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Guess who's playing tabla for Ravi Shanker.

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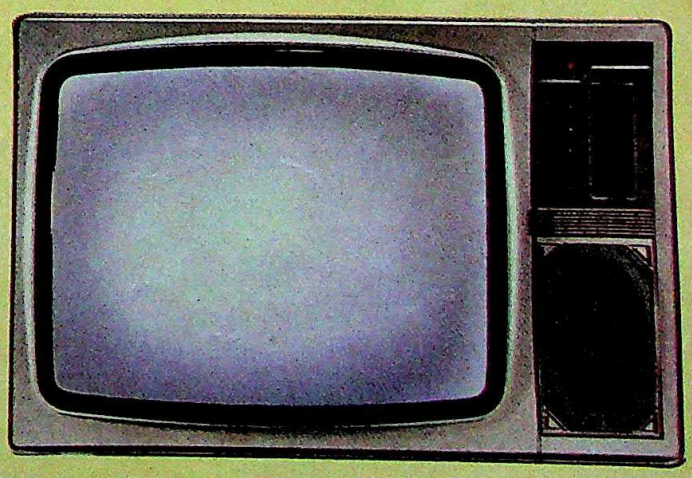

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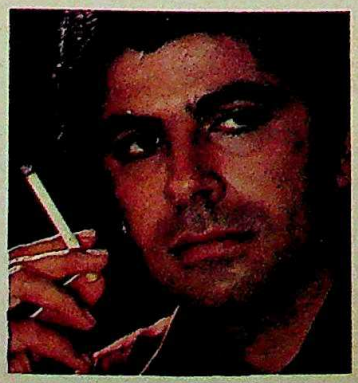
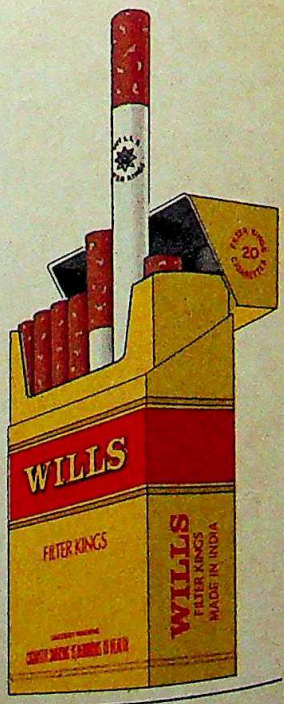
FOR SOME MEN THINGS ALWAYS GO SMOOTHLY

First night tickets.
Par for the course at golf.
And the rich, mellow
experience of a truly
great smoke. For some
men, it all comes very,
very smoothly.





Wills Filter Kings
Smooth. Very smooth

STATUTORY WARNING
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

WFK-5950

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thrice — in 1965, 1971 and 1973 — for alleged anti-national activities. That Khan's interests lie more across the border became clear when he recently objected to the setting up of a BSF outpost on the border facing Amin-ka-paar, a predominantly Muslim village in Barmer. Since there were no restrictions here with people from both sides freely crossing over, the BSF had shifted its checkpost in front of the village. The villagers objected to this and when it had no effect, they approached Khan. When the BSF did not listen to him either, Khan goaded the Pakistan Rangers on the other side to protest that the BSF had come too close to the border.

Khan is not the only one. There are others, like Ghazi Khan and Talib Khan, both well-known Congress(I) leaders of Jaisalmer, who have been arrested on similar charges. Bachaya Ahmed of Kutch, who was the vice-president of Congress(I)'s Lakhpat taluka unit, is still in jail for bringing Pakistanis into India, sheltering spies and even spying for Pakistan himself. That the loyalties of most of the Muslim villagers on the border lie on the other side is another disturbing fact.

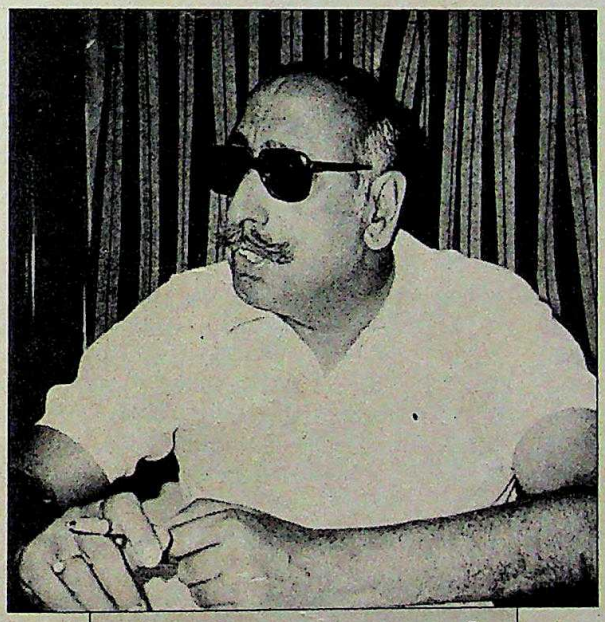
Apart from problems like smuggling and espionage, infiltration also threatens to upset the demographic balance in the region. This is especially true in the districts of Kutch in Gujarat and Barmer and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. Interviews with a cross-section of society revealed that the grudge against outsiders who have been cutting into the region's scarce resources is steadily building up. Residents of the border villages fear that the situation has all the potential of turning into another Assam. Says H.V.Malpani, convenor of the Citizens' Council of Jaisalmer: "If the Government does not initiate immediate steps to stop infiltration, it will escalate into a major problem soon due to imbalances. The country has seen what happened in Assam." And G.Khan, additional collector of Jaisalmer, agrees: "Pakistanis should be identified and sent back. Many of them are now freely moving about. If this is not done, innocent Muslims will suffer in the propaganda against infiltrators. Border inhabitants are naturally scared of another Assam developing here."

But perhaps the most serious threat is the threat from within. It is not only Muslim villagers who are suspect. Rajputs living near the border are equally involved in smuggling and sheltering infiltrators. The easiest means of livelihood in these backward border areas is to smuggle Indian liquor and *bidis* to Pakistan and exchange it for provisions. As a result, villagers of Jaisalmer district feel closer to Pakistan than to their own country as the nearest Indian town is more than 100 km away. No development programme of the Government reaches them. They get no benefits and so do not feel part of India. Jaisalmer District Collector Lalit Kothari says: "We are doing so little for their welfare. They feel that India does not care for them. They are also not dependent on India as everything they need comes from Pakistan. Then how can they identify themselves with India?"

THE Government is largely to blame for this increasing alienation. In Ganganagar, villagers on the border had only a negative reaction to India as they could watch only Pakistan television. It is only now, when a low-power television transmitter has been set up in the area, that things are beginning to change. Said Ashok Kumar Khatri, a revenue inspector in Ganganagar: "They have started feeling attached to India after watching Indian programmes and news on television."

The BSF has been asking the Centre to define a buffer zone between the two sides. As things stand there is not even a fence to stop people from crossing over to each other's sides. Even if a barrier is erected, it still would not help until the Government stepped up vigil along the border. There are areas where the nearest BSF outpost is 40 km away from the border because the terrain is rough and rocky. White concrete pillars at intervals of some kilometres form the only demarcating line. Kabul-ki-dhani, a village in Barmer yards away from the border, is known to shelter Pakistanis. Here the BSF has shifted its watchtower to an elevated plane to have a better view. But that hardly helps when the outposts happen to be few.

The Centre had continued to turn a blind eye to the problem until Sikh terrorists started jumping the boundary for arms, training, funds and shelter in Pakistan. That is when the Government was forced to sit up and take note. Police and army officials were taken aback when they stumbled on bits of evidence after the arrest of Ravindra Sethi and Balvinder Singh who were slipping back into India after guerrilla and commando training in Pakistan. Intelligence men discovered that at least 800 Sikh youths had similarly crossed over. Sikhs who were jailed in Pakistan had been released only to be trained in these camps for three months and then sent back to India. They brought back with them sackfuls of sophisticated guns, grenades and Rs 10,000 in Indian currency. They were promised more arms and money every three months if they completed their mission successfully. The Ganganagar border has now been tightened and more BSF battalions have been deployed. Sealing the border and intensifying patrol is just the beginning. A lot more needs to be done to tackle the problem. To begin with, it has been suggested that the names of all migrated Indians be struck off the rolls and those living along the border be issued identity cards. But considering the rate at which the infiltrators are trickling in, by the time that is done, it may be too late.



"Our laws are oriented to help criminals. Ninety per cent of the people caught for infiltration, smuggling and spying get away without any punishment."
MAHENDRA NATH DHAWAN
SP, Jaisalmer

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RACHPAL SINGH

Diary of an Extremist

WHEN the cordite finally cleared on that fateful June day last year, army and intelligence personnel sifting through the rubble of the Akal Takht where Bhindranwale and his men chose to make their last stand, came away with two truckloads of files, papers and miscellaneous documents. Stuffed into gunny bags, the assorted collection was distributed among the concerned intelligence agencies for scrutiny. Among the papers was a diary written in Gurmukhi which is now in the possession of the Central Bureau of Investigation. Though the contents of the diary will never be made public, it has a singular significance in that it was maintained by Rachpal Singh, a personal assistant and a trusted confidant of Bhindranwale and the man who screened all those seeking interviews or favours from his militant leader. Rachpal's diary was discovered near the bodies of Bhindranwale, Shahbeg Singh and Bhai Amrik Singh but of Rachpal himself there was no trace. His body was never identified among those killed or captured during Operation Bluestar but his diary offers a sensational and often embarrassing insight into the close liaison between Punjab government officials and the terrorist preacher. Principal Correspondent RAJU SANTHANAM *was able to examine a portion of the diary recently. His report:*

RACHPAL SINGH was one of the few men close to Bhindranwale who was well educated and therefore acted as a conduit between those seeking an audience with Bhindranwale and was in fact present at most meetings. The diary, though incomplete—some secret meetings now publicised are not mentioned—and not regularly maintained, has nonetheless, entries from '83 to the end of May 1984, and lists people who called on Bhindranwale as well as offers a rare insight into the thinking in the Bhindranwale camp just before Operation Bluestar. The diary lists names of seven senior government officials who were close to Bhindranwale and in fact were passing on information to him and also contains details of the secret meetings with government emissaries owing allegiance to then Central Ministers, Buta Singh and Giani Zail Singh.

From the contents of the diary it is clear that part of the problem in Punjab last year was that there were too many emissaries involved in negotiating with the militant leader, some officially and others at the behest of ministers. If the diary is authentic, and there is every reason to believe it is, there was total confusion in evidence. On the one hand were emissaries sent by the Government trying to forge some semblance of peace; on the other were hordes of politicians, senior police officials and local sarpanches who forced Bhindranwale to question the Government's motives and thereby spurn any peace feelers.

One example mentioned in the diary is the exchange of fire lasting several hours between Central Reserve Police Forces and Bhindranwale's men on February 12 last year. The diary notings indicate that Bhindranwale was convinced that the security forces were going to storm the temple; on February 14, according to the diary, a deputy commissioner rang up Bhindranwale and actually apologised for the firing and also confided that the Government was thinking of launching an attack and the heavy firing was believed to be a sort of prelude.

Yet, the diary records that on February 19, Sardar Ajaib Singh Machaki, an emissary of Buta Singh, met Bhindranwale to urge him to issue a statement condemning violence and in support of communal harmony. The suggestion was abruptly turned down because, as Rachpal notes, Bhindranwale was already convinced that the Government was preparing to storm his citadel. At the same time, Rachpal notes, yet another peace move initiated by the then Border Security Force commander, Birbal Nath, was made through a go-between, Makhan Singh, sarpanch of Bagha Purana in Ferozpur district. Makhan, the diary notes, met Bhindranwale on March 31, and stated that Nath had spoken to the prime minister who had agreed to lift the ban on the All India Sikh Students Federation if Bhindranwale laid down arms. Makhan asked Bhindranwale to send two representatives to Delhi to discuss the details. Rachpal notes that the offer was rejected and that Bhindranwale suggested to the Government that Rajiv Gandhi should come to Amritsar instead to talk to him personally.

The diary reveals that on April 13, Bhindranwale was again approached by a government emissary with the proposal that two unnamed central ministers were prepared to fly to Amritsar and talk at the circuit house to any of his representatives. The diary, however, does not mention any response, but presumably this offer was refused as well. What it does reveal is that between February and April,

THE DIARY

Entries

THE ENTRIES in Rachpal Singh's diary are usually brief and to the point, often in the nature of an appointment book with some elaboration on what was discussed. But they also convey a glimpse into the myriad comings and goings around the man who was the hub of terrorism in Punjab for so many years. Among the other entries in the diary:

January 26: A deputy commissioner told a Bhindranwale aide that unless the Akalis compromised with Bhindranwale there was no possibility of solving the Punjab tangle.

February 3: Two police officers, favourably inclined towards Bhindranwale, met him at night and urged him to instruct followers that no further incidents should take place in Amritsar city.

February 19: Bhindranwale rings up a superintendent of police in a district and asked him to trace two missing Sikh girls or face consequences.

February 22: Two police officers met Rachpal Singh and Amrik Singh. They were escorted out at 10.30 at night.

February 24: A journalist (not named) warned Bhindranwale of a possible police attack on the Golden Temple at night.

February 26: An unnamed Sikh army officer from Sarsawa alleged that an air force officer in Assam had trained commandos who were to be dropped into the Golden Temple. Each helicopter would be reinforced and would carry 24

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Bhindranwale's mind was being poisoned against the Government by some of the very emissaries who had supposedly come to talk peace. On March 3, the diary states, Ajaib Singh Machaki told Bhindranwale the incredible story that the anti-Sikh violence in Haryana had been orchestrated by Rajiv Gandhi, Bhajan Lal, Sher Singh, a Haryana minister, and T.N. Chaturvedi, the then home secretary. On March 11, a Congress (I) leader, Trilochan Singh Riyasti, goes and meets Bhindranwale with the news that he had met the prime minister and she appeared in no mood to solve the Punjab tangle.

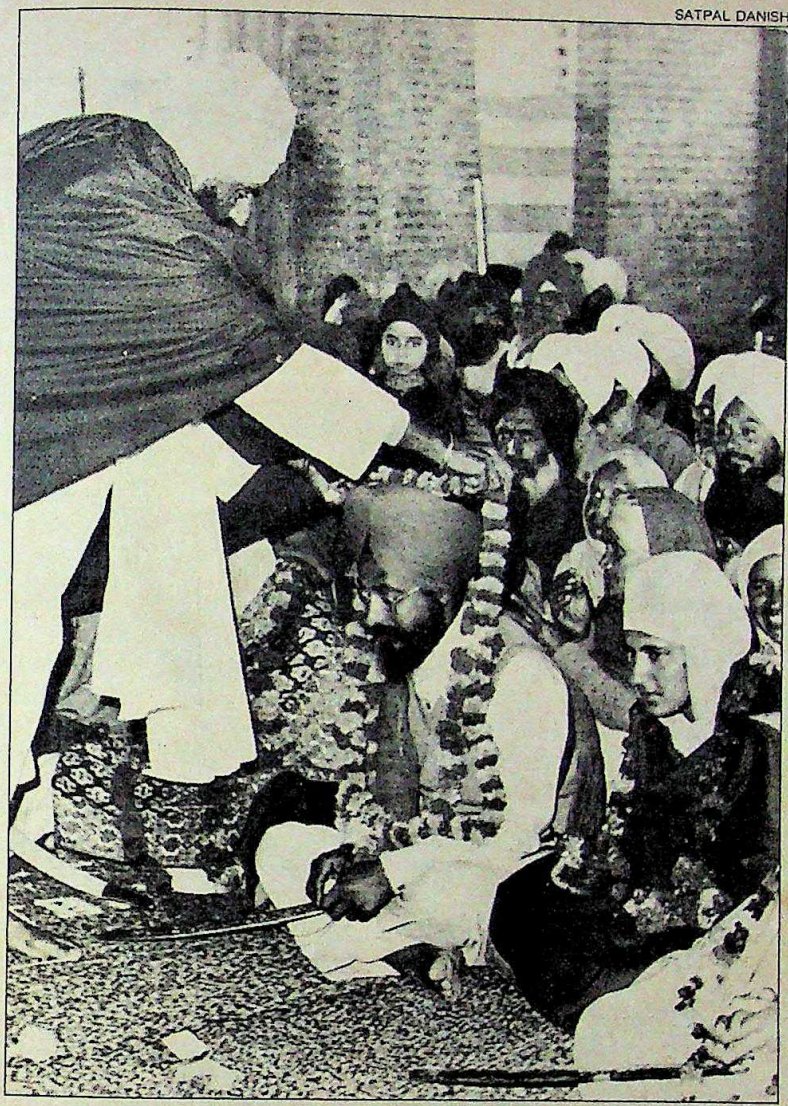
There was also a consistent effort made separately by Giani Zail Singh's emissary, a man called Pistaul Singh. The diary only notes that on March 12 Pistaul Singh met Bhindranwale and made certain revelations which were discussed till late in the night by the militant leader and his closest aides. The diary makes no mention of what the revelations are, but Pistaul Singh, 55, a veteran politician who is well known in the Mehta Chowk area, is still around. When asked by INDIA TODAY, he did not deny his meetings with Bhindranwale and in fact admitted to meeting him on several occasions during the period of the diary. He now says that Bhindranwale had told him that their only demands were that the cases against him and his close aides should be treated leniently. "I promptly conveyed this to Giani Zail Singh but other persons were against any form of settlement," he says.

What has the Government done with the revelations in the diary? After translation into English, the Central Bureau of Investigation wrote to the Home Ministry with the names of the officials who were mentioned in the diary. The Intelligence Bureau was given the task of verifying whether the allegations were true.

The interrogations of some prominent extremists like Harminder Sandhu included questions about the diaries. Said one official who followed up the diary: "In some cases we were fairly convinced that a particular official was linked quite closely with Bhindranwale. In the case of others we realised that the officials were actually collecting intelligence." Officials say that action was taken wherever the Government was convinced that an officer was involved. Of the seven officers named, one has been suspended and five others transferred to other jobs.

A senior intelligence officer admitted that it was difficult to ascertain an individual officer's real political leanings and the motives for his actions which may, on the surface, have led the authorities to believe that he was hobnobbing with Bhindranwale. The whole truth will never be known—unless, of course, there was another meticulous Rachpal Singh writing another interesting diary.

SATPAL DANISH



Bhindranwale blessing Rachpal Singh at his wedding: trusted aide

commandos outfitted with bullet proof jackets.

March 4: Retired Brigadier Mohinder Singh (now in detention) gave information about possible commando action. Five companies of the BSF and Army, he allegedly said, had been sent to Halwara for commando training.

March 6: A journalist met Bhindranwale and told him about "intense activity" outside the Golden Temple.

March 21: A Swedish Diplomat and his wife met Bhindranwale and held discussions. Bhindranwale is said to have talked about "excesses" committed on Sikhs.

March 24: Sardar Ajaib Singh Machaki conveyed to Bhindranwale that Buta Singh would reach Amritsar the same day and asked Rachpal Singh to arrange an interview with the Sant.

March 24: A local journalist was given Rs 40,000 by Bhindranwale for publishing his viewpoint.

April 3: Bhindranwale rejected the prime minister's feelers through Makhan Singh of Bagha Pura.

April 12: An anonymous call from a 'Colonel' from Calcutta who said that "adequate" precautions were necessary for Baisakhi because the government planned to kill Bhindranwale on that date. The message was discussed at a high level meeting by Bhindranwale, Major General Jaswant Singh Bhullar, Brig (Retd) Sandhu, Brig Mohinder Singh, and another retired officer, Narinder Singh.

April 29: An IAS officer, Gurtej Singh, who is now underground, met Bhindranwale. No other details given.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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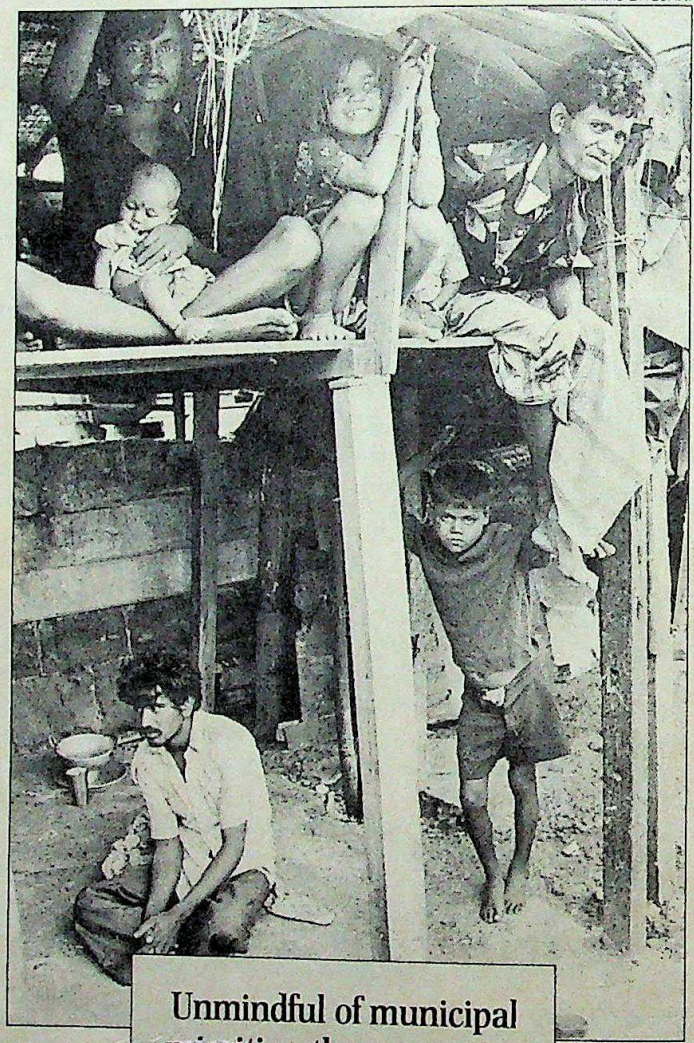
SQUATTERS

Battle of the Budge

"THEY work and sleep where they ease, for no conveniences are available for them. Their daughters come of age, bathe under the nosy gaze of passers-by, unmindful of the feminine sense of bashfulness. The cooking and washing over, women pick lice from each other's hair. The boys beg. Menfolk without occupation snatch chains with the connivance of the defenders of law and order. When caught, if at all, they say: "Who doesn't commit crimes?"

—from the judgement of the Supreme Court authorising the Bombay Municipal Corporation to pull down unauthorised structures on public land.

NAMAS BHOJANI



FOUR YEARS after the first huts were pulled down on Senapati Bapat Marg in Central Bombay in 1981, the wheel has come full circle. It is now over a month since the Supreme Court gave its verdict on the petition filed by a journalist and two slum-dwellers challenging certain sections of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) Act which empowered the corporation to pull down unauthorised structures on public land. The Supreme Court ruled that squatters had no right to encroach on public land and that the BMC could demolish their unauthorised structures. However, it stayed evictions until October 31, a month after the monsoons, and urged the BMC to provide alternative accommodation to the pavement-dwellers who had been listed in the 1976 census.

For the past one month and even before that, government and city agencies in Bombay have been coming to terms with the fact that the judgement, far from being a solution to the city's housing and environment problems, has only brought matters back to square one. If anything, in Bombay civic officials realise it only too well that they cannot afford to be high-handed in the evictions any more. They agree that the brash way in which the then chief minister, A.R. Antulay, had ordered all pavement-dwellers to be thrown out in 1981 won't do now. Which is why Municipal Commissioner Jamsheed Kanga has promised to go about the eviction in a "systematic manner". Says Additional Municipal Commissioner N. Ramamurthi with studied caution: "We are working out a phased programme of clearances. First major roads and arteries that are choked up will be cleared. Then squatter settlements which hold up public projects will be moved and so on. It's a question of working out priorities."

Unmindful of municipal priorities, the pavement-dwellers are determined to stick on where they are until given other places to stay

Unmindful of municipal priorities, however, the pavement-dwellers are determined to stick on where they are until given other places to stay. The more defenceless of them have resigned themselves to fate. Like Sahara Bano, an emaciated maid who came from a village in Maharashtra's Sholapur district and settled down in a 5×5 feet hovel on the same Senapati Bapat Marg where it all began. Bano's brother makes and sells paper fans on the beaches and this is the family's principal means of livelihood. Now Bano even has a ration card to her name and looks on her piece of the pavement as her only home, mainly because she has no option. Says Bano helplessly: "Now there is nothing left for us to do but to throw ourselves on the street and let the *seths'* vehicles run us over. I am determined not to go back to my village and die of hunger and starvation."

Miles away, along the tracks that lead to Ghatkopar station in the eastern suburbs lives Sopan Biramane with his wife in a makeshift corrugated iron *jhonpdi* bought for Rs 7,000 in 1982. He pays Rs 10 a month for using a nearby water tap and Rs 15 a month for electricity. Biramane, who earns Rs 600 a month from a lowly job in a chemicals company, is uncomfortably aware that his tacky hovel could be one of the first to be pulled down since it stands on railway land. But he says resignedly: "I have nothing to go back to in Satara. No land, no work, no prospects. Here at least I can live a comparatively decent life."

In the heart of Bombay stands Farida Bai, a large woman who wears an amulet on her arm to keep her blood pressure in

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check. She is something of an activist and has taken part in several *morchas* to demand better living conditions. Yet, she is as helpless as anybody else. Says Farida: "I have been living here for 25 years. This is my home. Where do you want me to go?"

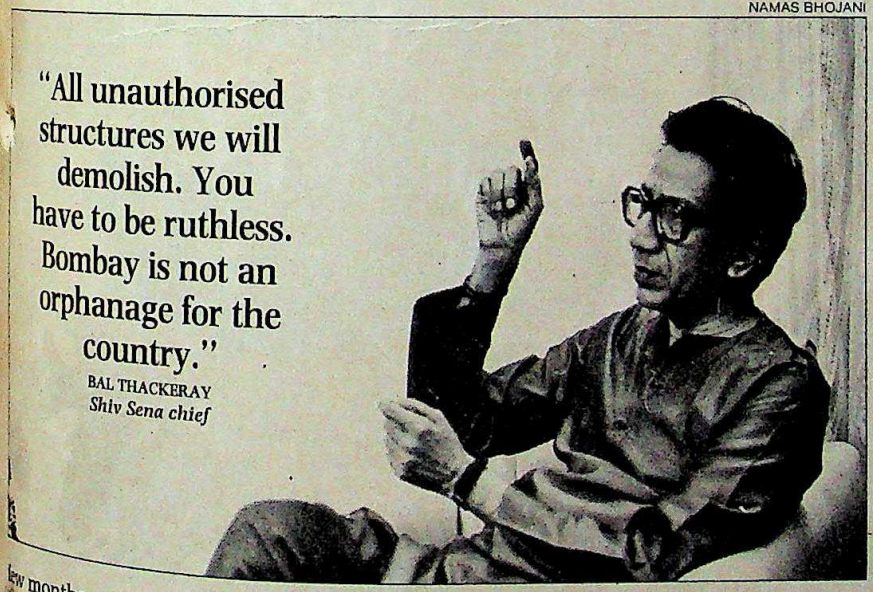
To this question, fiery Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray has only one reply: "Out!" And "out" means not only from their unauthorised huts but out from the city itself. For years, Thackeray has been thundering hellfire and brimstone at the "outsiders", the migrants settled in Bombay, asking for their eviction from the metropolis. To Thackeray, the Supreme Court verdict has come as something of a first step in this direction since most of the squatters are "outsiders" by his definition. And with his chauvinistic Maratha party at the BMC helm, Thackeray is now swearing sweet vengeance. Says Thackeray in gritty tones: "All unauthorised structures, whether on the footpath or elsewhere, we are going to demolish. The law must be obeyed. You have to be ruthless. Bombay is not an orphanage for the entire country."

Thackeray can afford to be belligerent. His party made a stunning comeback a few months ago in the BMC elections and now rules the city. Chhagan Bhujbal, the Shiv Sena mayor of Bombay, hits the headlines often with his clean-up drives. In one of them, he even walked through knee-deep sludge in crowded Crawford Market and personally supervised the clearing of 100 truckloads of age-old muck. Bhujbal is now determined more than ever to carry out the law to the letter. Says the Maratha mayor: "The pavements are for pedestrians. They are not plots of land on which one can settle down for ever and ever. Bombay must be saved."

The 'save Bombay' chant is increasingly being taken up by the city's Maharashtrian middle class which has thrown its weight behind Thackeray and his fiery legions. Somewhere along the line, squatters have become synonymous with "outsiders" and they now find themselves the major target of Maratha ire. That this is a misconceived notion floated by the Shiv Sena does nothing to quell this vehemence. Vows Nalini Majrekar, a Senapati Bapat Marg housewife: "It was we who were the second class citizens. Now we'll show them what's what." Revchand Lad, a state government employee, is equally gleeful: "What Antulay did in 1981 (the eviction of slum-dwellers in blinding rain which provoked the petition to the Supreme Court) was excellent. I have seen these people. They are the criminal element in Bombay. And they must be thrown out."

But their teeth-gnashing righteousness is not shared by their neighbours belonging to other states. Company executive Suresh Balasubramaniam reasons: "The judgement and subsequent action by the corporation will bring back the rule of law. If they have a right to life, so do I."

NAMAS BHOJANI



"All unauthorised structures we will demolish. You have to be ruthless. Bombay is not an orphanage for the country."
BAL THACKERAY
Shiv Sena chief

Even cricketer Sunil Gavaskar feels the need for rationale: "I welcome the idea but I hope the Government finds them alternative accommodation."

The vengeful mood of the "legitimate" citizens has ironically driven home the extreme sensitivity of the situation. This has put the city bosses on guard. Local politicians are wary of antagonising the middle and upper classes. Says Bombay Regional Congress Committee(I) chief Murli Deora: "It is a step in the right direction. But the implementation will cause some problems." Virendra Bakshi, MLA from Ghatkopar, cautions that action has to be carefully thought out. "We can't just get rid of them," he says. And considering that the majority of his constituency lives in slums or on pavements, he obviously knows what he is talking about.

Whatever Thackeray might say, it is just not possible to get rid of the squatters for good. Blind eviction with escorts to the state's boundary is simply not on. And even if they are evicted, what is to prevent them from coming back? There are countless cases of people having left a place temporarily, only to return once things cooled down.

The options open to the BMC therefore become limited. Either it rehabilitate the slum-dwellers on the spot or resettle them in other areas if their hutments come in the way of development projects. A number of agencies are working out solutions that are essentially in the nature of pilot programmes, all of which hinge around the secure land tenure theory. Says Satish Tripathi, chairman of the Bombay Housing Board, the body charged with looking after the thousands of crumbling buildings in the metropolis: "Many of our schemes are held up because of squatters. So even though pavement-dwellers are not our responsibility we are offering them the incentive of forming cooperative societies and giving them pieces of land at a nominal cost with long-term leases."

The idea is to ask financial institutions to give the cooperative societies loans to build simple houses. Adds Tripathi: "Normally we would have evicted them straightaway. Now we have to change our approach. The board has ten such schemes on hand. We will see how it works and then take up more if these turn out to be successful."

The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) and the Bombay Metropolitan and Regional Development Authority (BMRDA) are working on a less idealistic programme: the Bombay Urban Development Project (BUDP) with an investment of Rs 282.33 crore, partly financed by the World Bank. The emphasis here is not on providing finished houses but serviced sites. It is proposed to develop 85,000 house plots at strategic locations over 600 hectares through the next five years. However, this scheme is not meant for existing slum-dwellers but aims at meeting the increasing influx from outside Bombay, which is currently estimated at 300 people daily. The essential part of the scheme is long-term leasehold rights to the plots.

On a smaller scale, MHADA is starting a pilot programme for one lakh slum fam-

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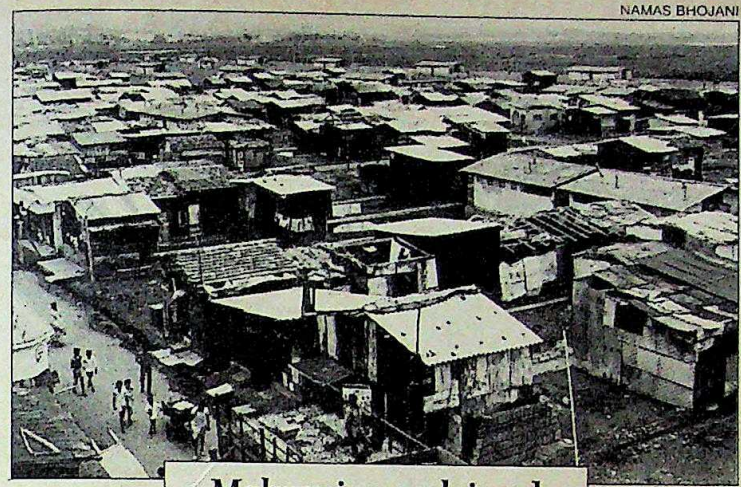


ilies in Greater Bombay. Certain basic criteria have already been laid down:

- One latrine for 10 families;
- One water tap for 15 families;
- Internal lanes not less than four feet in width;
- A spiral approach road to the slum
- Security of tenure on the land, provided 70 per cent of the residents join together to form a cooperative society.

Says MHADA's Chief Community Development Officer Pratima Panvelkar: "We have been talking to a lot of people and the response has been pretty positive. It's the security of tenure which attracts them the most." As it should because that is what they want most of all. Says Arumugam Ramaswamy, a casual labourer who lives in a Mulund slum and supports a family of three with his earnings of about Rs15 a day: "I came to Bombay 10 years ago in search of work. But still I have no place I can call my own. Give me a piece of land and I will be happy." The so-called "photo-pass", the identity card issued (theoretically) to all the slum-dwellers listed in the 1976 census, says specifically that it "does not confer any rights on the occupant in the property he has occupied".

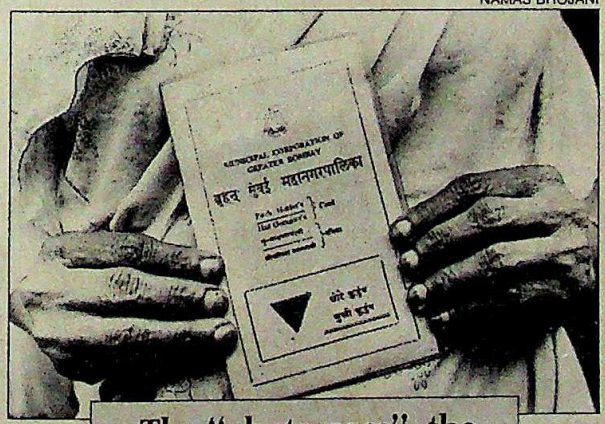
The resettlement colonies are not popular with the squatters because they are far away in the suburbs and badly serviced, often no better than the slums themselves. Kalavati of Dahisar works as a maid in half a dozen houses, helped by her 15-year-old daughter, and earns around Rs300 a month. She asserts that she just cannot accept being banished to the boondocks like "so much *kacchra*". The boondocks is Malwani, a reclaimed marsh in north Bombay which today houses over one lakh displaced pavement and slum-dwellers. Begun as a resettlement colony in the early '70s, Malwani is bidding to become another Dharavi and land here is already expensive at Rs 150 per sq ft. Rooms sell illegally for Rs 30,000. This despite the fact that facilities are deplorable: inadequate bus service for the residents, most of whom work more than 5 km away, filthy toilets, unclaimed garbage and the growing menace of liquor dens and slumlords hunting for new pastures.

Malwani, a reclaimed marsh, houses over one lakh displaced pavement and slum-dwellers. Rooms sell illegally for Rs 30,000 despite the fact that facilities are deplorable.

The Supreme Court judgement, even while reopening the eviction issue all over again, has been a blessing in disguise. It has forced the authorities to realise that the nearly two lakh illegal dwellers cannot be thrown out of Bombay as this would strain the city. Kisan Mehta of the Save Bombay Committee recalls that when he was chairman of the Bombay Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) about 15 per cent of its employees lived in slums. Today it is estimated that at least a fifth of the BMC's lower grades live in slums. They provide almost all of the city's maids and casual labour and about 50 per cent of its hawkers. Says Mehta: "If you say the city will sink with them, the city will also sink without them. I can't evict them and expect my milk to be delivered at Malabar Hill at six in the morning." And his point is amply illustrated by Kalavati who says: "If they take me away to Malwani then who will wash the *sethanis'* utensils? As it is, if I am asked to live in Malwani, I will have to double my rates."

Like many others, Mehta points out that the Government can easily take over nearly 3,000 hectares of private vacant land under the Urban Land Ceiling Act. With five persons occupying a tenement of 20 sq m and with 300 tenements to a hectare, 3,000 hectares could house all the 4.5 million slum-dwellers of Bombay. "This would ease the pressure on essential roads which these people are occupying at present, free essential land meant for public projects and solve Bombay's problem without a lot of heart-burn," he says. He estimates the cost of the project at Rs 200 crore. However, the state Government has so far made no move to acquire the vacant land. In fact, there was a move two years ago to give the land back to the owners but it was shot down by the courts.

NAMAS BHOJANI



The "photo-pass", the identity card issued to slum-dwellers, says specifically that it "does not confer any rights on the occupant in the property he has occupied".

As the monsoon nears its end, both sides are getting ready for November 1, although the BMC has so far stayed its hand, mindful of the court's decree. There have already been minor skirmishes between a police force intent on taking advantage of the judgement even before it can be implemented.

In the Shantinagar slum of faraway Dahisar, for instance, there have been quite a few visits by over-enterprising policemen out to make a fast buck. Subhash Gupta, who came to Bombay

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HAMARA SHEHER

Hard Focus

THE COINCIDENCE couldn't have been more remarkable. The Supreme Court judgement on Bombay's pavement-dwellers came barely a few weeks after an 82-minute celluloid shocker began rubbing consciences raw all over the town. *Hamara Sheher* (our city) made by 35-year-old award-winning film-maker Anand Patwardhan, is a documentary just this side of anti-demolition propaganda. The film shows the all-too-familiar images of shanty town: a dingy wasteland levelled by lathi-wielding cops; determined faces living in constant fear of being evicted or run over; and a sturdy woman saying defiantly: "You can keep breaking things down. I will just spread my sari and make another shelter."

These images may not be new. But the film's triumph lies in the juxtaposition of the pathetic and the ridiculous with consummate artistry. And the strident and cynical message that emerges is: "Our city has no place for the poor." The ridiculous, like the ragged, has various shades. It emerges in former sheriff S.P.Godrej saying: "As Indians, it is shameful to allow such a life-style." Or in a powdered socialite who reminisces of the good old days when Bombay was not so crammed. Or in the perspiring MLA and political lord of Bandra, Ahmed Zakaria, who ties himself in knots declaring that he is against unauthorised construction and in the same breath claiming credit for a stay on demolitions near the Bandra slaughterhouse in 1983.

The whole bizarre sequence is set off by the apparent callousness of civic officials. Former municipal commissioner D.M.Sukhthanker sits on his well-tended lawns and says: "It is best they go somewhere else where they are legal." A lesser functionary is seen asserting contemptuously that the only possessions of pavement-dwellers are plastic sheets. Probably the only ones who feel any pity are the much lesser officials who carry out the actual demolitions. But then it is more a matter of identification and common suffering than pity. Like the municipal worker who himself lives in a slum and shares their plight. He underlines the irony when he says: "What kind of a state is this where those who live in slums are sent to demolish them."

The satire is more eloquent in the scenes showing a street play. The play mocks the stereotype politician who munificently provides dry taps for a slum and promises that they will have water five years later when the next elections are held.

Hamara Sheher is not a beautiful film. Precisely because it is not meant to be so. Also, it offers no apology for its heavy bias: its random samples of former sheriff and fat socialite, who in no way represent the wider public opinion against demolitions and evictions. Says Kisan Mehta of the Save Bombay Committee: "What we need are solutions and urgently." It is the film's weakness that it does not provide any. Patwardhan says he wanted it that way. He admits that he wanted to get his own message across and so he even talked people into making candid statements that suited him. So while Sukhthanker and Godrej thought they were participating in a dialogue on the environment, they unwittingly gave themselves away on a more sensitive issue. But for the Marxist Patwardhan, the ends justify the means. And many agree that in this one case, the dictum has been well-taken.

Hamara Sheher: "no place for poor"

from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh 15 years ago and stayed on to run a small shop here, found himself at the receiving end of one such visit. He was confronted by a posse of burly constables from the local police station who demanded to see the licence for his shop, knowing full well that he didn't have any. They demanded Rs 300 and Gupta thanked his lucky stars when he was let off for just Rs 10.

Not so lucky was Shanta, who came from Palanpur seven years ago and now ekes out a living by hawking flowers at Malad station. She recounted her terrible experience: "I came back home one day and found everything broken up. Now I am afraid to leave my house in case they come back." Not working for just one day means a loss of Rs 25 which the flower-girl can ill-afford. But their troubles have just begun. The worst of it is yet to come. Their real plight would begin when the temporary reprieve granted by the Supreme Court expires and the BMC embarks on its eviction drive.

By all accounts it will be a tense winter in Bombay. Already, activist groups are girding up for the protest, enthused by Anand Patwardhan's controversial film on slum-dwellers and their eviction *(see box)*. Says Dr Indumati Parikh, president of Stree Hitkarini, a women's organisation active in central Bombay slums for the last two decades: "We are terrified of the misery and the chaos indiscriminate demolitions would cause." Adds Nirmal Kumar of the Sangharsh Vahini, which has adopted three slums: "The harassment will no doubt increase as the weeks go by. Only if the slum-dwellers present a united front will they get some respite."

For the present, Bomay's rulers will be forced to tread the fine line between duty and concern. Additional Municipal Commissioner Ramamurthi frankly admits that the solutions will not be easy. The next few months will show if India's richest city can prove its greatness and humanity by cleaning up its pavements and green spaces without throwing out its people, by protecting them from the chauvinistic goons of the Shiv Sena who think Bombay is theirs and theirs alone. For this crowded strip of an island, the challenges have never been so daunting.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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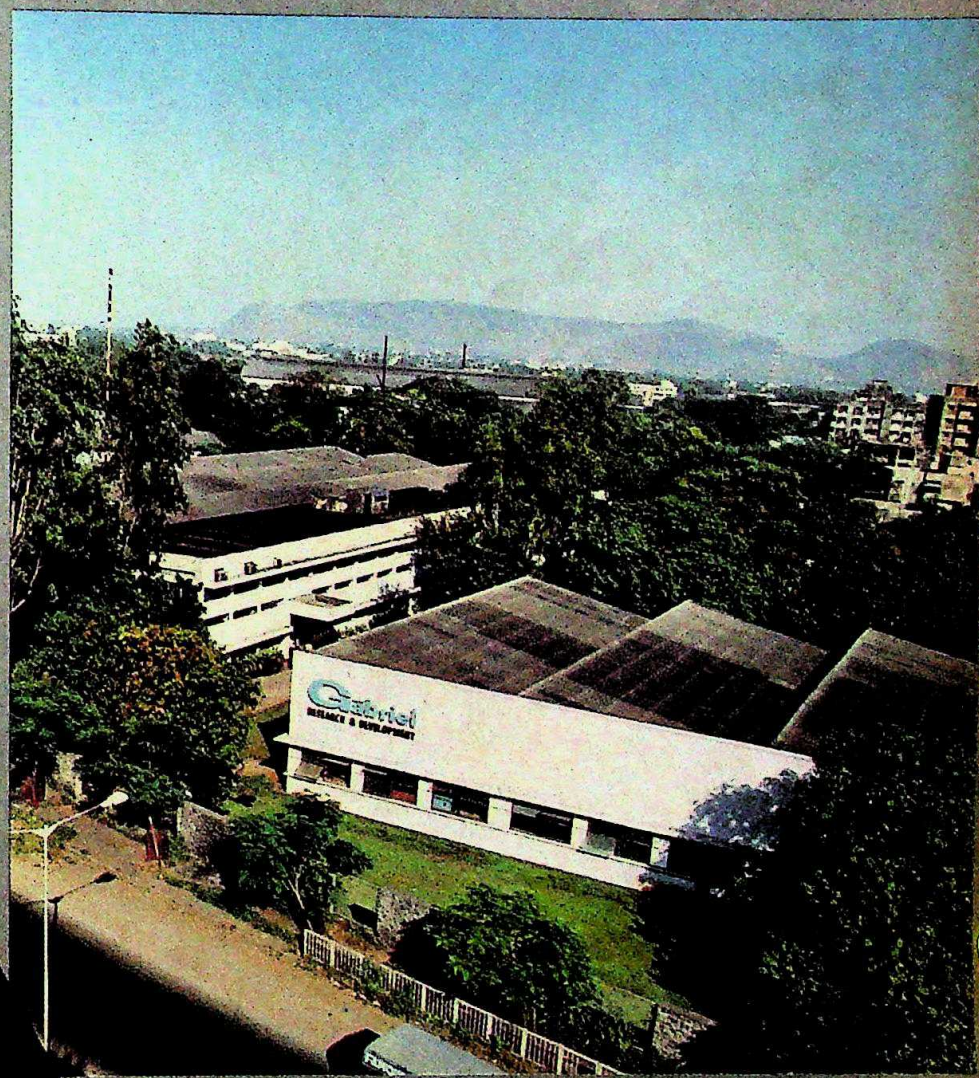
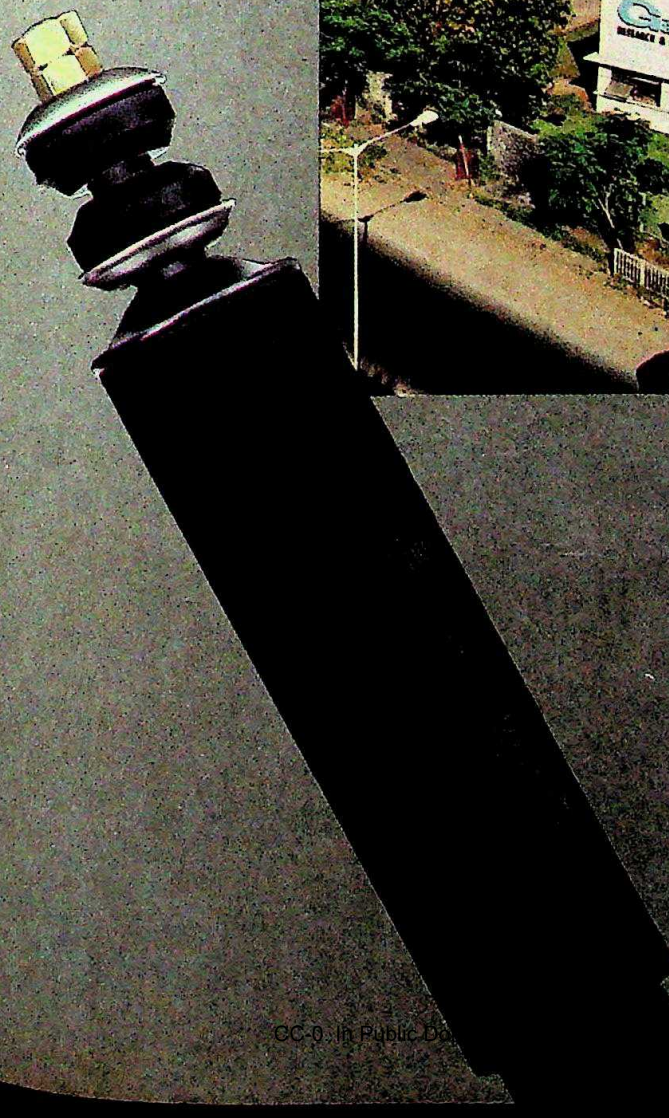
The birthplace of a leader— Gabriel shock absorbers.



Mulund. Bombay.



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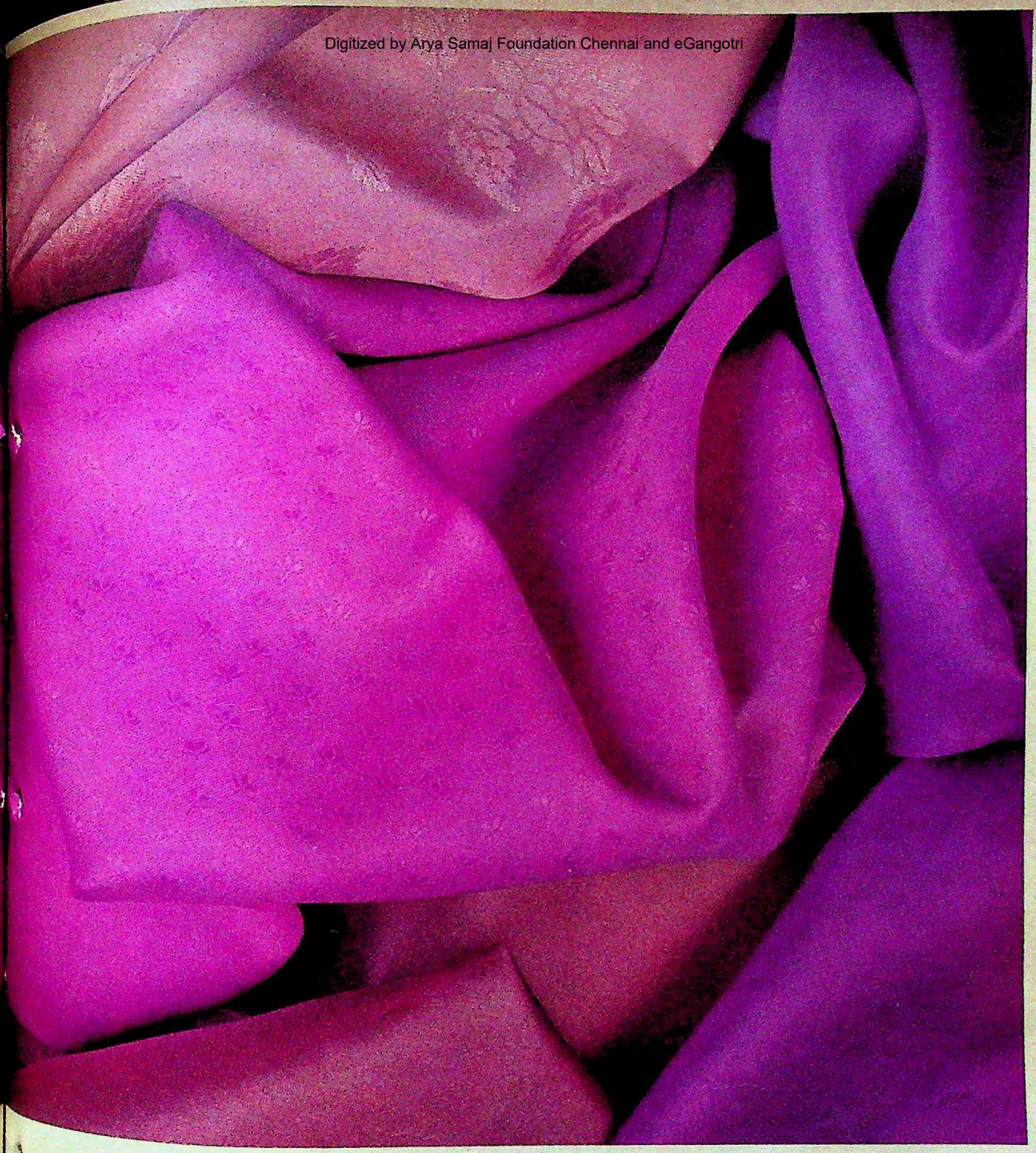

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TITAN'S TIME

THE TATAS are moving into watches through a joint venture called Titan Watches, in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) and Frances Ebauches, a leading Swiss watch component manufacturer. Each of the three partners will hold between 20 and 26 per cent of the equity, with the balance being offered to the public. The project, worth Rs 30 crore, will turn out two million watches annually—quartz analog and mechanical—at a plant near Hosur in Tamil Nadu (national watch sales total between 12 and 15 million a year, half of it smuggled). The Tatas have already pulled off a coup by taking in I.K. Amitha, former executive director of HMT and the doyen of the country's watch industry. For the Tatas, this will be the second attempt to get into the watch market, the first one being an abortive tie-up with Hegde and Golay, and promises enormous growth because the market is growing at between 8 and 10 per cent annually.

BANKING ON THE BOOM

INDIA's capital market boom is beginning to attract some of the world's largest merchant bankers. Close on the heels of the New York-based Merrill Lynch and the London-based Warburg S.G. and Hill Samuel, who are investigating offshore tie-ups with Indian businessmen to set up mutual funds — or unit trusts — for non-resident Indians and foreigners interested in putting money into Indian stocks, comes Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB). This London-based investment bank has pioneered non-resident investment in Brazil, South Korea and Taiwan, and Chairman Michael von Clemm says his bank is interested in exploring the idea of a mutual fund if regulatory, tax and other problems are resolved. The Hindujas are expected to be involved in the venture, if and when it is floated.

SHADY SALES

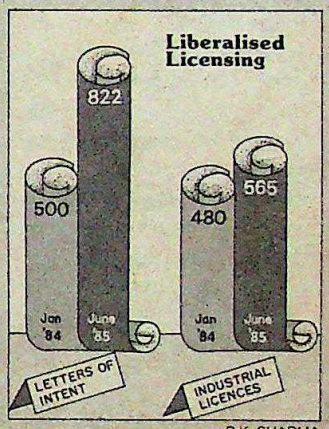
THE COMPANY law board (CLB) is investigating the non-resident purchase of shares in the Madras Aluminium Company (MALCO), which the financial institutions had handed back in mid-1983 to Congress(I) MP, R. Prabhu, who is the son of one of the company's two founders, on the understanding that he would buy out the 27 per cent institutional holding. But some of the shares seem to have been acquired by non-residents. The company's second founder has now complained to the CLB that the non-residents are Prabhu's front-men, and the CLB has said it is investigating the matter. Prabhu explains that the non-residents had approached his brokers in Bombay, and that he had consequently agreed to sell them some of the company's shares.

DEEPENING MYSTERY

THE DCM share mystery (INDIA TODAY, July 15) has taken an unexpected twist, and may go down in corporate history as the first case where a company's chairman emeritus sold shares that the board of directors later refused to transfer into the buyer's name. No fewer than 60,000 shares were sold by Bharat Ram Associates, while a further 1.35 lakh shares were sold by Shriram Fibres (run by Bharat Ram's son) and five of its investment subsidiaries. Yet the company's board of directors has now decided not to register the new owners of the shares. But the new law on share transfer registrations cannot be applied to the latest share transfer refusal because it has not yet been gazetted.

SHIFTING SCENES

THE GOVERNMENT's policy of liberalising industrial policy seems to have produced quick results, judging from the number of letters of intent and industrial licences issued in the first half of this year. There is an increase of 64 per cent in the former, from 500 in January-June 1984 to 822 in January-June 1985, while the increase in industrial licences is from 480 to 565—an increase of slightly under 20 per cent.



B.K. SHARMA

This is despite the fact that a number of industries have been de-licensed and only need registration with the department of technical development. Simultaneously, official sanctions for share and debenture issues by a number of companies are also going up, from Rs 2,000 crore last year to between Rs 2,500 and Rs 3,000 crore this year. The number of regis trations too has shown a substantial and steady increase over the previous years.

MOUNTING COSTS

THE GOVERNMENT has woken up to the unexpectedly large foreign exchange cost involved in allowing a large number of companies to sign foreign collaborations for two-wheeler, car and truck projects. Investigations show that in the first five years of the Maruti project alone, the foreign exchange cost involved in importing equipment, components, and in paying royalties and technical fees will total Rs 550 crore. A second car project, in the private sector, is expected to cost Rs 265 crore in foreign exchange over five years, while two other car projects are likely to cost about as much. Some projects for manufacturing light commercial vehicles will also have a comparable foreign exchange bill. A tentative total of the foreign exchange outgo for all the projects works out to almost Rs 1,800 crore — with further sums likely to be outward bound because of the associated projects being undertaken by ancillary units. The final foreign exchange total may be in excess of Rs 3,000 crore. The Government is sufficiently worried by this and has called for a review of new foreign collaboration proposals.

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FINANCE MINISTER

Bouquets and Brickbats

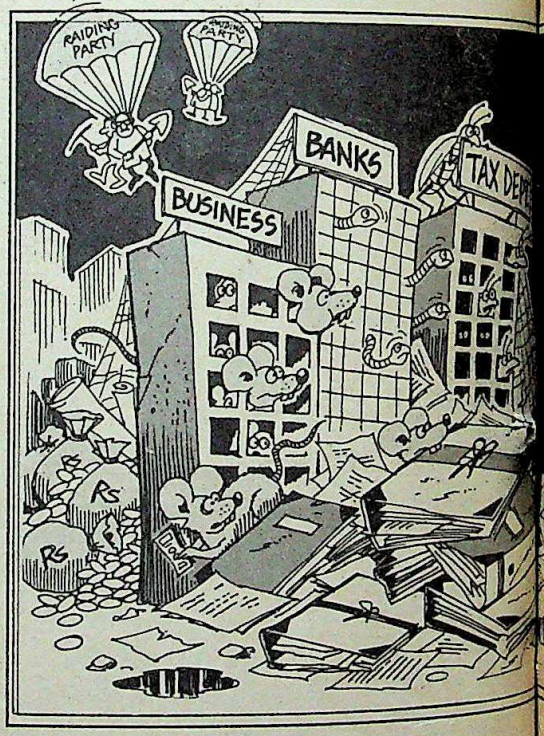
AT A CONGRESS(I) parliamentary party meeting, he is heckled on prices amid virtually unprecedented scenes of a minister not being allowed to speak. Elsewhere, he creates waves by talking of clapping big industrialists behind bars, and allegedly threatening to whip businessmen with their own lash. Inside the Finance Ministry, he has thrown out the deadwood in the top echelons of the bureaucracy, and has just got the resignations of five senior officers in the Income Tax Department: he himself says with a chuckle that this is unprecedented. And moving farther afield, he has sacked two bank chairmen, secured the resignation of the chairman of the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), replaced all non-official bank directors with new nominees, and made the ending of corruption in the banks a crusade. Across the country, he is the target of loud and often vitriolic criticism for his policy of not meeting businessmen and industrialists individually.

The man at the centre of these many converging storms is 54-year-old Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh. And as he sits down every morning at his large, boomerang-shaped desk in the Finance Ministry—usually at 7.15 in the morning—he has in front of him what he calls an "action plan". This is done department-wise for every quarter, and judging from Singh's explanations of the individual items (some 200 of them), it is quickly obvious that more storms are brewing: Singh has a list of government departments and directorates that will face the axe if they can't justify their existence ("some of them are so redundant, no one even knows they exist, and I am going to trim down the size of the Government"); he is also in the middle of setting up a customer complaints system for the banks, and customers whose complaints do not get sorted out will be allowed to confront the concerned bank chairman in a monthly face-to-face. Singh seems about to launch his own version of Doordarshan's *Janavani*. And all this is only the beginning.

Singh grins at the prospect of the action in store. Asked if businessmen aren't complaining about the 'excessive' activity by tax raiding parties, Singh says: "But I haven't even begun moving. I have just turned the ignition on." And quizzed on how he has been able to pack in so much action in recent weeks, he comes up with two answers: first, he says there will be even more "compressed action" in the next two months; then, he walks behind one of the sofas in the well-appointed, wood-panelled office that is twice the size of the prime minister's across the road, and pulls out for your astonished gaze a plastic pink-and-blue *chattai* (mat). "I am here every morning by 7.15 or 7.30," he says. "And I put in 15-hour days. Sometimes, I sleep here at night, and I use this *chattai*." Doesn't he get tired? Yes he does. So sometimes he does what he calls free-hand exercises. Unfortunately, he doesn't allow photographers to snap the sight of the finance minister furiously waving his arms next to the computer on the side unit of his desk.

V.P. Singh, as should be obvious by now, is enjoying himself. He chuckles easily and frequently, though the hour is late and his wife is calling up from home—which is not a government mansion with acres of lawns, but a small apartment far away in south Delhi. Asked if she doesn't complain about his long hours, he dismisses the thought with another light-hearted comment: "We are long past the stage of complaining." Then, he pulls out of his pocket what at first sight looks like a photo album. On second sight, it is in fact a photo album. But inside, each page is filled with white cards, detailing what Singh has on his agenda: policy issues on the left-hand pages, individual cases and other matters on the right-hand pages. At two stages during the conversation, when issues cropped up on which he felt he wanted more information, Singh paused to make fresh notings in his 'diary'. And as in the case of the action plan on his desk, different colours of inks are used to mark out progress: yellow for urgent priority, with the deadline approaching, green for a job done, and so on. The finance minister has classified, prioritised, and is monitoring his work. And since Singh's other cap is that of the commerce minister, he has a bundle of bound volumes, containing computer print-outs of the work to be done a kilometre away, in Udyog Bhavan.

Management by objectives? Management by the Birla-patented *parta* system of daily monitoring of underlings' progress. What V.P.Singh is doing is both, and much more. A country that is used to having seasoned men like T.T. Krishnamachari and R.Venkataraman, or astute operators like Pranab Mukherjee as finance minister, now finds that it has something approaching an *enfant terrible* in the hot seat. For while he isn't a great expounder of economic philosophy, he is a finance minister who believes in action.



and is clear on what he is after. For as he says, "my job is my action plan". So he wants to clean up the departments and the banks, he wants to push through with an impressive range of new legislation (a narcotics bill this year, another on tax evaders, a third on new direct tax laws next June, and a review of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act before next March), announce a long-term fiscal policy this month, implement the recommendations of the Abid Hussain and D.N. Kapur reports on exports, decide on a new policy for public sector enterprises based on the Arjun Sengupta report, and much more. Already, in the last few months, he has announced a new scheme for giving employees stock options in their companies, amended the law governing the registration of share transfers, and pre-

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pared new crop insurance and social security schemes, apart from shaking up taxpayers, tax evaders and tax-collectors, and holding one 'open house' session where he listened to exporters' problems for three hours in the morning, and came back in the afternoon with 28 spot decisions that had everyone cheering.

Anyone chasing so many hares at the same time is bound to find some foxes chasing him too. And across the country, comment is plentiful on his numerous raiding operations, on the budget-inspired price rise, on his unwillingness to meet businessmen and parliamentarians to discuss their individual problems, on the shape of a new tax policy, and much else. And predictably, opinion is sharply divided. "You don't get more tax revenue with an attitude of confrontation," says D.A.Patodia, president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), referring to the flurry of raids in search of tax evaders. "If you want taxes, you must develop an attitude of cooperation." A leading Calcutta-based industrialist, asked to comment on the city's assessment of the hyper-active finance minister, says very simply: "The mood is anti. How can he tell his income tax officers to catch people and to ignore the 'niceties of the law'?" (Singh says he was misquoted on this.) Madras businessman H.C.Kothari says: "The finance minister is becoming paranoid about tax evasion." And FICCI Secretary-General D.H.Pai Panandikar admits that big business is not happy with many of the things Singh is doing, though he adds that in the sessions that he has had with FICCI delegations "Singh made a very good impression."

The finance minister has his fan club too. Tarun Das, secretary-general of the Association of Indian Engineering Industry (AIEI), confesses that he is an admirer, refers to Singh's unostentatious life-style and points out that the country needed a clean finance minister. Swraj Paul, the non-resident *enfant terrible*, says: "I was very pleased to find on my latest trip to Calcutta that people were no longer saying they could get things fixed in the Government. This is a remarkable change." And K.N. Modi, one of whose companies faces tax problems with the Government, says: "V.P.Singh is unpurchasable." Not to be outdone, horse-owner and industrialist M.A.M. Ramaswamy says that "when the Government is making it attractive for businessmen to pay their taxes properly, we should try to help the Government."

Opinion is equally divided on the finance minister's reluctance to grant audiences to people for discussing their individual problems. The Congress(I) Lok Sabha member Ramakrishnan Prabhu recalls how Singh declined an appointment to a delegation of tea estate owners who had come up from Uthagamandalam, Prabhu's constituency, and says he finally had to barge into Singh's office so that the tea-men could hand across their representation. One industrialist pointed out that even the prime minister met people, so why not the finance minister? Another said: "Singh's problem is that he thinks there are very few honest people, and that after Gandhi there is V.P.Singh." K.N. Modi argued, in contrast, that there was no reason why industrialists should want to meet the finance minister. "Even if I meet him, what can I tell him?"

A bank officer, one of thousands who went on strike recently because the Government reduced the salary increase that the officers' union had hammered out with the Indian Banks Association, was bitterly critical of Singh's attitude. And Sonodyne's A.K. Aikat said: "I support what Mr Singh is trying to achieve. But I don't entirely support the way he is going about it, because giving sweeping powers to the tax-collecting machinery in the past has often increased corruption."

Singh himself is unfazed by reports of mounting hostility, especially from the business community. "They know what I am after, and when they meet me they tell me that what I am doing is fair. All these complaints are only lobbying. In any case, if a businessman has evaded the law, and the law says he should be in jail, then he should be in jail. What is wrong in my saying so? Jail is where he belongs." But when asked why, soon after his budget, he declared that tax rates would be raised again if revenues were not enough, he says with a disarming smile: "You must also make some allowances for a politician." Quizzed on the fact that most raids in the past have yielded precious little prosecution, he says this was because of the law saying that catching someone with black money was not enough, you had to prove his intention to evade tax. "Now I am going to amend the law in the next Parliament session, so that the burden of proving innocence is not on the Government but on the man with black money."

He has, however, modified his stand subtly on some issues. No, he does not have a policy of not meeting people individually, it is just that he does not have time, since he handles two heavy portfolios and has a double-load of Parliament work as well. And quite in contrast to his stance at the party meeting where he was heckled, he does not any longer roll out the statistics to show that inflation this year is less than in earlier years. He admits that "the middle class has been affected, because of the higher prices of petrol, sugar, electricity and the kind of vegetables that they like to eat". But he adds that the items consumed by the poor have not become that much costlier, and says sardonically: "If you want to eat tomatoes in this season, they will come out of cold storage, and you have to pay the price."

While his officials hum and haw endlessly on what the long term fiscal policy will do in precise terms, Singh is disarmingly forthcoming, and seems to promise far-reaching change. "Why should people have to be jumpy at budget-time every year? We owe it to the people to say what we have in mind over the next five years: will we raise or lower taxes, will estate duty or the compulsory deposit be brought back in the next five years? Are

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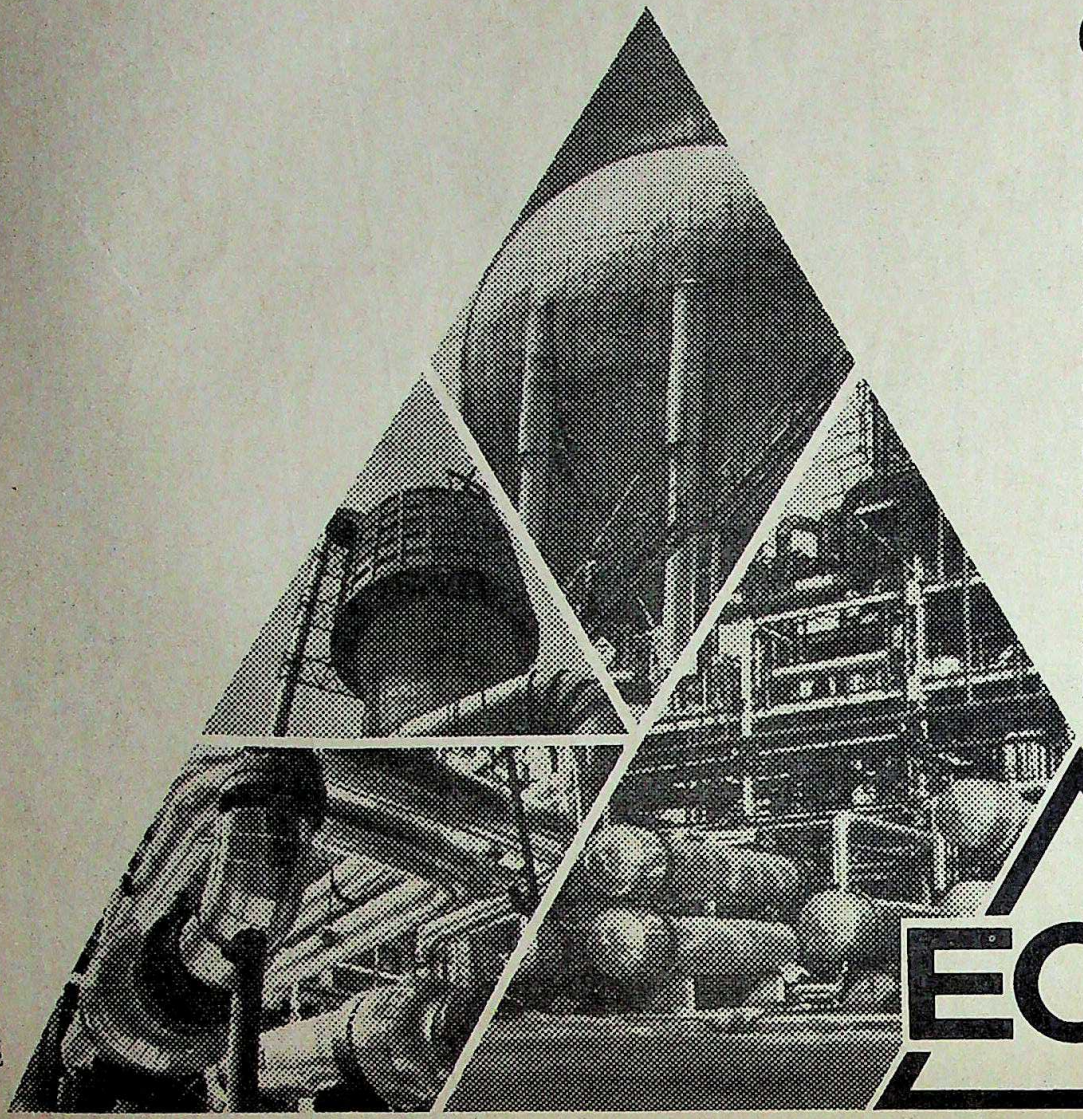
India's total annual capacity of fertilizers: 6,500,000 tonnes



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we going to introduce the value-added tax, will customs duties on raw materials be lower than on finished goods? And if domestic industry is going to get some duty protection, what degree of protection can it expect? We will talk of the whole gamut of issues, so that people can later judge our achievement against what we promised."

A man who talks so positively, and quite unlike most politicians dressed in brief authority, must be different from the ordinary run of vote-seekers. And when he is up against a tough chestnut, he admits it frankly. Can he really end corruption in the banks? He falters a bit, then concedes that "this is a tough question. It is not that everyone in the banks is corrupt, because then the banks would not have survived, but I have to do more, and I know it." Nevertheless, he already has his basic work planned out: key operating results (including loan recoveries and frauds) are mapped out for the major banks on a single sheet of paper. "When any bank chairman comes to me, I show him this sheet and say this is your face. Tell me what you have to say. And when the time comes for his term being renewed, I will look at this sheet." The sheet of paper, as it turns out, is not very flattering for something like two-thirds of the public sector banks that Singh is talking about.

Singh is equally critical of the bank chiefs for being willing to pay their officers so much money. "Their total bank profits, after allowing for the clerical staff's pay hike, is Rs 80 crore, and they want to give Rs 80 crore to the officers in a pay increase. Then will the budget subsidise the banks and their officers? A junior officer gets a starting pay of Rs 2,200. They have to keep the rest of the economy in mind." He seems to have put his view across equally strongly at a meeting with bank officers' spokesmen the following day, because the officers' strike call was quickly withdrawn.

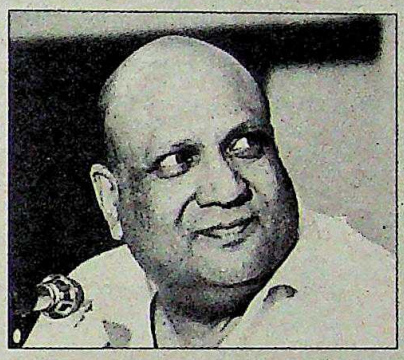
In the next few weeks, Singh is going to take a final decision on a change in the financial year, decide how much money the power and telecommunications departments can raise directly from the public to supplement their investment budgets, take a series of measures aimed at reforming the stock exchanges, give a push to the computerisation of bank operations, decide on ways to improve bank profitability, start a detailed review of government expenditure, submit proposals to the Cabinet on new pricing and wage policies for public sector companies, decide on new tax rates for the textile industry, 'intensify' revenue collection, decide how many senior tax officers he wants to retire compulsorily, take the first steps towards simplifying direct tax laws, decide on what to do with the recently submitted black money report and so on. The months to come will see even more action on a dozen other fronts. And every morning, Singh is going to monitor progress on these fronts, at half-hour sessions with all his five department heads.

There is little doubt that Singh means what he says: the future will see even more 'compressed action' than the immediate past. And few will be able to cavil at even the decisions that are likely to be controversial, like a trimming of government. For Singh—despite getting no fewer than 800 letters every day, every one of which is acknowledged—has reduced the personal staff of the finance minister from 14 to 3, and got rid of another 11 personal staff attached to the commerce minister. And he functions without a personal secretary.

So, unfazed by the talk of him being dropped from one or the other of his portfolios, Singh continues with his job, as he put it once, of lowering the walls put up by past governments, but cementing the gaps in the walls. And, as he said in reply to a question on how his senior officials react to his style of functioning, "this is not a love affair that I have to watch reactions. A finance minister has to do his job."—T.N.NINAN

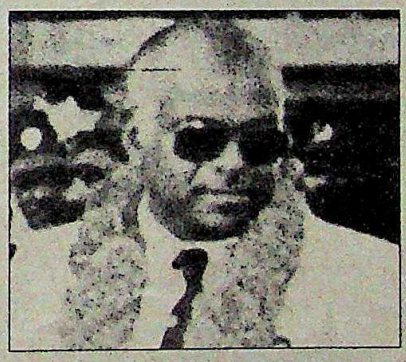
"You don't get more tax revenue by an attitude of confrontation. If V.P. Singh wants taxes, he must develop an attitude of cooperation."

D.N. PATODIA
president, FICCI



"I was pleased to find on my latest trip to Calcutta that people were no longer saying they could get things fixed in the Government. This is remarkable."

SWRAJ PAL
industrialist, London



"When V.P. Singh is making it attractive for businessmen to pay their taxes properly, we should try to help the Government."

M.A.M. RAMASWAMY
stud farm owner and industrialist, Madras

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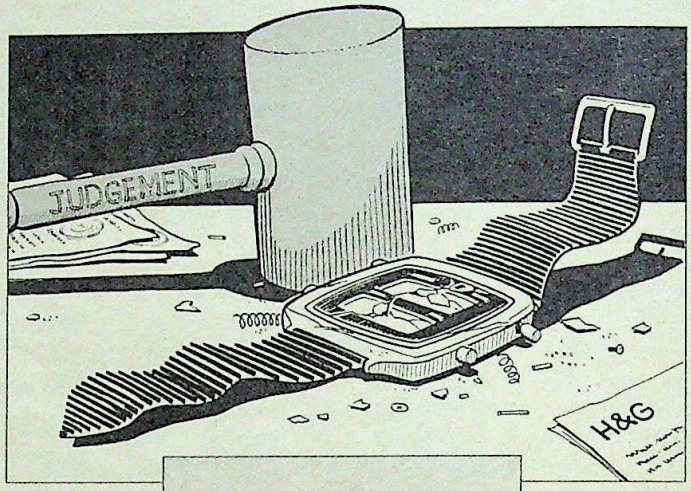
HEGDE & GOLAY

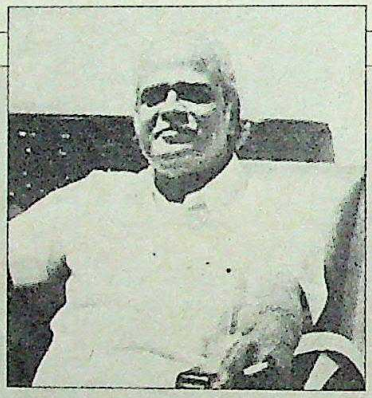
Running Out of Time



IT WAS heralded as an industry pioneer: one of the first private sector majors to start ticking after the public sector Hindustan Machine Tools went into the watch business in 1961, and perhaps the first to launch digital electronic watches in the country. Hegde and Golay also had a lot going for it: a collaboration agreement with a Swiss watch company, imported machinery that business rivals describe as "excellent," and a product that compared favourably with the best in the country. As an added bonus, many of its 1,800 employees were trained in Switzerland. But on July 26, in two separate judgements, Justice P.P. Bopanna of the Karnataka High Court ordered the Bangalore-based time-keeping pioneer (peak turnover: under Rs 5 crore) and 16 of its ancillary companies to be wound up. In a quite unanticipated way, company Chairman B.T. Shanker Hegde's time finally seemed to have come.

The fateful verdict was preceded by raids on Shanker Hegde's house and his arrest on three occasions, the first when excise officials raided his watch complex, the second when the Karnataka State Financial Corporation (KSFC) locked up one of his factories and the third on the charge of threatening a local revenue official with a revolver—an accusation he hotly contested in a letter to state Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde. And even before the case came up for hearing, Shanker Hegde bought space in the Bangalore edition of *The Times of India* to charge the KSFC with illegally attaching property and harassing small units.

If what went on out of court spelt high drama, the charges aired in the courtroom did so no less. The State Bank of India, which had hauled the company into court, accused Hegde and Golay and its ancillaries of not repaying loans. Together with interest, the dues amounted to over Rs 6 crore when the bank filed its winding up petition five years ago (in all the company owed Rs 10 crore to various creditors, including the KSFC). The bank also charged the company with refusing after 1978 to permit bank officials to inspect stocks and machinery pledged to it. Finally, the State Bank argued that the assets of Shanker Hegde and his wife, both of whom had stood guarantee for the loans, had little value now: much of the assets comprised dues from the company which was in no position to repay them. Also, plant and machinery pledged with the bank had depreciated in value over the years. With its security worthless, the bank pushed for closure of the company and its ancillaries.



"I believed that we could produce millions of watches and export them."

B.T. SHANKER HEGDE
chairman, Hegde & Golay

The watch company, on the other hand, while denying that it owed the bank money, accused it of forging documents that suggested the opposite, of scheming to ease out Hegde and bring the Tatas into the company's management, of not providing funds in time, and of levying exorbitant rates of interest.

What emerges from this welter of blasts and counterblasts is that the company ran into squally weather after the mid-'70s. According to Government officials, though it was licensed to manufacture 6 lakh watches annually, actual production capacities never crossed 3.5 lakh. In recent years, output touched a high of 2.20 lakh downmarket watches before slumping to a little over 25,000 some two years ago. The company has paid no dividends for over a decade, and has been in the red since 1976, except in two years. Even in those two years, the firm's auditor testified in court, it would have shown a loss had the interest owed to the bank been taken into account.

What went wrong? The company suggested in court that the State Bank's failure to release money in time pushed the firm downhill. Hegde himself wrote to the Karnataka chief minister that state officials and politicians had conspired to harass him. And he told INDIA TODAY that KSFC-financed equipment bought from Switzerland in 1974 was not released till two years later because the institution did not cough up the money in time. Hegde also blames the Government for slashing the import duty on watches in the late '70s in a bid to fulfil the domestic demand for watches, while retaining the duty on stainless steel, a vital raw material. Says Hegde: "It was impossible to compete in this situation. My friends called me an eccentric for not seeking an import licence for readymade watches because private manufacturers were also getting them. But I would not do it on principle."

Certainly, Hegde was a controversial figure in an industry traditionally associated with conservatism. Says a Central government official who did not want to be identified: "The problem was that Shanker Hegde was forever getting into disputes." That could be true. He is at the moment up to the neck in legal battles (he has filed in all 26 petitions).

But the key to the man may really lie in his past. Without formal education, he has had to battle it out for much of his life. After leaving his home in a south Karnataka village as a young man, he made a name for himself in the trade union movement in Bombay. He quit the city in the '50s to make his foray into industry. Says Hegde: "I believed that we could produce millions of watches and export them," adding proudly: "All these boys is

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the watch industry across the country are my boys. I trained them. I was a tyrant who gave them hell but loved them." His dream of building "a multi-million dollar trade name export-oriented watch industry" has come a cropper, but he owns a printed circuit boards (PCB) unit—with (monthly profits of Rs 5 lakh), a cutting tools factory and a transmission equipment unit.

What all this suggests is that Hegde and Golay's problems may have sprung from Hegde's sour relationship with his bankers and the financial institutions. The closure of the company's foreign collaborator, Bernard Golay SA, a small Swiss watch firm, was also clearly a blow to the company. Watch industry sources also attribute the company's sticky times to "bad, overcentralised management" and "unfair competition from small units." The chief executive of a watch company who sticks to the latter theory points out: "Hegde was no babe in the woods. He was an astute businessman."

Whatever the truth of the matter, Justice Bopanna upheld much of the State Bank's case. And a Tata official claimed last fortnight that Hegde, and not the bank, had invited the Tatas to come on board. According to him, Hegde had second thoughts fearing that the Tatas, the State Bank and the KSFC were banding together to take over his company. The Tatas eventually pulled out.

What is curious in all this is that Hegde seems to have signed blank documents. Notes Justice Bopanna: "The contents of the document, excluding the printed matter, are in one shade of ink, but the date... bears another shade of ink." And while he exonerated the bank of the charge of forgery, the bank did not get off lightly on the count of levying high interest. Said the judge: "This court has taken the view that the payment of interest at the rate of 16.5 per cent per annum...does not appear to be in consonance with regular banking practice." What is also not clear is whether the bank and the financial institutions appraised the project judiciously before lending the company money.

The company is now closed, marking the untimely death of an industry pioneer. Though the court has turned down his appeal to stay its order to wind up the company and its ancillaries, he remains unfazed. He asks: "Do I look upset or tired of the situation?" He then pauses and adds "I know my age. Perhaps the time has come for me to launch an offensive" — a statement he declines to elaborate.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI with SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Bangalore

BUSINESSPEAK

M.S. GUJRAL

Standing Tough

IF ANYTHING has marked Mohinder Singh Gujral's working life, it has been repeated confrontations with labour. Gujral almost always won, of course. So it was entirely fitting that on the day Gujral, 62, finally stopped working, with the expiry of his term as chairman of Coal India, the Supreme Court gave its judgement on a host of petitions by railwaymen who had been summarily sacked in 1981 by Gujral, then chairman of the railway board. The judgement, upholding the right to sack government servants without holding an enquiry, has kicked up a storm, but Gujral—an army officer before he joined what was then known as the Superior Revenue Establishment of the Indian Railways in 1948, maintains a military view of worker indiscipline as evident from this conversation with Senior Editor T.N. NINAN.

I REMEMBER how the case started. In November 1980, I had been appointed chairman of the Railway Board and asked to put the railways back on the track. One problem was indiscipline. In February, the All India Loco Running Staff Association went on a lightning strike, and I sacked 1,000 of them. They got a court order that they should be paid full wages until the court gave its verdict.

Normally in such a situation, the Government decides that since they are being paid anyway, they might as well be allowed to return to work. But I said this will break discipline, and I had to teach them a lesson. So I said, all these people live in railway colonies. If they are getting their full pay, but not going to work like everyone else, they will have to face the reaction from their colleagues and neighbours. This will be a psychological war, and I said let them face it.

Now the court verdict has come, and I have been vindicated. The point is that you have to take demonstrative action. Basically, labour is good, but you have to anchor them with discipline. In the coal industry, even if you concede 20 demands, they will come to you with 200 more. And they are paid so much money, some of them take home as much as Rs 3,000. This unbalances the economy, they don't know how to spend the money usefully, so they drink, or they don't come to work half the time, because they don't need the money.

In Coal India too, I had to take demonstrative action. When they gave a call for an illegal strike, I said that anyone who stayed away for one day would have his pay cut for eight days. This too is in court. I acted under a clause in the Payment of Wages Act which has come down from British days, but I know that the court will finally strike my order down, because this clause is unconstitutional: how can you take away wages when the man has worked? But I had to use the law because the unions were holding the coal industry to ransom. Without tough action, there will be strikes daily and even good workers will get demoralised. Once you take demonstrative action, there is no need for it later.

People of my type are bound to get into a clash. My philosophy is that unions are out to hijack all the time. We can't go on with the British culture of union rights. In fact, the sickness in Indian industry is because managements in India are either soft, or timid, or bureaucratic. A learned American jurist once said that "Law is violence", and our industrial elite is reluctant to accept the 'violence' implicit in law enforcement. So no one wants to enforce discipline.

In the 1960s, I had to manage the railways in Asansol during the days of the United Front government. I was gheraoed because a worker had died in an accident, and they wanted the foreman suspended. I said an enquiry will be held. Till then, no suspension. So they gheraoed me, and said they would bury the dead worker in front of the office staircase. I just kept quiet. So at night they dug a grave and buried him. That immediately brought the Central Government into the picture: how can a man be buried on government office property? So Delhi told the state Government to remove the grave and the dead body. The police, who had done nothing during the gherao, had to do it. That helped my reputation, and there were no more gheraos. Most of the time, I find that my reputation preceded me after that, because of the action I took. And that was half the battle won.

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MARBLE INDUSTRY

Polished Performance

MARBLE, it seems, is really moving. The luxury building material that graces the Taj Mahal is being used in many more buildings in many more ways. Prices are stable, modernisation is under way, and demand is booming. All of which makes great news for Rajasthan, which produces 90 per cent of India's marble and has estimated reserves of 900 million tonnes. From only 2.65 lakh tonnes in 1980, the state's output this year is expected to touch 7 lakh tonnes.

Fuelling the marble boom has been hectic construction throughout the country. And even the middle class is in the market, perhaps encouraged by the upwardly surging cost of cement. Says Gauri Shankar Dhoot, owner of a marble processing unit in Makrana, the town synonymous with the marble of the Taj: "Mosaic tiles (made of a mixture of white cement and marble chips and used for floors) cost nearly double what they did six years ago. But the price of the cheaper variety of marble has gone up by only about 25 per cent in the same period."

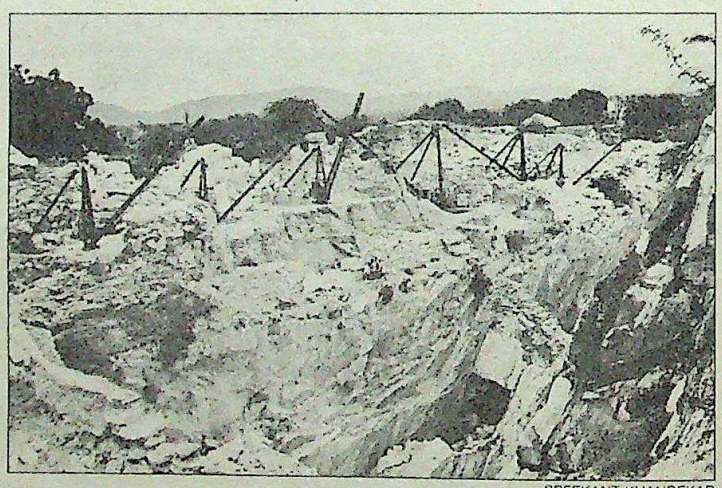
Keeping the price down has been achieved partly by the introduction of new technology, both indigenous and foreign. A new type of cutter made locally has enabled processors to use much smaller blocks of the stone. In the past these would have been sold cheap to make chips. Also, as K.P. Lal, managing director of the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation points out, "Over the last few years there has been an awakening to the advantages to be had from modernisation in various other areas."

Marble is also finding a market in what was once the preserve of ceramic tiles—covering walls and interiors. Until two years ago there was only one unit which produced these tiles, but in the past year three more have emerged and in the next few months another seven are expected to go on stream.

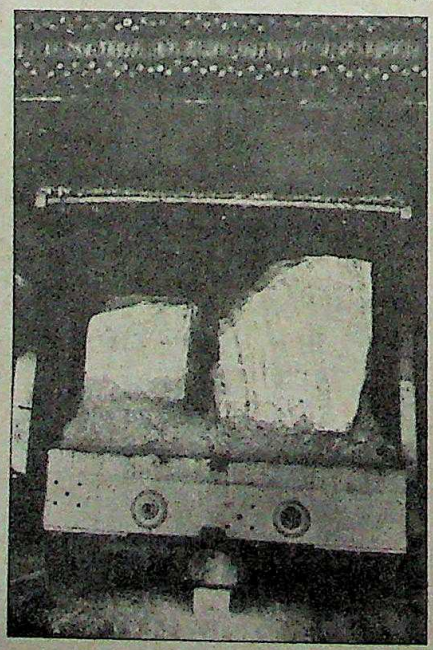
But the most important technological development in the industry has occurred in the processing units which convert the blocks of marble into slabs. Till a decade ago this was done by notoriously slow steel saws. The mid-'70s saw the first Italian cutting machine (which uses diamond bits) come to Makrana. So efficient were the new machines that 130 of them have replaced 1,390 of the old. A bright spot in the change-over has been the role of local ingenuity: most of the diamond-tipped cutters are local copies of the foreign models, available at half the price.

"The new machines have speeded up the process fantastically," says Deepak Bansal, a prominent marble processor in Makrana. "The old steel saws could cut only up to two inches in an eight-hour shift. But the diamond machines cut between four and nine inches *per hour*. The polishing and finishing are better too." What is more, the indigenous saws cost only about Rs 10 lakh, half the price of the imported variety.

The mines of Makrana and (below) blocks of marble: boom time



SREEKANT KHANDEKAR



But there are some dark patches in this rosy picture. Out-dated practices in the mines, for example, act as a drag on the industry's growth. Mining methods are a case in point, and the scene at the mines sometimes looks like a frieze unchanged over the centuries. Most of the work is still performed manually, and though a few petrol-driven cranes are used it is not uncommon to find labourers using a winch to haul up one-tonne or even heavier blocks of stone from a depth of more than a hundred feet. Some mines are only 40 feet square.

A disappointing situation also exists as regards exports, even though India is the second-largest producer of marble in the world, next only to Italy. The industry has difficulty enough fulfilling the demand at home, leading to the situation which occurred recently when a quiet lifting of the ban on import of marble led to firms in Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay importing it under the Open General Licence (OGL). The ban was reimposed after a furore over the scandalous loss of foreign exchange.

The industry was also shocked when this year's budget called for an excise duty of Rs 20 per square metre of slabs. This led to a prolonged strike in the mines, and the duty was subsequently reduced to Rs 10 per square metre with a 25 per cent margin for waste in slab production. But problems remain. Says a unit owner: "It is difficult to quantify marble production since so much cutting is involved. More than the money, it is the harassment by officials that bothers us since one can keep arguing forever over every block of stone." But all these problems notwithstanding, the general mood of the industry remains upbeat. With demand booming, production rising and prices relatively stable, the marble at Makrana reflects a bright future.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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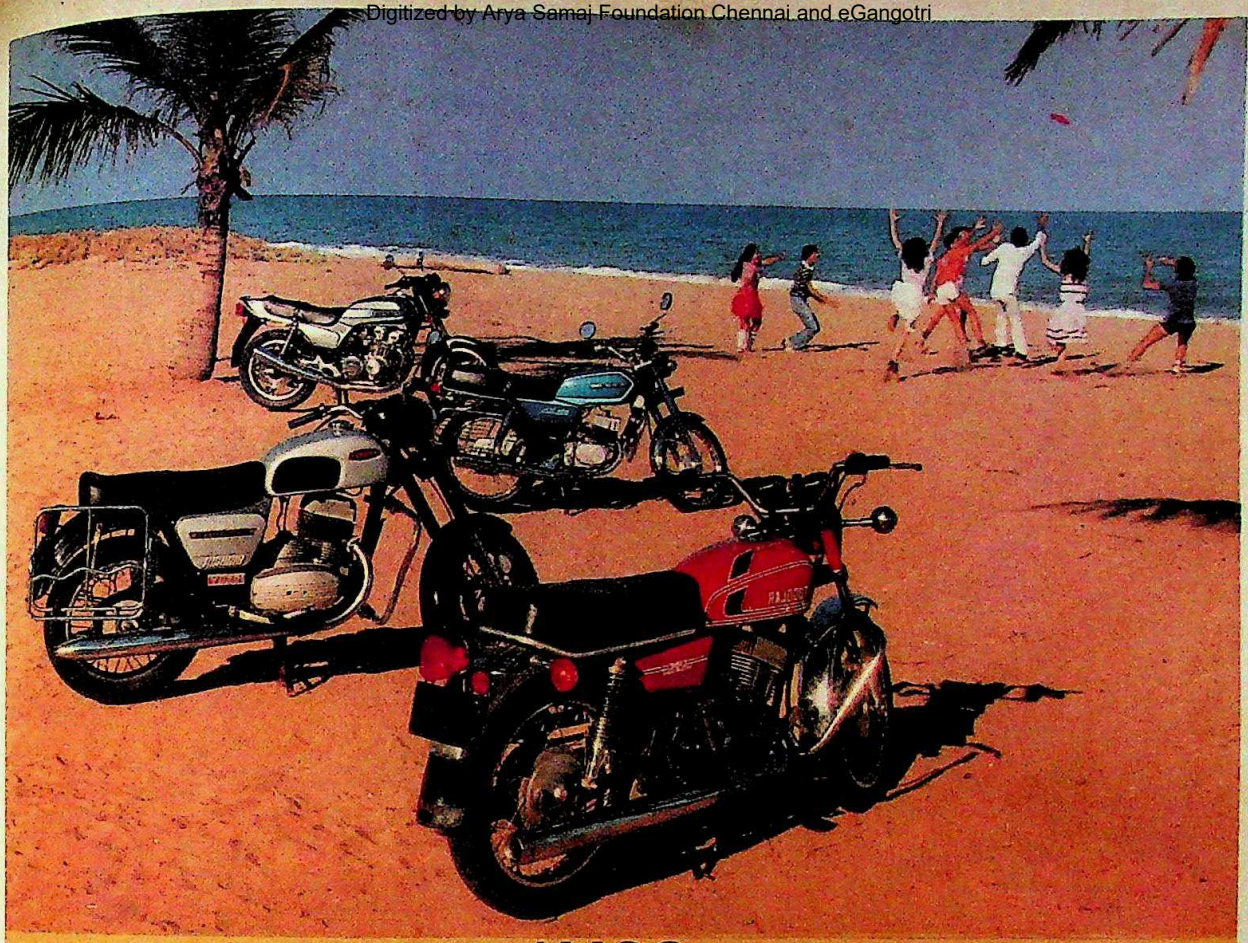

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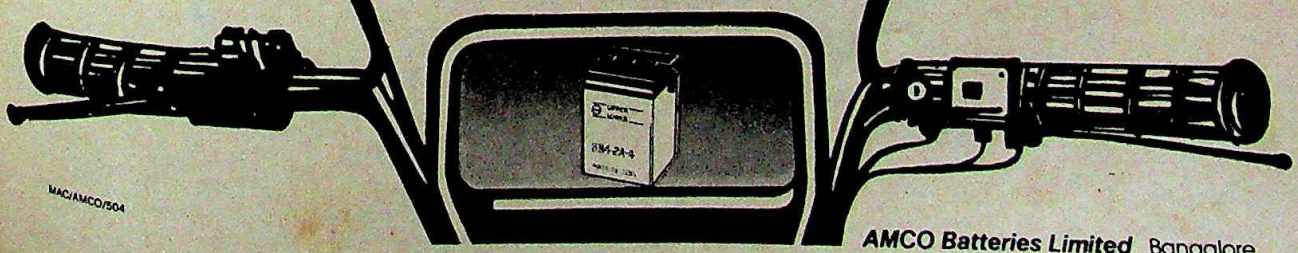
AMCO : where the action is

MR. A. SIVASAILAM
Chairman, AMCO Batteries Ltd.

MR. YUICHI YUASA
President, Yuasa Battery Company Ltd



MAC/AMCO/504

AMCO Batteries Limited Bangalore.

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Fun...on the double!

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Cut out the dullness.
And let the fun shine in!

Pick up your Hot Shot.
And pass the smiles around.

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No one's on the other side of the fence.
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Yes, now there's a smile
behind the camera too.
Because there's nothing to
worry about.

No fidgeting. No focussing.
Just aim. And shoot.

Choose from the widest range
of cameras. In the popular 110 format.
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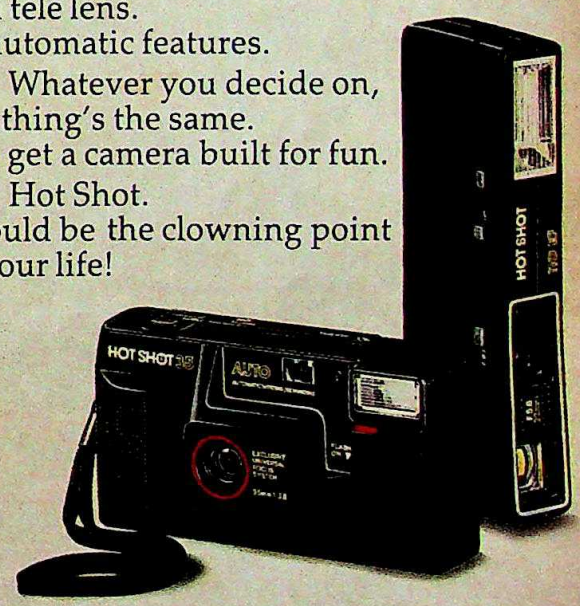
exclusive Universal Focus System.

Get what you want.
A camera with a flash.
Or a tele lens.
Or automatic features.

Whatever you decide on,
one thing's the same.
You get a camera built for fun.

Hot Shot.
It could be the clowning point
of your life!



HOT SHOT 35&110

Just aim. And shoot!

PHOTOPHONE INDUSTRIES INDIA LIMITED
7, Saki Vihar Road, Bombay 400 072

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9. Public Liability
10. Carrier's Liability
11. Bullock Cart
12. Pump Set
13. Pedal Cycle
14. Horse
15. Engineering Insurance
16. Professional Indemnity
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18. Multi Perils
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21. Business Interruption
22. Cash in Transit
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You think these things always happen to others. Never to you. But it could. And when you least expect it. Leaving you completely shattered . . . physically and financially.

Wouldn't it be wiser to protect yourself against the unexpected? New India offers the widest range of covers against every contingency. And the premiums cost a tiny fraction of the total value of the security being offered.

A little foresight shown today can give you all the protection you need for the future. Don't delay. Call or write to your nearest New India office. We'll be glad to give you complete details.

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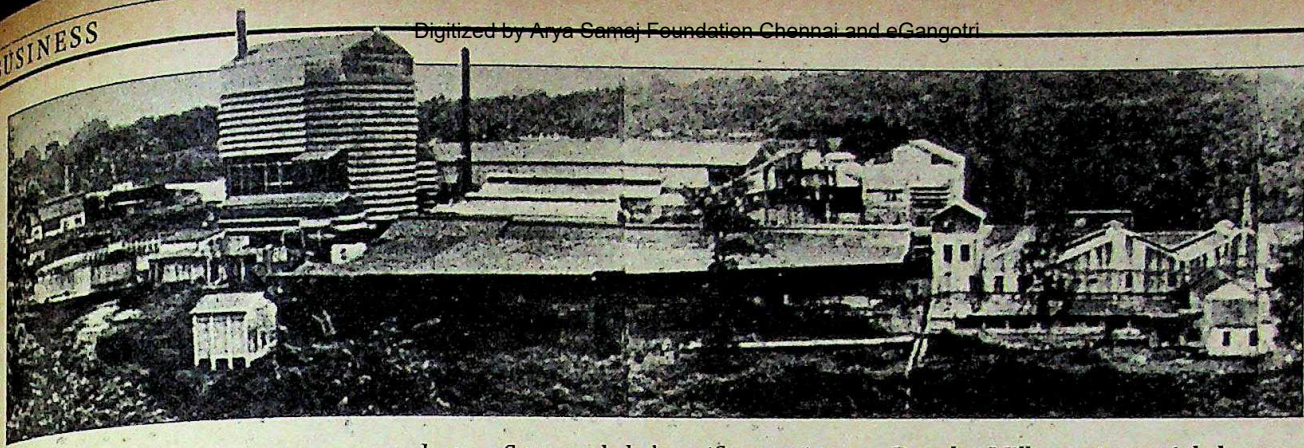

Punalur Mills: controversial closure

KERALA

Costly Error

INDUSTRIALISTS are not often bundled into prison like petty criminals. And when they are, the repercussions are predictably shattering as the Kerala Government has ruefully discovered. Last fortnight, the Kerala-based Punalur Paper Mills announced that it would down shutters come November 10, throwing almost 1,400 workers on the streets and threatening the livelihood of another 4,000 who depend on the mill.

The mill's closure application was submitted to the Government immediately after the dramatic arrest of its Managing Director, Laxmi Nivas Dalmia, and his release under a court order. Quilon District Collector Anand Bose had ordered his arrest because his company had not paid sales tax dues of Rs 31 lakh.

Certainly, that was not a very large sum to kick up a dust about. Oddly enough, the state Government owed the paper mill Rs 1.5 crore in excess raw material billings. It should have handed over the money to the company before last April under the terms of an agreement struck between the two long-feuding sides, but did not do so because it was strapped for cash. Had the Government paid up in time, Dalmia would have had the cash to clear his own liabilities, and the whole situation could have been avoided — a point echoed by the ruffled industrialist. Says Dalmia: "If the Government had adjusted the balance of the sales tax dues against the money due to me, the whole issue could have been settled amicably."

While the arrest itself may have raised eyebrows, the circumstances in which the industrialist was held sent shock waves through the state. A diabetes patient, Dalmia's request for a doctor when he was arrested was turned down. Surrounded by rifle-carrying constables, he was dumped into a police jeep and hauled off to Trivandrum Central Jail. But Bose, a young IAS officer, tells it differently. Claims the district collector: "All that we did was to refuse him permission to travel in his own car after his arrest. He also wanted his personal doctor instead of the government doctor provided by us."

"The single biggest error I ever committed was to rehabilitate a sick paper mill in Kerala."

LAXMI NIVAS DALMIA
managing director
Punalur Paper Mills

That may or may not be so. But Bose seems to have erred in arresting Dalmia. The Kerala High Court, which quashed Bose's arrest warrant after the mill filed a writ petition, observed that under the Sales Tax Act only a dealer who has been assessed for sales tax and has failed to pay it in the stipulated time can be called a defaulter. Justice Radhakrishna Menon, while pointing out that Dalmia was not a dealer, added: "(Here) the company is the defaulter and therefore the question is whether the respondent was within his jurisdiction in initiating proceedings against the managing director." Bose on his part explains that "we proceeded against Dalmia under Section 65 of the Revenue Recovery Act: We could not attach mill property because Dalmia had already got a court order against this." He also hastens to clarify that in his drive against sales tax defaulters, he has even attached the property of public sector undertakings in Quilon district.

The latest bout between Punalur Paper Mills and the state Government is the upshot of long-simmering differences between the two. The mill has piled up losses till last year of Rs 8.5 crore principally because of raw material problems. The Government diverted forests reserved for it to rival mills and billed it excessively for dry eucalyptus. According to a company spokesman, while his mill had to shell out Rs 1,058 per tonne of dry eucalyptus, Gwalior Rayon got the raw material for Rs 35 and Hindustan Newsprint for just Rs 18.53. So the company went to the high court. The court ordered the Government not to discriminate among the three units. Says Dalmia: "As a result of the losses, raw material shortages and the state Government failing to implement the high court order, the company's financial position became very critical. Therefore, it could not pay its statutory dues."

The row hotted up again early this year when the Government started proceedings against the company to recover sales tax dues of Rs 47 lakh. Dalmia threatened closure, but before the shutters could be downed permanently, a deal was struck with the Government: Rs 16 lakh would be paid before March 31 and the remainder before October. Chief Minister K. Karunakaran assured the management that the excess payments would be refunded before last April, but the promise was not kept.

But what is clear is that the barrage of publicity could deter other industrialists from investing in the industry-starved state. And as Laxmi Nivas Dalmia put it last fortnight: "The single biggest error I ever committed was to rehabilitate a sick paper mill in Kerala."

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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STOCK MARKET

Scrip Scrap

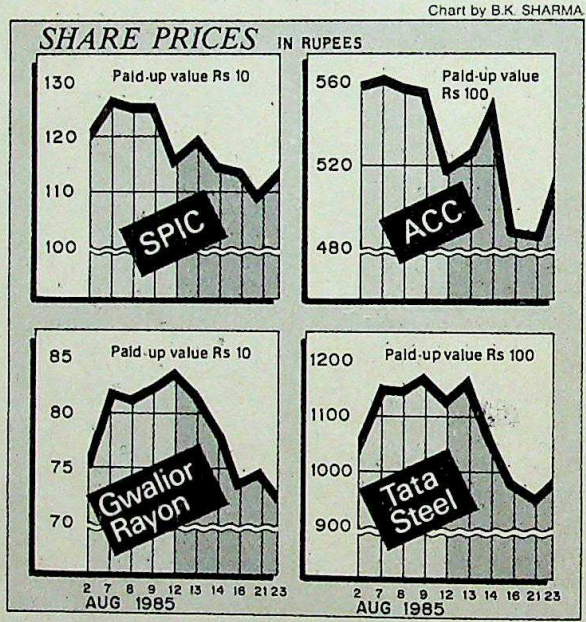
THE MORNING of August 12 started like any other on the nation's 13 stock exchanges, promising business as usual. Going by the trend of the last few months, that meant a fresh spurt in share prices. But before the day was half out, it was evident that something unusual was afoot. A select group of brokers was selling a mixed bag of blue chips and lemons. Southern Petrochemical, Associated Cement, Gwalior Rayon and Tata Iron and Steel Company shares — all the favourites of the last few months — were sold. Then, like donkeys being introduced in the derby, the shares of some weaker companies were launched. And the brokers who sold these shares clearly had instructions to sell at any price.

The market soon realised what was up. The financial institutions were flexing their muscles and unloading a small slice of their Rs 3,000 crore plus equity hoard. Within the next few days, the trickle would soon turn into a steady stream, and before the fortnight was over some Rs 25 crore worth of carefully selected scrips would have been dumped on the market.

The meticulously planned intervention had immediate effect. *The Economic Times* share price index, which on August 7 had touched 519.1, tumbled over the next few days and by August 16, had settled at 471.7. The Rs 100 Tata Steel share which had by August 9 climbed to a dizzying Rs 1,195, sank in the next seven days to Rs 985. Other blue chips like Gwalior Rayon, Bombay Dyeing and Associated Cement also took a nose-dive. But with share prices slowly inching their way up again by the end of last fortnight, a chorus of stock-market voices was raising a host of questions. Did the Industrial Financial Corporation of India (IFCI), the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC), the Unit Trust of India (UTI) and the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) really mean to put the lid on share prices? If so, why was such a limited amount of scrips hawked? As Delhi broker Prakash Jusroi sardonically put it: "If the institutions sell such limited quantities, their move will go the way of the gold auctions under the Janata government."

There is, however, little doubt that some kind of action to cool an overheated market was overdue. The stock exchange authorities had raised brokers' deposit requirements (or margin money) to a staggering 40 per cent of the price of some shares, but even this had failed to curb overtrading. And government officials argue that official intervention had to come. Says the chairman of a financial institution: "Gamblers had entered the market. The stock exchanges were not able to monitor jobbers (brokers who trade only in one or two shares each); even shares placed privately and not listed on the exchanges were being quoted at a premium. The market had reached a dangerous point and needed some correction." Certainly, Finance Minister V.P.Singh was sufficiently worried by the turmoil on the stock-market, and personally ordered the financial institutions to start selling. Singh told INDIA TODAY last fortnight that he wanted to cool the market, and that he had left the operational details to the institutions.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The Government also suspected that the share boom was being fuelled by black money, and there is evidence to suggest that this may well be the case. At a Citibank branch in Bombay last fortnight, where share applications were being received, the queue before the cash counter was far longer than the one before the cheque counter, and snaked its way all round the block.

But many believe that the Government's move to bring share prices down will come a cropper. Amrit Lal Bajaj, president of the Delhi Stock Exchange, swears that nothing can hold back share prices. Says Bajaj: "The economy is bracing to take off. Prices may fall for a few weeks but are bound to go up again. The market will remain unaffected even if the institutions sell their entire equity."

While that extravagant claim was yet to be tested, the institutions' move had other spillovers. Broker Pramod Kohli in the capital had a premonition that the institutions would unload their shares. So three days before the operation began, he sold 7,000 Southern Petrochemical shares at Rs 132 each. Come August 12, when institutional selling had driven the share's price down to around Rs 126, he bought them back, making more than Rs 40,000 in the bargain. And about a dozen brokers on the Delhi Stock Exchange who had been caught on the wrong foot by speculating without having shares to deliver (stocks were not available) were able to buy shares. Says Jusroi: "Bears got a chance to get out of the market."

The biggest winner in all this has clearly been the financial bodies. They seized the chance to strengthen their share portfolios by dumping their lemons (some 10 per cent of the total shares sold, according to an IFCI official) and profit from a booming market. Says the chairman of the financial institution: "I wouldn't hazard a guess as to how much profit has been made, but it's a very good sum."

The big question last fortnight was whether the institutions would now make it a regular practice to unload their shares so that the market would not get overheated. Some of the institutions have a long-established policy of not parting with their shareholdings in blue chip companies, despite repeated demands from brokers that they unload their shares in established firms and reinvest the money in the shares of newly floated companies. Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh said last fortnight that he was personally in favour of the reinvestment idea, but added that the Government had not considered the issue. Meanwhile, the key question remained unanswered: had the institutions shot their bolt, or would they be back with more blue chips and lemons in the coming weeks?

—PALAKUNNATHU G.MATHAI

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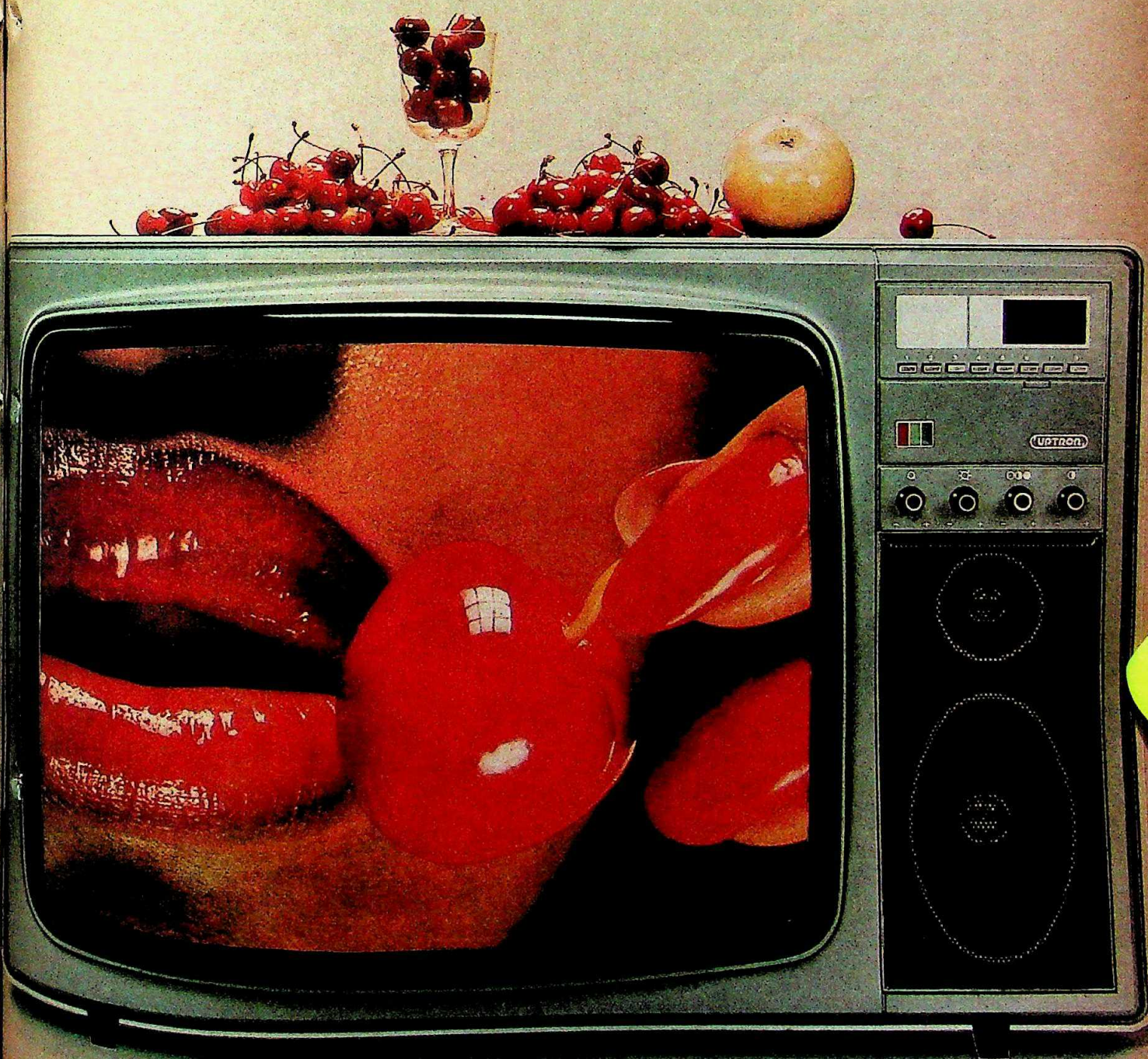
Colour from Uptron.

Reach out and touch it.



UPTRON TV

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Corporate Office: 10 Ashok Marg, Lucknow-226 001.

ULKA-D-UIL-631

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ADVERTISING

The Celebrity Sell

WOULD you buy a suit from this dashing, greying cricketer with the Robert Redford moustache? Or a TV from that demure news-reader who blinks her eyelashes every time she tells you that an accord is reached? Or ghee from a wrestler who has obviously had a lot of it? Quite a lot of people think you will, going by the number of celebrities—aspiring, current or fading—posing and pirouetting in suits, next to food cans, on top of cycles, astride motorbikes and inside T-shirts.

Starting with the number of nubile and not-so-nubile actresses drooling over Lux toilet soap to M. Azharuddin looking dumbfounded in an odd make of suitings, more and more advertisers are getting the beau and sporty monde to climb on to their bandwagon. Says Alyque Padamsee, executive director, Lintas India Ltd: "What we're seeing is selling of life-styles by the people who epitomise that life-style the best."

More and more advertisers are getting the beau and sporty monde to climb on to their bandwagon.

A number of high-profile, celebrity-based campaigns have hit the road in the last few years:

Editor Russi Karanjia, Lt-General Jagjit Singh Aurora, actor Kabir Bedi and cueist Mike Ferreira figure in a series of Vimal ads for premium worsted suitings—"the finest suitings for professionals in the age group of 35 plus", according to the Mudra Communications boss A.G. Krishnamurthy.

Film stars Rati Agnihotri, Mithun Chakraborty and Tina Munim pose for Hindicised spots—"*Hum, tum aur Thril*"—for McDowells' cola in what Padamsee calls an effort to grab the huge "Hindi market" for soft drinks.

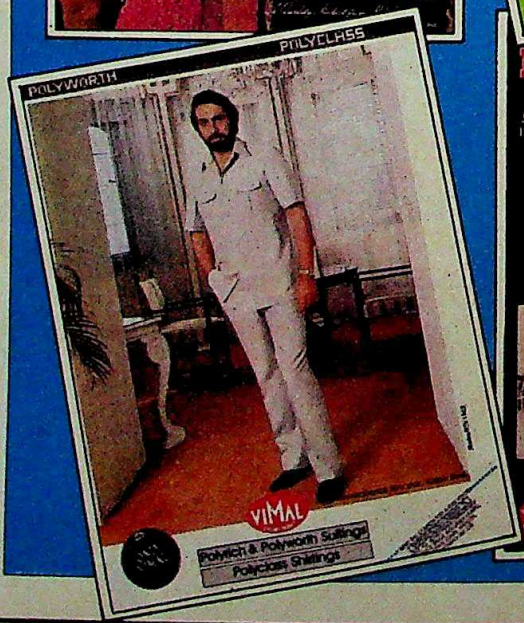
Television news-readers Tejeshwar Singh and Gitanjali Aiyar, fashion designer Lillette Dubey and TV sportscaster Charu Sharma peddle concentrated food Marmite; HMM Ltd, the company that makes it, says that sales have increased by over 50 per cent ever since the spots began to be aired.

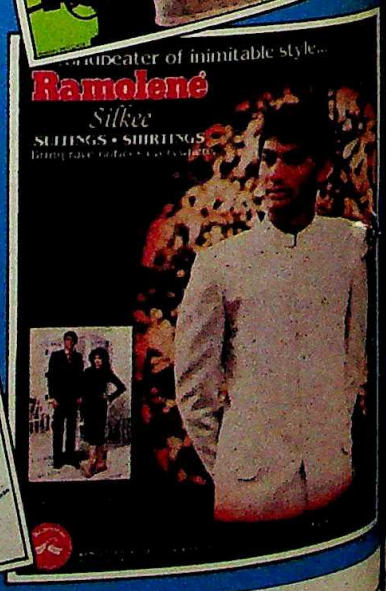
Cricketer Ravi "Audi" Shastri looks cool in Proline sportswear T-shirts, with or without beauties clinging to his arm, and Proline Chairman Rajiv Batra claims that the 'Ravi Shastri collection', a daring attempt to sell T-shirts priced at shirt prices as exclusive casual wear, is doing very well with sales of Rs 3 crore. Shastri also puts in an appearance in the Japanese-made National television sets ads aimed at the Indian market.

On the not-so-commercial front, character actor Iftekhar and aging tragedian Dilip Kumar were used in commercials made for the railways, in which they exhorted travellers to keep compartments and stations clean. Evergreen tycoon J.R.D. Tata had also agreed to appear and appeal, claims K.George John, resident Director of Ulka Advertising Pvt Ltd, which did the spots.

And, of course, one of the most successful campaigns has been for Parle's highly saleable cola Thums Up, which has used practically the entire Indian cricket team at some time or the other.

So the celebrity bandwagon rolls on, with more action to come. Cricketer Sunil Gavaskar and his wife Marshneil have





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joined up with two former advertising men to form the Professional Management Group (PMG), an agency which plans to take over sportsmen's advertising lives and get them better deals than they have got so far. Azharuddin, for instance, was offered Rs 7,500 for a year's contract with a textile mill when even a professional model would have got Rs 20,000.

Says PMG partner Sumedh Shah: "We don't get to the American level where the agencies literally tell the sportsmen to run their lives. We'll just secure for them the best contract they deserve. After all, the sportsman's appeal cuts across the board." Thus on the cards is a commercial for Pizza King, where the entire Indian team might indulge in fun antics like trying with one another to see who eats pizzas the fastest. The fee for the whole thing could be as high as Rs 2.5 lakh and will be doled out according to each player's seniority and standing.

Egoes mean money and there is no doubt that quite a few of the celebrities are in it for fast hefty bucks and other perks. Shastri's contact with Proline Sportswear is said to be worth over Rs 1 lakh. Sunil Gavaskar says he doesn't know how much he is making "out of this racket" but estimates his income from commercials at Rs 2 lakh per year. Kapil Dev is said to receive the consumer goodies he poses for as perks: a TV set, a fridge and so on.

This is a far cry from the days when celebrity advertising first began in India. Russi Karanjia says he modelled for Vimal because Dhirubhai Ambani asked him to do so and he didn't get a penny. Ferreira, who explains that he togged up in worsteds only to "give billiards a break", got only Rs 3,000 while Tejeshwar Singh got only Rs 1,000 for the Marmite ad. The rate for a top bracket face, according to Suresh Balasubramaniam of Trikaya Advertising, the company that evolved the Thums Up campaign, ranges from Rs 25,000 to Rs 1 lakh a year.

That is a lot of money, but if the campaigns are slick and well designed, they work wonders for the advertiser too. Rediffusion Advertising created a campaign for the high-priced BSA SLR bikes which showed Kapil Dev and Vijay Amritraj saving their respective situations because the bikes lent to them by obliging children got them to their playing fields on time. Targeted at the 11-15 age group, the spots apparently did their job: the bikes' manufacturers T.I.Cycles' sales ballooned from 30,000 to 1,80,000 cycles a year. Says H.V.Subramaniam, branch director, Rediffusion: "The point is that it is really the kid who lends the heroes his bike who is the centre of attention. So the sportsmen don't dominate the ad."

Another success story is that of the Ravi Shastri-Proline tie-up.The Proline sportswear range was launched only two years ago but it already sells five lakh pieces a year thanks to its clever positioning as all-purpose sportswear and skillful use of Sandeep Patil (who was the first cricketer used for the campaign but was dropped when he stopped making runs) and Shastri. Says Proline Chairman Batra: "Ravi really comes across as the cool, casual achiever and that's how men and women want to feel when they wear our clothes."

Cricketer Sunil Gavaskar and wife Marshneil have formed an agency which plans to take over sportsmen's advertising lives and get them better deals.

Other intelligently placed advertising is not so prominent. Actress Jaya Prada lends her luscious hair to Amla hair oil and thespian Shreeram Lagoo to the tonic Chyawanprash, both products of Dabur Pvt. Ltd. But sometimes it can fail. Sunil Gavaskar remembers the time when he first started appearing in ads for a soap called Sentry. "I don't even know if it is still around." Later he appeared in a series of Palmolive shaving cream ads but says that "somehow people

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Warm, pleasing yellows. Soft, soothing greens. Deep, mystic purples. Colours you've never heard before.

At Colour-Chem we make them sing. In the widest repertoire of shades and hues in the world of pigments and dyes.

In that subtle refinement of tone called quality control.

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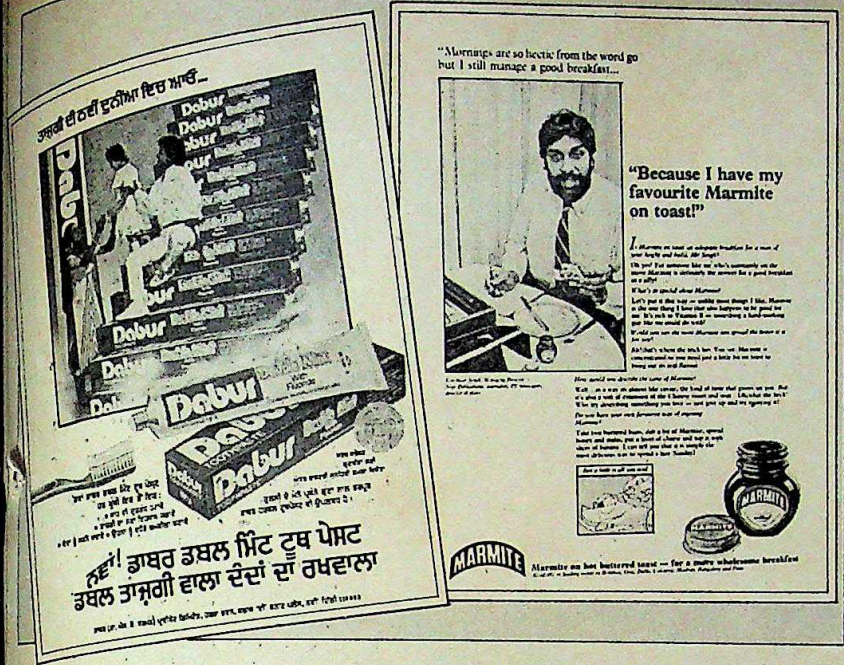

remember me in the ad but always remember the product as something else." Former Indian cricket captain Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi once appeared in an ad for Chancellor cigarettes: the film showed him throwing a sumptuous party in a sumptuous flat for sumptuous people: The cigarette flopped miserably. "Celebrity advertising is tricky," muses Ogilvy Benson and Mather creative director Suresh Mullick, "which is why we never use it now, although we did use Shashi Kapoor for Liberty shirts once. Very often the celebrity can overshadow the product, and then poof."

The big daddy of celebrity advertising is of course the Lux campaign which began worldwide over 50 years ago and which in India currently uses over 40 stars a year—about 300 have been signed up for it all over India—without paying them anything. "I wouldn't dream of showing Lux without a filmstar clutching it," says Shunu Sen, vice-president, marketing, Hindustan Lever Ltd (HLL). "When a star appears on Lux you know she's arrived." The stars are paid only token gifts to appear in it—although some years ago there was a move in the film industry to boycott Lux campaigns because they weren't getting any money for it. "The product is in tune with the people who endorse it," says Sen. "It's a perfect example of synchronisation."

However, HLL has run into problems with another star, Priya "Rajani" Tendulkar. She appeared in national ads last fortnight as a choosy Rajani Prabhakar endorsing the detergent made by HLL's competitor Godrej—which also sponsors the Rajani programme on television. Before she became a celebrity, however, Priya had signed a contract for Rs 6,000 with HLL for advertising a similar product and the film had already been shot. Sources say that this could have been one of the classic pitfalls of celebrity advertising: one person endorsing two competing products.

There is as yet no research to show if celebrity advertising works or doesn't, but most advertisers are agreed on one thing—that for mass-produced consumables like soft drinks and clothing, of which there are plenty of competing brands, attaching a celebrity's name to a particular brand makes it stand out from the crowd. Explains Padamsee of the Thril campaign, "We wanted to reach out to the vast mass of unanglicised people who were with it but not it. Rati, Tina and Mithun are not perceived as part of the English-speaking crowd and their invitation to share their drink was really an invitation to share their life-style. A life-style that went down well with the large mass of people who wear jeans but were not brought up on them."

With the proliferation of brands in any product, celebrity testimonials might be the only way to break away from the pack. But establishing credibility is still the key to a good sell, though that might not be the case with the Lux line-up—as one wag says, "who believes that Zeenat Aman actually uses Lux." Says Bobby Sistas of Sita's Pvt Ltd: "Shastri for sportswear is fine, Shastri for motorbikes—even with his gold Audi—can pass, but Shastri for suitings with models clinging to him? Ridiculous." The idea, as Subramaniam of Rediffusion says, is that the celebrity "must be in sync with the product."

Which is probably why Pardip Chanda, marketing manager of HMM Ltd, says they did not use a celebrity for their Horlicks—it is notable that not one sportsman appears in the health drink ads because "Horlicks is not a glamorous product but a down to earth one." HMM used a housewife called Suchitra for Horlicks for eight years and Hindustan Lever is said to have eschewed the use of a familiar face in favour of a tough, rather cussed housewife called Lalitaji to get across its point of Surf being value for money. Mudra uses celebrities lavishly but subtly. As Krishnamurthy claims:

Celebrities can enhance awareness of a product but can drown it if not properly used and the key is to fine-tune the medium and the message.

"We were the first and still are the only agency using celebrities who do not endorse the product."

So celebrities can enhance awareness of a product but can drown it if not properly used and the key to getting you to believe Sunil Gavaskar or Gitanjali Aiyar is to fine-tune the medium and the message. Whatever the tricks of the trade, more and more people, especially the newer stars of sponsored programmes are getting into the act. Shafi Inmadar and Swaroop Sampat of *'Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi'* are modelling for desi banians and phoren sarees respectively. Satish Shah from the same sitcom has already appeared in other ads. As video director Jalal Agha—who appeared in a highly successful spot for Pan Parag—says: "We have got to the point where any big name is willing to sell anything. Whether he actually does or not is not his problem." What's in a name. Well, if selling something, just about everything.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI with PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

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SEVENTH PLAN

Hope on the Horizon

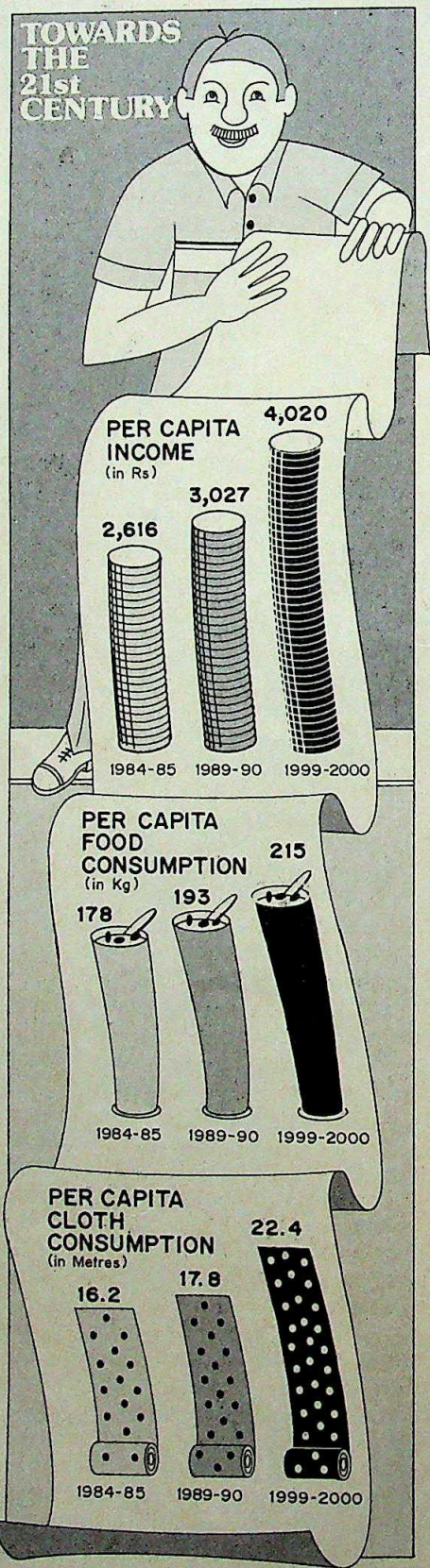
THE LAST thing you would expect from a government headed by an ex-pilot is a sharp cut in the spending on aviation. Yet that is precisely what the Seventh Five-Year Plan, now being given its final touches, proposes to do. While investment in virtually everything is scheduled to rise sharply, by between 50 and 100 per cent or more, the money being given for civil aviation is *down* from Rs 931 crore in the sixth plan to Rs 758 crore. In fact, the plan document says that "the growth of Indian Airlines will be *restricted* to 8 per cent per annum."

That is one of several surprises in the plan document, a copy of which was obtained by INDIA TODAY. For instance, in an atmosphere charged with a new consumerism and the promotion of colour TV's, new cars and videos, the draft plan calls for a curb on conspicuous consumption. And for all the talk of high technology, the biggest increases in investment outlays are in a host of unlikely fields, such as forestry, social services, special areas programmes, and the development of backward areas. Family planning, in fact, gets a record 135 per cent increase in outlay, while nutrition's slice of the cake is up by a mouth-watering 335 per cent: an increase that no other sector can match. This perhaps reflects the Government's new-found awareness of more basic human needs.

Other policy reversals may be imminent, for the plan document talks of raising an additional Rs 2,000 crore through higher direct taxes in the next five years. This cannot be achieved without reversing the trend set in the last Central budget, which saw hefty reliefs being given in income tax and wealth tax, apart from the abolition of estate duty.

How much of this will finally go through remains a question, however, because the prime minister has asked the Planning Commission to give more money to some of the relatively neglected sectors, like power, oil and the railways. And Rajiv Gandhi is apparently not very happy with the Planning Commission's sense of priorities. The coming weeks will show whether he now manages to get the plan recast in a new mould.

There is some surprise over the sixth plan performance too. The two sectors that got the maximum attention from the Government in terms of policy changes—industry and exports—have turned in the poorest performances. For the first time in any plan, industry grew slower than agriculture (3.9 per cent annually against 4.4 per cent for agriculture), while exports during the 1980-85 quinquennium totalled only Rs 33,000 crore, far short of the target of Rs 41,000 crore. In fact, the trade deficit is not expected to drop even over the next five years.



The poor performance by industry seems to have occurred despite what the plan document terms a "sustained increase of 16 per cent per year in the real investment in fixed assets by the private corporate sector during the first four years of the sixth plan", despite this, as a recent assessment of the Indian economy by the World Bank has noted, "the acceleration in (economic) growth....reflects improvements in agriculture and services, with the contribution of industry actually decelerating..." Clearly, the Government seems to feel it has the right now to ask industry for a better response to liberalised policies.

There is, nevertheless, a fair sprinkling of good cheer running through the plan document, which starts off by declaring that "since the mid-'70s the Indian economy has moved to a higher growth path." It also says that the percentage of the population below the poverty line has dropped from 48 per cent in 1977-78 to 36.9 per cent last year (a claim that is disputed by numerous economists and social scientists), and a further drop to 25.8 per cent is forecast for 1989-90. The growth of employment, at 4 per cent annually, is expected to be well over the 2.6 per cent growth in the labour force.

How much of what the plan says is to be taken seriously is another matter. For while the draft document says that "the Government and the public sector have to play a major role in the development process" and that "these are matters which cannot be left to the free play of market forces", the public sector gets less than half the total investment outlay for the first time ever. In both the third and the fourth plans, the public sector outlay formed more than 60 per cent of investment. This dropped to 53 per cent in the sixth plan, but in the seventh this figure will be no more than 48 per cent. India's private sector has now become the dominant factor in economic investment.

Such numbers may, in the end, say little about what will really happen. For while the overall growth target for the next five years is a relatively modest 5 per cent (the sixth plan did 5.3 per cent, and earlier plans used to aim at between 5-

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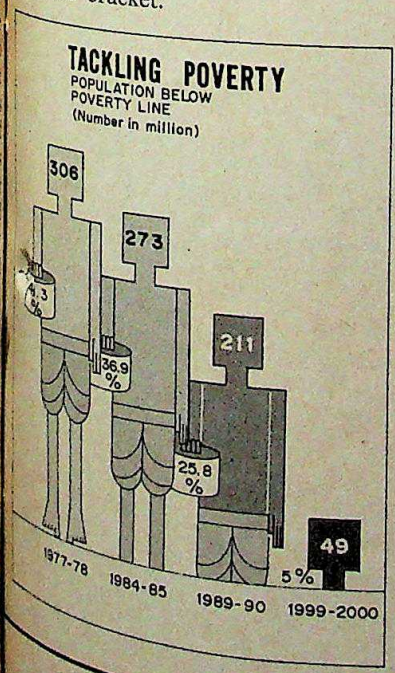
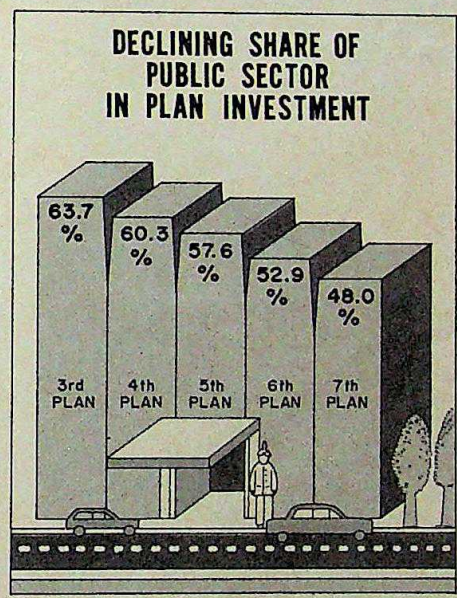
and 6 per cent), the target for industry is no less than 8 per cent: more than double that achieved in the last five years, with no obvious reason to expect that such a sharp acceleration is round the corner.

Also, the total investment proposed is Rs 3,22,366 crore, and reads unnervingly like one of those telephone numbers you never get. Some of the other growth rates projected are equally flattering: annual double-digit growth is forecast for sugar, newsprint, fertiliser, cement, aluminium, polyester and viscose staple fibre and filament yarn, machine tools, commercial vehicles, electricity generation and a host of chemical products. But the biggest growth of all is slated for electronics, from a very low base to Rs 10,500 crore in 1989-90, and a staggering Rs 50,000 crore by the year 2000, at which point electronics is expected to account for no less than one-eighth of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The state of the economy at the advent of the much heralded 21st century is spelt out in some detail, and with a fair overlay of hope. Only 5 per cent of a population of 972 million will be below the poverty line (against 36.9 per cent now), there will be near full employment, and per capita income at Rs 4,020 will be over 50 per cent higher than what it is today. Also, the country will be producing around three times the current quantum of steel, fertiliser, aluminium, coal and electricity, and five times in the case of plastics. Yet, in actual fact, this is not much to speak about; for using current World Bank standards, the projected level of per capita income at the turn of the century will just about take India out of the 'low-income economies' bracket.

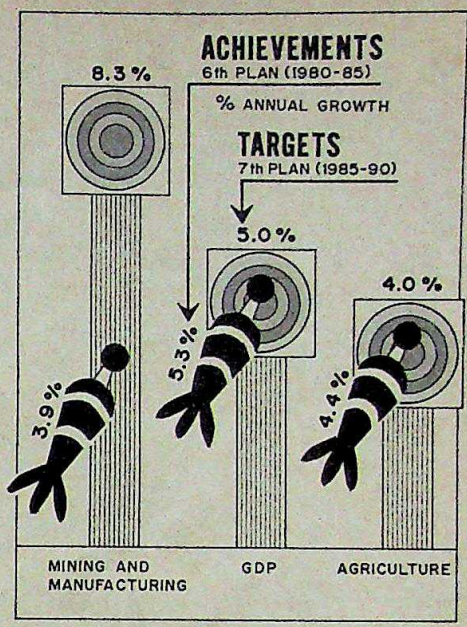


If that does not make for a very ambitious target at a time when euphoria runs high on what the economy can do, given the policies promised by the Rajiv Government, perhaps the most important and certainly worrying reason is the increasingly desperate state of government finances, reflected in the declining percentage of public sector investment. Despite planning for additional resource mobilisation of a staggering Rs 46,500 crore through higher taxes and increased prices for public sector products, taking credit for foreign borrowings in the public sector of Rs 18,000 crore, and planning for budgetary deficits totalling Rs 14,000 crore—making for a total additional cash inflow for the Government of Rs 78,500 crore—the public sector investment outlay will be only Rs 1,54,218 crore. Without the additional cash, the existing resource base provides only Rs 75,718 crore—less than the Rs 1,10,000 crore invested during the sixth plan.



As the plan document states honestly enough, the Government is eating up capital for non-plan spending, and the seventh plan document shows no easy way out. In fact, the document notes with concern that the national savings rate has dropped from 24.6 per cent in 1978-79 to 23 per cent, with a corresponding drop in the investment rate. It is in the light of these that the plan calls for a curb on conspicuous consumption. Manmohan Singh, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, has in fact spoken out against promoting industrial growth by encouraging consumption, and called for encouraging people to save so that the Government will have to invest.

The other new feature of the plan document is the concern for the environment, and some of the statistics in the document would make anyone sit up. No less than 105 million hectares of cultivable land and 8 million hectares of non-forest and non-agricultural land are subject to "widespread soil erosion", and a further 43 million hectares are degraded because of waterlogging, soil alkalinity, ravines and shifting cultivation.



There is also going to be an enormous strain on Indian cities: as much as 60 per cent of the population growth between now and 2000 will be in the cities, which will more than double in size. Amidst the urban decay that is already evident, the possibility of such an explosion can hardly be cause for comfort

Other fundamental changes will also occur in the Indian economy. The share of agriculture in GDP will drop over the next 15 years from 37 per cent to 25.5 per cent, while mining and manufacturing will increase their share from 18.1 per cent to 23.6 per cent. The most dominant sector in the economy will therefore be not agriculture, as now, but services.

Through it all, however, the main statement that the plan document makes is one of hope: that in a measurable time span of 15 years, "the percentage of population below the poverty line would have been reduced to 5 per cent, there would be near full employment....there would be a palpable improvement in the quality of life for the people as a whole, and a majority of the population would have been enabled to satisfy all the basic needs of living." If this vision of the future becomes reality, half a century of problem-ridden planning will finally have delivered.

—T.N. NINAN

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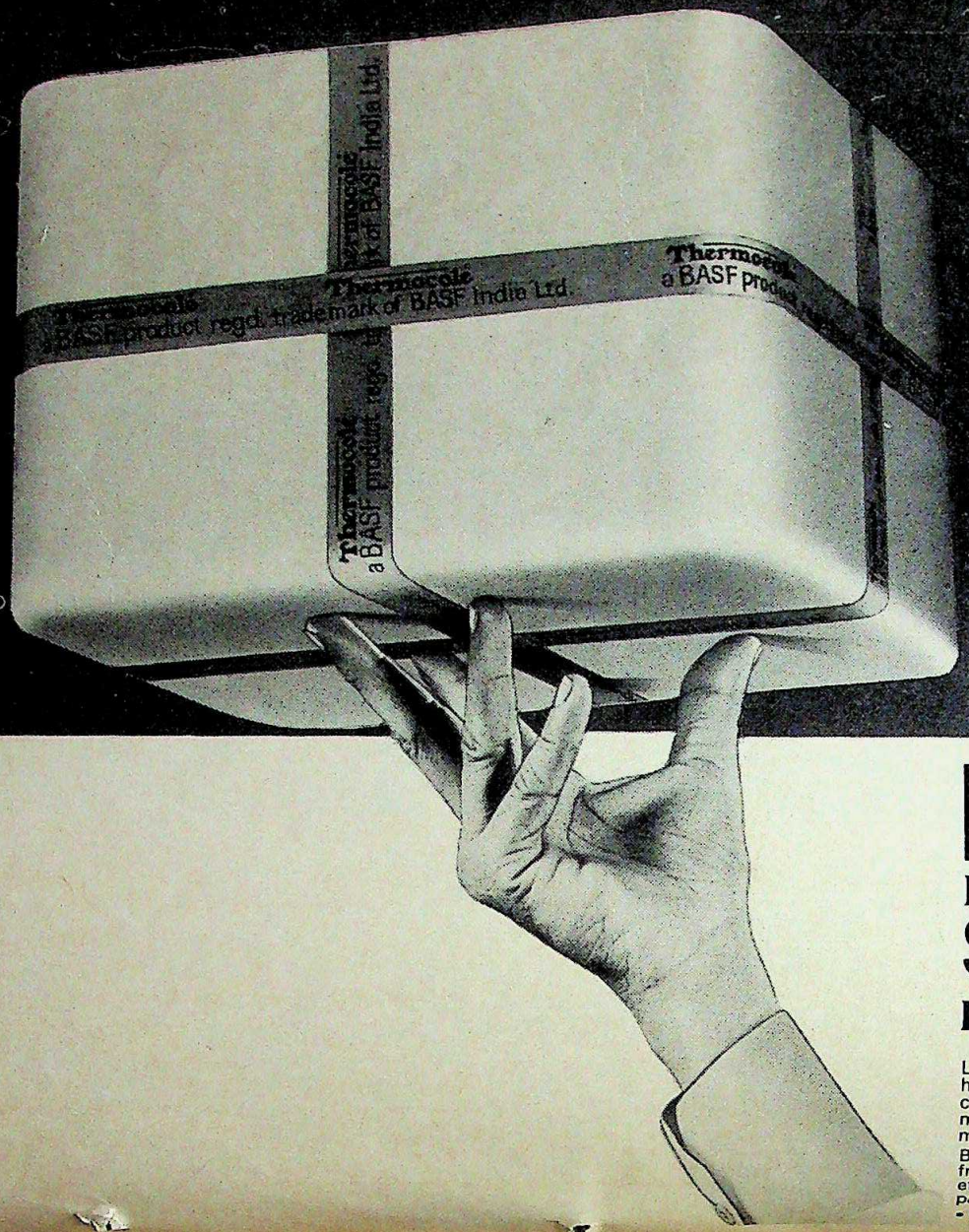
It's Light...



...Yet Strong-

BASF EXPANDED Styropor® PACKS

Light yet strong, Expanded Styropor has many other excellent characterisitcs which makes it the most versatile and ideal packaging material yet developed.

Be your product big or small, fragile, heat sensitive, perishable, etc. Expanded Styropor is the ideal packaging material, as it:-

- Insulates against extremes of climate.
- Prevents breakage.
- Absorbs shakes and shocks of transportation and handling.
- Keeps out dirt and moisture.
- Can be custom moulded to embrace any size or shape of product to hold it securely.

It protects, while it pleases the eye.

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Sarayu Foundation Chennai and eGangotri, Haridwar

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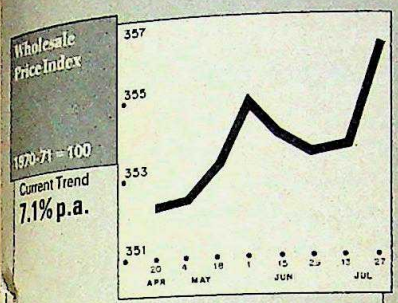
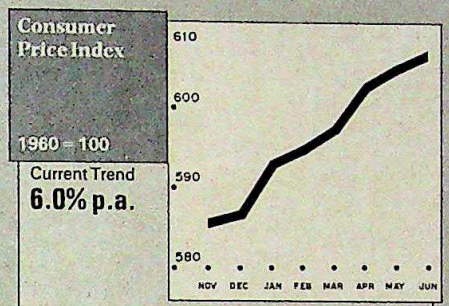
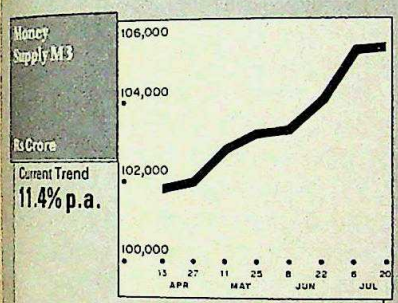
Consumer prices have ruled relatively steady, but wholesale prices saw a sharper rise than in past weeks. Money supply recorded no growth but bank credit to firms was on trend last fortnight. The trade gap expanded and foreign exchange reserves dipped sharply. The stock market also saw a sharp down swing.
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of the last six months data to which a regression is fitted.



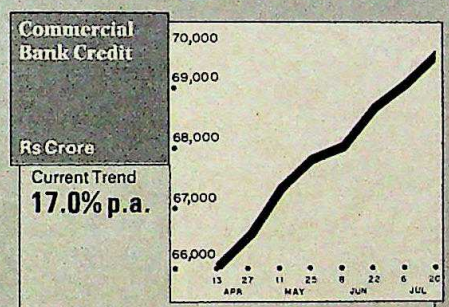
Wholesale prices jumped 0.7 per cent last fortnight, chiefly owing to a sharp spurt in the prices of food articles.



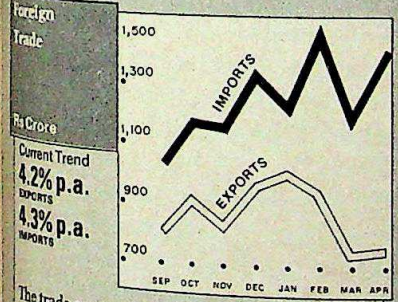
The consumer price index saw a moderate rise by 0.3 per cent last month, at about half the trend rate of growth.



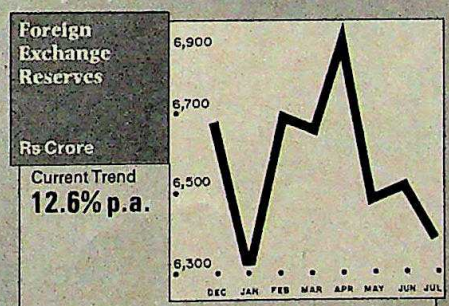
A decline in bank credit to government offset marginal increases in other components of money supply, to yield almost no growth.



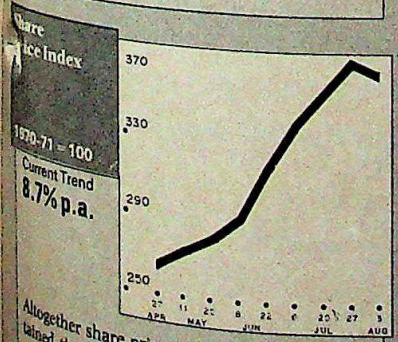
Bank credit to firms had increased marginally by 0.7 per cent last fortnight, maintaining the long term trend.



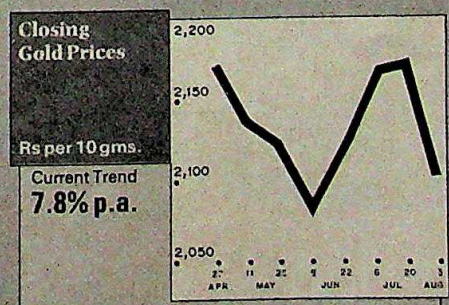
The trade gap expanded to about Rs 650 crores last month, causing some pressure on the tight foreign exchange situation.



Foreign exchange reserves recorded a 2.1 per cent dip continuing the see-saw of the last few months and adding to the decling trend.



Altogether share prices appear to have maintained their upward movement in fact there was a drop of nearly 2 per cent in the last week.



A 2.8 per cent decline in the price of gold last fortnight reversed the rising trend of the previous month.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Items with maximum growth in July 1985

	% Growth
Tapioca	16.16
Raw Hides	11.49
Fish	9.47
Maize	8.27
Khandsari	7.62
Sugar	6.46
Masoor	5.12
Bajra	4.77
Gur	3.88
Raw Silk	3.71
Cashew-Nuts	2.80
Barley	2.70
Wheat	2.58
Caustic Soda	2.45
Meat	2.17
Chillies	2.16
Milk	1.88
Coffee	1.62
Gram	1.53
Groundnut Seeds	1.51
Nylon & Terene	1.45
Cables & Wires	1.26
Aviation Spirit	1.25
Kerosene	1.11
Coir Yarn	1.09
Cotton Cloth	1.02
Mining Machinery	1.01
Betel-Nuts	0.94
Bolts & Nuts	0.91
Jowar	0.84
Machine Tools	0.83
Industrial Instruments	0.75
Coir Fibre	0.73
Boilers	0.73
Pipes & Tubes	0.69
Dyeing Materials	0.68
Arhar	0.66
Pesticides & Insecticides	0.59
Woollen Cloth & Khadi	0.58
Buses	0.57
Tractors	0.53
Sugarcane	0.50
Power-Driven Pumps	0.50
Tobacco	0.47
Dry Cells	0.46
Paper	0.45
Cement	0.45

Of 139 series considered, 50 with a weight of 38.6 accelerated while 89 with a weight of 48.0 decelerated.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Coal Thousand Tonnes, July	10803	10547
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, July	655.8	542.6
Cement Thousand Tonnes, July	2662	2527
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, July	2281	2283
Goods Traffic Million Tonnes, July	20.35	19.07

—Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP, ICIM

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"At first, I found it a little hard to believe that the Chemical Division of a 'third world' company not only exports products but also technology to developed countries of the West."

That's the Thermax Chemical Division for you.

Importing technology from abroad is one thing. But, at Thermax, we have always made it a point to make foreign technology relevant to India. So we have adapted and innovated the technology we have acquired from the West.

And, today, the scenario has changed. Take, for instance, the agreement Thermax signed 5 years ago with Sybron Chemicals Inc., U.S.A., whereby Thermax had to pay royalty for technical know-how. But, today, Sybron, who are one of the world's largest and most technologically advanced manufacturers of ion exchange resins and related polymers, accepts Thermax to be on par with them technologically. As a result, the agreement has been renewed recently with a mutual technology transfer clause replacing the royalty clause. Today, Thermax actually exports indigenously developed technology to Sybron, in exchange for the know-how being gained from them.

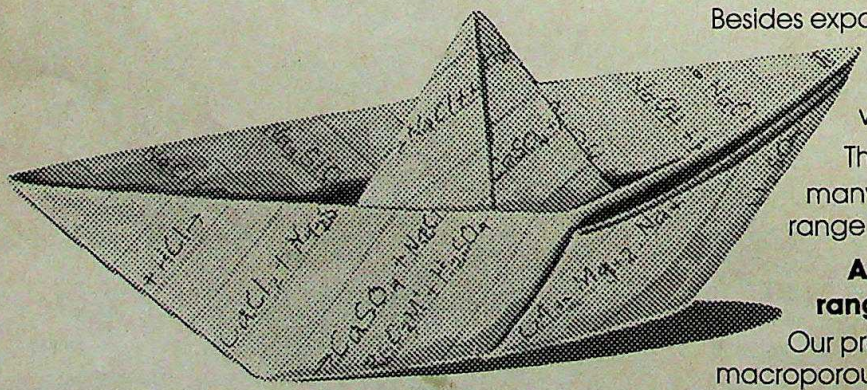
The Division has not only contributed immensely towards import substitution of nuclear grade resins and resins for the recovery of Streptomycin, but exports nuclear grade resins, resins for metal extraction, and inert resins for mixed bed water treatment systems in thermal power stations.

The Chemical Division has gained international recognition of our competence. Besides exporting our speciality chemicals to the USSR and Canada, we also have technology exchange programmes with the USSR on a regular basis.

The Chemical Division has many 'firsts' to its credit. And the product range we have to offer is impressive.

An at-a-glance view of the product range

Our products include the TULSION range of macroporous and gel ion exchange resins for



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removal of dissolved ionic impurities from water or other solvents. These resins are manufactured in collaboration with Sybron Chemicals Inc., U.S.A. We also manufacture TULSEPARS anionic polyelectrolyte, CAT-FLOC-T cationic polyelectrolyte, made in collaboration with Calgon Corporation, U.S.A., and MAXTREAT non-chromate and chromate-based chemical dosing formulations for cooling water systems.

We introduced in India ECONOMIX, a fireside combustion deposit cleaning agent, which increases boiler efficiency, while saving effort and maintenance costs. This is made in collaboration with Chalbar Ltd., U.K.

We also make oil well chemicals, which include speciality chemicals like the 'pour point depressant', which improves the mobility of crude oil; oil-soluble demulsifiers for oil-water separation; scale inhibitors for water flooding in oil wells; and polyelectrolyte-based deoilers.

And we recently developed a handy test kit for water testing in process industries and in boilers.

The Chemical Division in a capsule

Our problem-solving approach and proven abilities have earned us a great deal of goodwill. Even companies not using Thermax systems or products approach the Division for guidance. And we also undertake to train employees of our clients.

The Division continuously monitors the performance of all products sold. Ours is an improvement-oriented approach, with a constant effort to better product performance. For instance, our entire range of ion exchange resins has been upgraded recently.

The Chemical Division of Thermax not only stands tall on our own strengths but also forms an integral part of Thermax's activities. It enables the Company to offer you, across our different divisions, a comprehensive package of services.

THERMAX

THERMAX PRIVATE LIMITED

CHEMICAL DIVISION

97-E, General Block, Bhosari, Pune 411 026

SALES OFFICES: Bombay • Calcutta • New Delhi • Madras • Ahmedabad • Bangalore • Bhopal • Hyderabad

Thermax Chemical Division – Making our chemistry work for you.

Rediffusion/T/4017a

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Copper & Aluminium Wires & Strips Covered with Paper, Fibre Glass, Nomex, Kapton & Teflon and Paper Covered Bunched Conductors.

Also Paper Insulated Flexible Lead Cables.

An undisputed choice for quality electrical windings.

Vinstar

Vinstar Winding Wires and Strips for transformer, motor and allied electrical applications are manufactured under strict quality control and as per Indian and International standard specification. They can also be supplied as per customers own special specification. These are manufactured in an ultra modern plant having facilities with latest equipment and technology in the field.

Range of production for round conductors is 10 SWG to 22 SWG. And for rectangular conductors from 2 × 2 mm to 10 × 10 mm cross section.

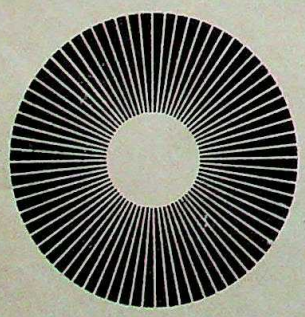
Manufactured by:

VINDHYA ENTERPRISES
Post Box No. 43, Rani Baug,
Rewa-486 001 (M.P.)

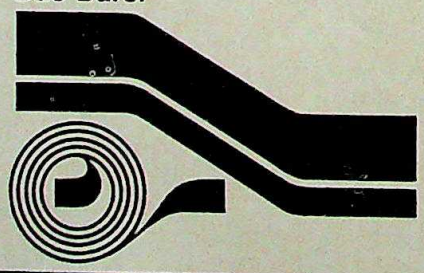
AMA-VE-15

We are proud to offer matchless quality.

Copper strips for Segments.



Copper Components and Flexibles & Laminated Copper with/without Electro tinning. Copper & Aluminium Bus-Bars.



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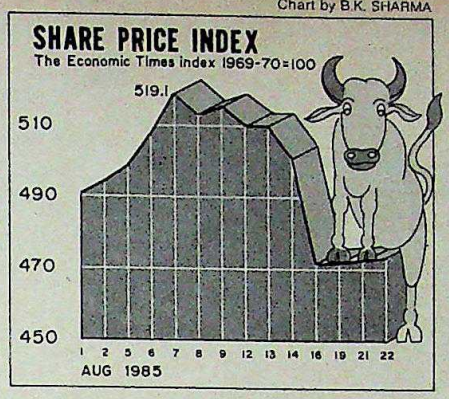
THE MARKETS

Turning Tide

THE TIDE finally seems to have turned, and it needed the financial institutions to achieve what for weeks had seemed impossible. By acting in unison, and dumping large amounts of shares on the stock-market in a concerted bid to end the sustained boom in equity prices, the financial institutions finally managed to pull down the rising curve of share prices. Share prices took some time to resume their upward search after the institutions had stopped selling. The bulls who had collared the market and done precisely what they wished for weeks on end seemed to be taking their own time before getting back into action and were now nowhere in sight. And some of the shares were offered 25 to 30 per cent lower than their peak levels.

Nevertheless, the stock-market has not suddenly become a bear's haven. *The Economic Times* stock-market index dropped only 7 per cent despite the heavy institutional selling, and suggested that there was still some resilience left on Dalal Street. Also, it remains uncertain whether the institutions will continue selling, or whether they have shot their bolt for the moment. It does seem clear that the institutions cannot sell too much just yet, because they will (with the exception of the Unit Trust) be subject to the capital gains tax on their sales realisations—unless, of course, an amendment to the tax law is round the corner so that this no longer acts as a limitation on institutional behaviour on the market.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Meanwhile, the market was agog with speculation as to the reasons for the institutions' sudden decision to enter the market and act with the clear desire to bring prices down. Both the Unit Trust chairman and the head of the General Insurance Corporation had asserted two months ago that they would not be disinvesting. Nevertheless, both had also made no secret of the fact that they thought the equity boom was overcooked, and that the heat had to be turned off.

For all that, there is little doubt that the orders to sell came from New Delhi, which had noted that the authorities on the Bombay Stock Exchange had gone to the extent of imposing 40 per cent margins on the purchase of cash-paid as well as forward-traded scrips. Even the much quieter Madras Stock Exchange had witnessed the slapping on of 10 per cent margins.

Clearly, the time had come to do something about the extraordinary state that the market found itself in, and perhaps no one could have done the job as effectively as the institutions. Certainly, their decision to sell, and sell big, has given the market a much-needed pause. The question now is whether the bulls will be on the rampage again.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 19.8.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	59.00	29.00	46.00	11.00 –
Associated Cement	610.00	385.00	490.00	70.00 –
Atlas Copco	70.00	37.50	61.00	2.00 –
Associated Bearings	725.00	425.00	720.00	37.50 +
Bajaj Auto	2000.00	855.00	1850.00	75.00 –
Ballarpur	65.00	45.00	55.50	8.50 –
Baroda Rayon	460.00	281.00	380.00	55.00 –
Bata India	88.10	48.00	66.00	18.50 –
Bayer	480.00	305.00	450.00	5.00 –
Best & Crompton	115.00	61.00	105.00	Nil
Bharat Forge	95.00	35.50	76.00	3.00 –
Blow Plast	85.00	36.50	78.00	13.00 +
Blue Star	82.50	33.00	77.50	2.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	156.00	66.00	115.00	9.00 –
Brooke Bond	83.00	47.50	63.00	12.50 –
Ceat Tyres	290.00	180.00	290.00	15.00 +
Century Spinning	1310.00	810.00	1120.00	190.00 +
Chloride India	91.00	56.90	82.00	4.00 –
Durgia	85.00	32.25	58.00	17.00 –
Colgate	318.00	147.00	170.00	15.00 –
Cyanamid	90.00	33.00	67.00	3.00 –
DCM	73.00	18.00	71.50	8.50 +
Dunlop	48.75	22.30	43.00	2.00 –
Elecon	108.00	54.00	90.00	5.00 –
Escorts	102.00	49.87	90.00	9.00 –
Food Specialties	215.00	86.00	160.00	35.00 –
Garware Nylon	56.00	24.50	49.00	3.00 +
Glaxo	78.00	24.00	65.00	2.00 –
G.E. Shipping	36.50	14.25	29.00	0.50 –
Gujarat St Fertilisers	810.00	537.00	705.00	60.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	87.50	53.75	74.00	2.00 –
Hindustan Lever	125.00	51.25	92.00	16.00 –
Hindustan Motors	86.00	37.50	74.00	3.00 –

	1985 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 6.8.85	Change on Fortnight
Indian Dyestuff	390.00	267.50	320.00	20.00 –
Indian Explosives	73.50	33.00	57.00	15.50 –
Indian Hotels	135.00	76.00	105.00	5.00 –
Indian Organic	124.00	50.50	110.00	2.00 –
Indian Rayon	125.00	66.00	109.00	3.00 –
Indrol	250.00	90.50	175.00	50.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	365.00	162.00	340.00	Nil
ITC	65.50	29.00	54.80	10.70 –
JK Synthetics	118.00	52.75	100.00	13.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	380.00	128.00	310.00	40.00 –
Kirloskar Oil	38.00	23.00	25.00	4.00 –
Lakme	200.00	74.00	145.00	30.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	175.00	72.00	149.00	11.00 –
Lipton	58.50	26.50	43.00	10.00 –
Lohia Machines	85.00	42.00	70.00	nil
Mahindra & Mahindra	102.00	48.00	67.00	19.00 –
Motor Industries	690.00	321.25	630.00	20.00 –
National Organic	550.00	240.00	485.00	25.00 +
Nirlon	70.00	37.75	50.00	6.00 –
Peico Electronics	99.00	38.40	76.50	19.50 –
Premier Auto	645.00	322.00	515.00	95.00 –
Ranbaxy	127.50	49.00	97.50	10.00 –
Raymond	120.00	59.00	86.00	15.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	95.00	57.00	85.00	5.00 +
Reliance Industries	252.00	120.00	230.00	5.00 –
Sandoz	82.00	31.00	65.00	8.00 –
Shriram Fibres	81.00	34.00	74.00	7.00 –
SPIC	137.00	43.50	114.00	7.00 –
Tata Steel	1195.00	381.00	985.00	75.00 –
Telco	1030.00	409.00	775.00	145.00 –
Vulcan Laval	125.00	64.00	112.50	2.50 –
Zenith Steel	75.00	28.00	64.00	7.00 –
20th Century Leasing	84.00	31.50	56.00	9.00 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.4123	8.3216
Austria	Schilling	100	61.9229	61.4339
Bahrain	Dinar	1	31.4123	31.4019
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.4813	42.4803
Canada	Dollar	1	8.8254	8.7471
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1975	1.1854
Egypt	Pound	1	14.2213	14.2209
France	Franc	1	1.4164	1.3888
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.5291	1.5159
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0063	1.0060
Iran	Rial	100	13.3552	13.2919
Italy	Lira	100	0.6413	0.6401
Japan	Yen	100	5.1203	4.9950
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7140	0.7139
Kuwait	Dinar	1	39.4093	39.4087
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8485	4.8013
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.7945	0.7940
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6323	0.6212
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.8639	3.8388
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7590	0.7582
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.3446	5.2946
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0724	0.0721
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4380	0.4379
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4549	1.4401
Switzerland	Franc	1	5.3005	5.2543
Tanzania	Schilling	1	0.6823	0.6820
Thailand	Baht	100	44.5723	44.5001
UK	Pound	1	16.7154	16.5933
USA	Dollar	1	11.9475	11.8350
UAE	Dirham	1	3.2350	3.2347
USSR	Rouble	1	14.0110	14.0023
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.3975	4.2918

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd, New Delhi, and quoted between the Banks on 26.8.85.

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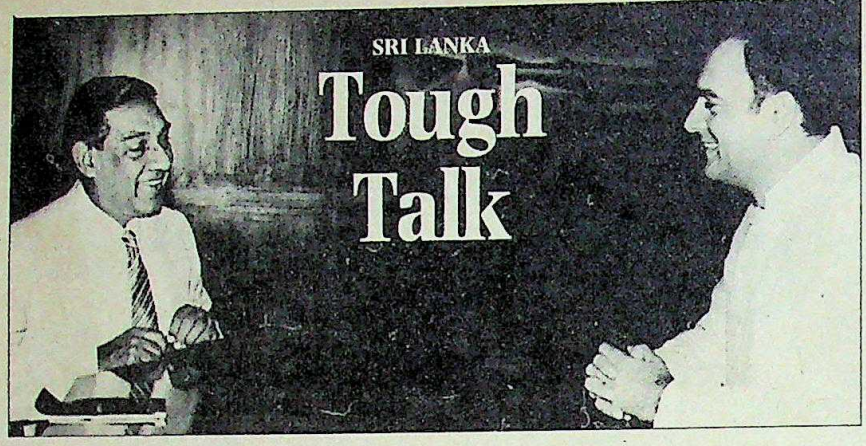
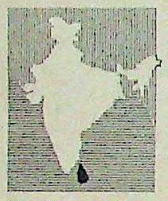
ASHOK VAIRE

SRI LANKA

Tough Talk



Rajiv with Hector Jayewardene in Delhi: balancing act



AFTER the Punjab accord and the Assam settlement, it looks like Rajiv Gandhi has been denied a hat trick", was the wry comment of a 'Thimpu-watcher' in Madras, referring to the virtual collapse of the second round of Indian-sponsored talks between Sri Lanka and their Tamil opponents over the island's ethnic issue in the Bhutanese capital last fortnight. The analogy was only too apt, with the Indian cricket team currently on an official tour of Sri Lanka. In the Thimpu test, however, with the injured teams back in the pavilion, it was India's umpiring that was becoming the subject of heated debate and controversy.

The Tamil militants, already resentful at India's strong-arm tactics in frog-marching them to Thimpu, had their hackles raised further by the demand of Sri Lanka's chief negotiator, Hector Jayewardene, that they lay down their arms failing which the negotiations could not proceed further. Since the positions had not altered much, the result was a deadlock which was further compounded when the Tamil delegates walked out of the talks over what they believed was a major violation of the two-month-old cease-fire; the alleged massacre of over 400 Tamil civilians at Vavuniya and Trincomalee by Sri Lankan security forces.

The Sri Lankan Government denied the reported killings, but the talks were doomed. In a desperate salvage bid, Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari rushed to Thimpu, storming angrily into the hotel where the Tamil delegates were packing to go home and gave them a tongue-lashing. Said one of the delegates: "He shouted and swore at us saying 'why the bloody hell did you walk out' and tried to literally drag us back to the negotiations. We said that our leaders had asked us to return. The next day he agreed that some of us could return but a token presence had to be maintained to indicate that the talks had been only adjourned".

But for the militants, convinced that they were pitted not only against the Sri Lankan but also the Indian Government, more fireworks were in store. Back in Madras, deportation orders were served on two top-ranking Tamil militants by the Indian Government, confirming their view that, unlike his other political successes, Rajiv Gandhi had chosen the stick over the carrots. The two men served with deportation orders, Professor A. S. Balasingham, official spokesman of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and S. C. Chandrahasan, convener of the Organisation for the Protection of Tamils of Eelam from Genocide, were asked to leave India within 48 hours. Balasingham is a British passport holder and a social scientist from London University, while Chandrahasan is a lawyer with Sri Lankan citizenship.

Balasingham: deported

Obviously, the deportation orders were served as a result of Hector Jayewardene's meeting with Rajiv in Delhi after the official adjournment of the aborted talks. Equally obviously, the Indian strategy seemed to be to come down hard on the hard-line militants to ensure that the negotiations succeed at any cost. Last week, the Indian Government was still pressurising the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) to send representatives to Delhi in a bid to get the negotiations restarted. An ENLF spokesman stated that the militants would agree to resume negotiations only if the Sri Lankan Government stopped army atrocities on Tamil civilians, ensured that the cease-fire was not violated, and put up concrete proposals. A few hours before he was whisked away by four policemen and an immigration officer, Balasingham had told INDIA TODAY: "We are no longer prepared to go on and on with the discarded district council proposal. Jayewardene has to come up with something more satisfying."

The Jayewardene he meant, Sri Lankan president and Hector's brother, was really in no position to make any concessions. In Colombo, the average Sinhalese, and more so the middle class intelligentsia, is increasingly restive and critical of the Government. Already economically hard-pressed, they are now freely critical of an administration they perceive as ineffectual and would prefer a military solution that would appeal better to their nationalistic pride than a peaceful settlement. But an embarrassed government seems incapable of either.

With the middle class forming the main opinion-makers in the compact, highly-literate and politicised island, these emerging trends are starting to undermine the self-confidence of the ruling United National Party's (UNP) rural and small town leadership. And, with Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel given to almost daily warnings of a darkening economic landscape (swelling defence spending has wrecked his budget), the business community, the traditional, pivotal pillar of the UNP, has started showing signs of acute insecurity. As a result, the party's top-rung spokesmen, including senior ministers, are now busy contradicting themselves when they are not contradicting each other over the question of "war or peace". The only section that can be happy about the turn of events is the newly formed National Front. "Parties cannot function nor can parliamentary politics if we do not halt the drift towards chaos which is where the Government is leading Sri Lanka. The only purpose of the National Front is to halt that," said Mrs Bandaranaike last fortnight.

Away from the din of the emotionally-charged debate, however, there are sections of the Sri Lankan intelligentsia that genuinly regret the Thimpu failure, but they now tend to blame Delhi

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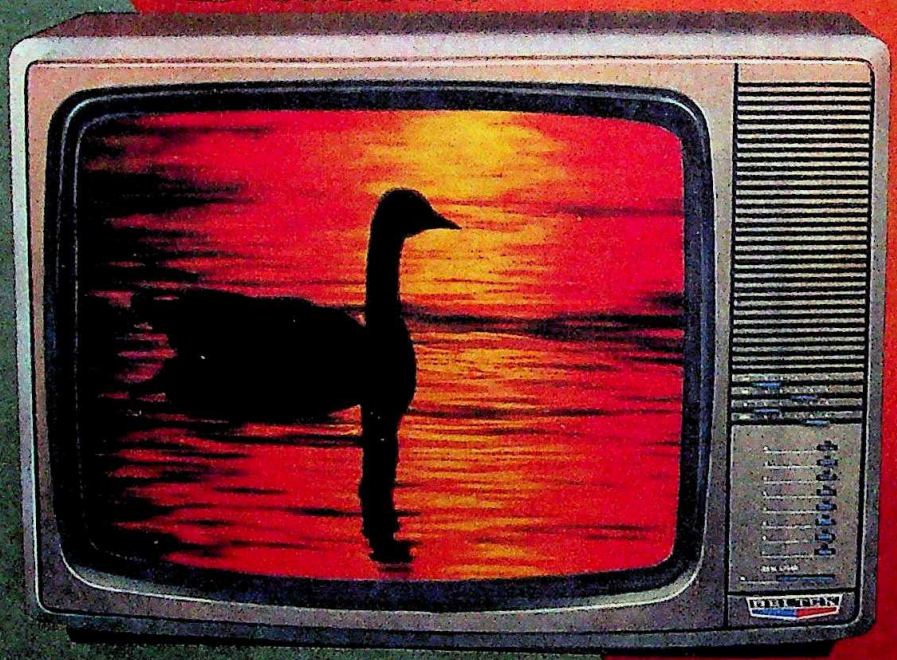

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LALITH ATHULATHMUDALI

"I fear more bloodshed"

SRI LANKA's National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali is known for his forceful and independent views, specially on the ethnic crisis that has engulfed his country. Though his domineering role in the Tamil issue is not as visibly in evidence as earlier, his is still a major decision-making voice. Last fortnight, Athulathmudali was in Geneva where he spoke to INDIA TODAY's CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM *Extracts:*

Q. ***What are the gut issues at Thimpu?***

A. The land settlement issue. How to move from the poverty test to an ethnic test. There is a strong feeling that land settlement must not be seen as making the majority into a minority. This is a tough issue. I don't like this concept of traditional homeland. The whole of Sri Lanka belongs to all of us and you cannot push a homeland thesis simply because the Tamil speaking population of Sri Lanka live in certain provinces. So while rejecting the homeland question one has got to see how an ethnic balance can be worked out. The other issue is the law and order question. They (the Tamils) say we need to protect ourselves and we need our own police force.

Athulathmudali

Q. ***But are their fears not legitimate?***

A. I think to some extent they are not wholly unreasonable. But on the other hand in a small country how do you move your police, how do you arm them, how do you train them?

Q. ***But don't you agree that there is a threat to the Tamils?***

A. No. I would put it this way. The Tamils had no threat till they started these terrorist attacks. They made demands which were seen as unreasonable by the people. As soon as terrorist attacks intensified in 1983, there was a backlash problem because the average masses thought the terrorists and Tamils were one. They hit back. The terrorist attacks were seen as a provocation. If they stop, there will be no such problem.

Q. ***There is indication that the hardliners and the Buddhist clergy are against negotiating.?***

A. Not at all. So long as we can get a reasonable solution there will be no problem, we can sell it to the masses. The Buddhist clergy tend to become important only when they reflect the opinion of the majority but what a lot of people don't understand is that the Sinhalese feel threatened. They feel they are being driven into the sea and when Madras starts sabre-rattling you know what they say, they (Tamils) can go back to Madras but where can we go.

Q. ***Your economy is suffering. What happens if the Thimpu talks fail? Will there be more bloodshed?***

A. Well, I hope not but I fear so. In Thimpu, the talks have adjourned *sine die*..

Q. ***Yes, India is trying....***

A. ...pushing around.

Q. ***If you are trying to say that the Tamils have not come voluntarily then whatever settlement you reach will not hold.***

A. Yes, but if they have come there we can have some kind of acceptance. But if they didn't go there voluntarily they are showing that they only want a military solution.

Q. ***How do you see India's role in the issue?***

A. I don't like to think of its behaviour prior to 1984. At present there is much greater understanding but the question is here are two friendly neighbours, age-old friends. They are two sovereign states and one does not challenge the sovereignty of the other. But can you go allowing on one's soil, people saying that I am going to declare war on your friendly neighbour? Some decision has to be taken about that.

Q. ***But India is a free country...***

A. Yes, but when the statements are made by citizens of a third country, what then? Some of the militants in Madras are British citizens.

more than Colombo. Delhi, they say, was right to take advantage of the much improved chances of a negotiated settlement that arose partly out of external pressure from Sri Lanka's aid donors and partly because Sri Lankan opinion was getting used to a new Indian premier less haughty and indifferent to Sri Lankan sensibilities than his predecessor. But Delhi, they say, erred in grabbing the opportunity too soon and too eagerly and for being naive enough to ignore the old truism that the smaller the country, the more intractable the complexities and irrationalities of its politics.

There is increasing opinion that by ordinary logic, Colombo's bottom line had to be much higher than the rejected provisional councils formula and that should have been ensured by Indian and Sri Lankan negotiators long before the actual talks were organised. But with the resurgence of violence, the worrying question was whether events had once again slipped out of the control of either Delhi or Sri Lanka's civilian negotiators.

In Madras, the militants are angered at the deportation decision and have begun to openly show signs of resisting Indian pressure. Huge rallies have been held in support of the militants and in protest against the deportation of Balasingham and Chandrahasan but latest indications are that New Delhi is to continue its crack-down on Tamil militants, while putting pressure on Colombo to bring its security forces to heel and control the violence.

India is also pressing Colombo to agree to making the working paper submitted at the Ceylon Workers' Congress to last year's All-Party Conference, a basis for further negotiations between the militants and the Sri Lankan Government. The paper envisions a substantial amount of regional autonomy for the Tamils with safeguards for all minorities through special administrative innovations. So far, the hitch has been that the Sri Lankans would like the Tamils to make the proposal while the Tamils insist that the Sri Lankans bring up the issue "so that we can then ask for something more and at least get regional autonomy". But if the anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka continues with Colombo unable to restrain its armed forces, and India increases its pressure on the militants in Madras, thus forcing them back to Sri Lanka, there just may not be another opportunity to give peace a chance.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo and S.H.VENKATRAMANI in Madras

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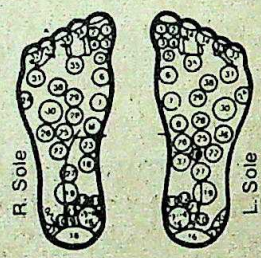

20. Colon
21. Appendix
22. Gall Bladder
23. Liver
24. Shoulder
25. Pancreas
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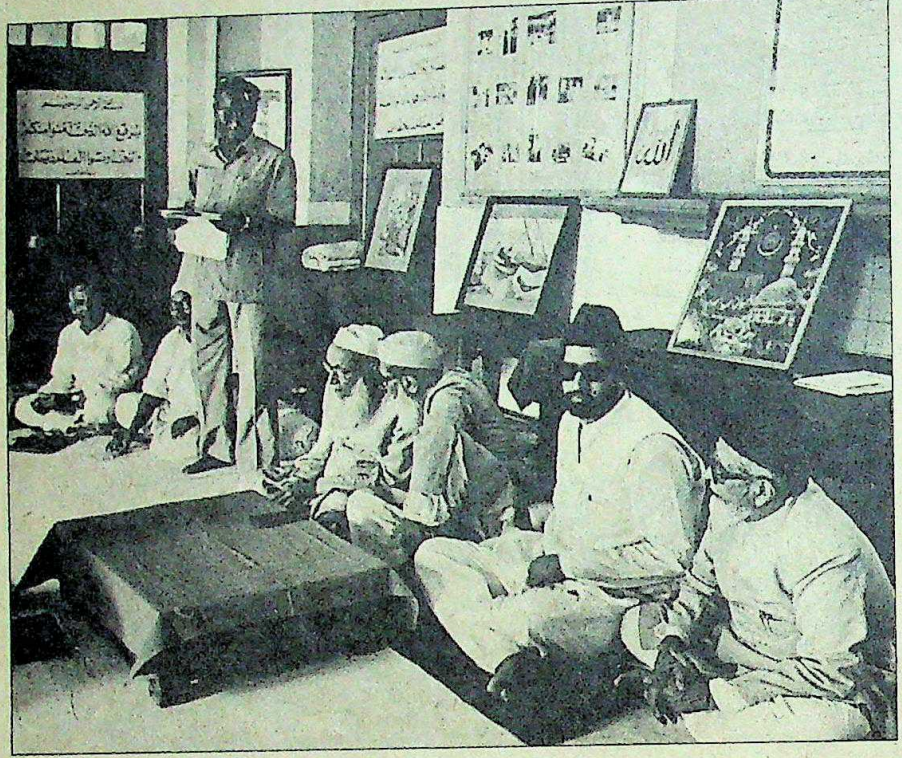

Religious leaders at AIMPLB meet in New Delhi: forceful plea

MUSLIM PERSONAL LAW

Controversial Verdict

WHEN the Supreme Court ruled that Muslim women were entitled to maintenance from their divorced Muslim husbands, they must have realised they were treading on tricky ground. But they could hardly have imagined the judgement would split the Muslim community down the middle. The ruling, delivered in April by a five-judge bench headed by the-then chief justice Y.V. Chandrachud, upset conservative Muslims who felt that the court was intruding on the basic tenets of the faith. The younger and more liberal sections of the community, who have been at odds with prevailing attitudes and practices that have kept their women backward, drew comfort. With the air heating up on both sides and appeals being made to the prime minister, the inevitable explosion was only a matter of time.

It came last fortnight, when conservative Muslims under the banner of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), met in New Delhi to chalk out a three-month long programme intended to build up Muslim public opinion against the verdict and defend the Shariah (comprising the divine revelations and doings of the Prophet). Warned AIMPLB General Secretary Maulana Minatullah Rahmani, the powerful Amir-e-Shariat of Bihar and Orissa: "We have so far desisted from an agitational course, but if our demands are not conceded by the Government, we will do whatever is possible."

The AIMPLB's demands, backed by the signatures of 275 leading *ulema* from all over the country, made a plea for amendment of Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC). Earlier no Muslim husband was required to pay maintenance to his divorced wife beyond the required period of three months (*iddat*) but the Supreme Court judgement modified the statute requiring the ex-husband to maintain his wife if she were without means. What's more, the court made it clear that if there was any conflict between Muslim Personal Law (MPL) and Section 125, the latter would prevail. The ruling was lent added weight by the fact that the learned judges quoted from the holy Koran: "For divorced women, maintenance should be provided; on reasonable scale; this is a duty on the righteous." Frequently referring to scholarly works on the Koran by a host of distinguished academics, the judges observed: "The contrary argument does less than justice to the the teachings of the Koran."

Muslim leaders were not slow in reacting. Said a visibly upset Syed Shahabuddin, Janata Party leader and editor of *Muslim India*: "The judgement has created a sense of religious insecurity. The Supreme Court cannot decide what is the essence of Islam as the MPL is a religion." Echoed G.M. Banatwala, general secretary of the Indian Union Muslim League: "This judgement will go down in history as a gross and shocking departure from judicial tradition. It is not for the court to sit down and interpret any religious book. They have totally outstepped their jurisdiction." If these observations did not border on contempt of court, it revealed the extent to which tempers had been aroused. Rahim Qurraisi, secretary of the Hyderabad unit of the AIMPLB argued that the "judges have wrongly interpreted Section 125" since their ruling is "violative of Section 127 (3) (b) which protects Muslims from the effects of Section 125." The respected Qazi-e-Shariat of Bihar and Orissa pointed out that "to impose responsibility of maintenance...is not supported by Koranic argument and on the contrary, is violative of the limits laid down by the Koran."

Strong observations, but they could not obscure the fact that the judgement had gone down well with a wide if not vocal section of the community. Said Supreme Court advocate Agha Farooq: "We are citizens of India and if the MPL clashes with the Constitution we must follow the Constitution. If maintenance is against the MPL or Islamic laws, let our women not ask for it. But if they go to court, then the court is bound to go by the law of the land." Wrote an elated Nusrat Bano Ruhi, a lecturer in political science in Bhopal: "The Muslim theologians tried their best to arouse the masses to agitate against a most just and reasonable pronouncement. That they gave a call to observe 'security of shariat day' on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramzan speaks for how the unscrupulous leaders who know little about their own religion play with the religious feelings of the people."

Welcome support came from no less personage than the Union Minister of State for Home and Industry, Arif Mohammed Khan. In a strongly-worded speech in the Lok Sabha – timed to coincide with the moving of a private member's bill by Banatwala seeking amendment of Sections 125 and 127 of the CRPC that would debar courts from grant-

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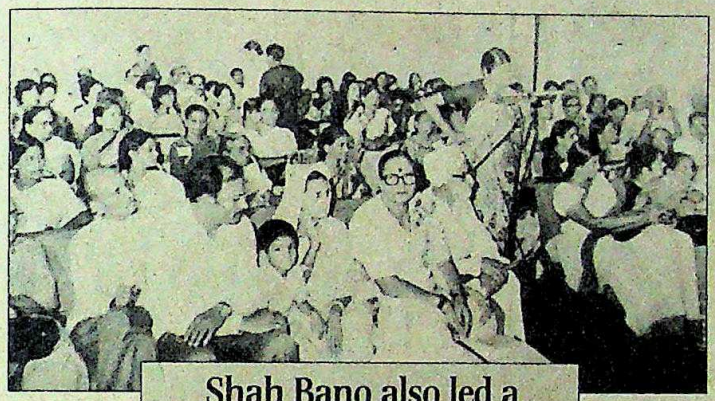
"This judgement will go down in history as a gross and shocking departure from judicial tradition... They have totally outstepped their jurisdiction."

G.M. BANATWALA
General Secretary
Indian Union Muslim League

IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT
President, Indian Union Muslim League

"No Muslim will ever tolerate any interference in the Shariat or personal law... It is obligatory to mould personal life according to the Shariat."



Shah Bano also led a delegation of women to the Prime Minister... urging the Government not to entertain any demand for amendment of Section 125.

ing maintenance to divorced Muslim women—Khan said was deceitful on the part of anyone to accept that part of the Shariat which suited him and reject those parts that again certain responsibilities. The former student leader of Aligarh Muslim University pointed out that a substantial provision had been made in MPL to protect women's rights. A husband's responsibility towards the woman he proposed to divorce and the manner in which it was to be effected were clearly laid down yet they were being blatantly flouted. *Talaq*, nowadays, was uttered thrice in a single breath to effect a divorce but the law laid down that a husband had to say it on three separate occasions and all the while the couple had to live together. Also, after divorce the man had to adequately provide for her. Substantial maintenance, even if it were a one-time transaction, was ordained by the holy book.

More important, the verdict came as a godsend to unassuming 70-year-old Shah Bano, who little realised the flap she would create when she filed a case with the first class judicial magistrate in Indore seeking maintenance of Rs 500 from her husband who had thrown her out of home. The proceedings dragged on till November 1978, when her husband Mohammed Ahmed Khan pronounced *talaq* thereby divorcing her. He argued that since she was no longer his wife, he was not entitled to pay her anything other than the *mehr* (promised at the time of marriage), maintenance for two years and during the three months of *iddat*. The magistrate, however, directed him to pay the princely sum of Rs 25 a month in August 1979, which the Madhya Pradesh High Court increased to the peculiar figure Rs 179.20 after Shah Bano appealed. An incensed Khan challenged the decision in the Supreme Court – though he was earning around Rs 5,000 a month from his legal practice. The rest is legal history.

Oddly enough, till the case went to the Supreme Court, no Muslim leader or organisation showed any interest. After the judgement, however, some conservative leaders were agitated over what they felt had brought into question the rituals of *nikaah*, wedding, and *talaq*, divorce. Argued Rahmani: "The judgement means a divorced woman continues to be wife until she remarries. In Islam two strangers are joined by *nikaah* and *talaq* means breaking of the tie. If after *nikaah* the two are not a couple and if after *talaq* the two are not separated, then everything becomes meaningless and illegal." He further argued that maintenance (*nafqua*) is in lieu of service to husband and the woman who has not done such service cannot be entitled to maintenance. Added Mujahidul Islam, considered an authority on the Islamic laws, "the wealth so obtained (through maintenance) on the part of the wife constitutes unlawful gain which is not permitted by our religion."

The verdict had its spin-offs in other places. In Calicut, a young divorced woman, Sainab, won the battle last month to secure maintenance for herself and her four-year-old son when the Kozhikode Additional District Magistrate ordered her husband to pay monthly maintenance of Rs 300 each to mother and son. Slightly different is the battle of Shahnaz Sheikh who has challenged many aspects of MPL on the grounds that they violate her fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Maltreated by her husband, who had married a second time, and then divorced, Shahnaz filed a case in court in 1983 challenging the MPL on three counts – *talaq*, polygamy and maintenance. Two months ago, B.R. Atre, additional legislative counsel with the Union of India filed a counter affidavit saying that Shahnaz's writ had no substance and pleaded that it be dismissed. These developments had unnerved the *ulema* and other Muslim leaders. Said Indian Union Muslim League President Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait angrily: "No Muslim will ever tolerate any interference in the Shariat or personal law. To remain a Muslim it is obligatory to mould personal life according to the Shariat." Some see it as an ominous first step towards a common civil code.

Events have now taken a turn with a memorandum presented to the prime minister on July 30 by an AIMPLB delegation seeking amendment of Section 125. A note has also been submitted giving a detailed explanation of Islamic laws and the effect the verdict has had. Around the same time Shah Bano also led a delegation of women to the prime minister and submitted a memorandum signed by 400 women urging the Government not to entertain any demand for amendment of Section 125. With battle lines drawn and talk of sacrifice in air, the outlook for the future is anything but peaceful.

—FARZAND AHMED

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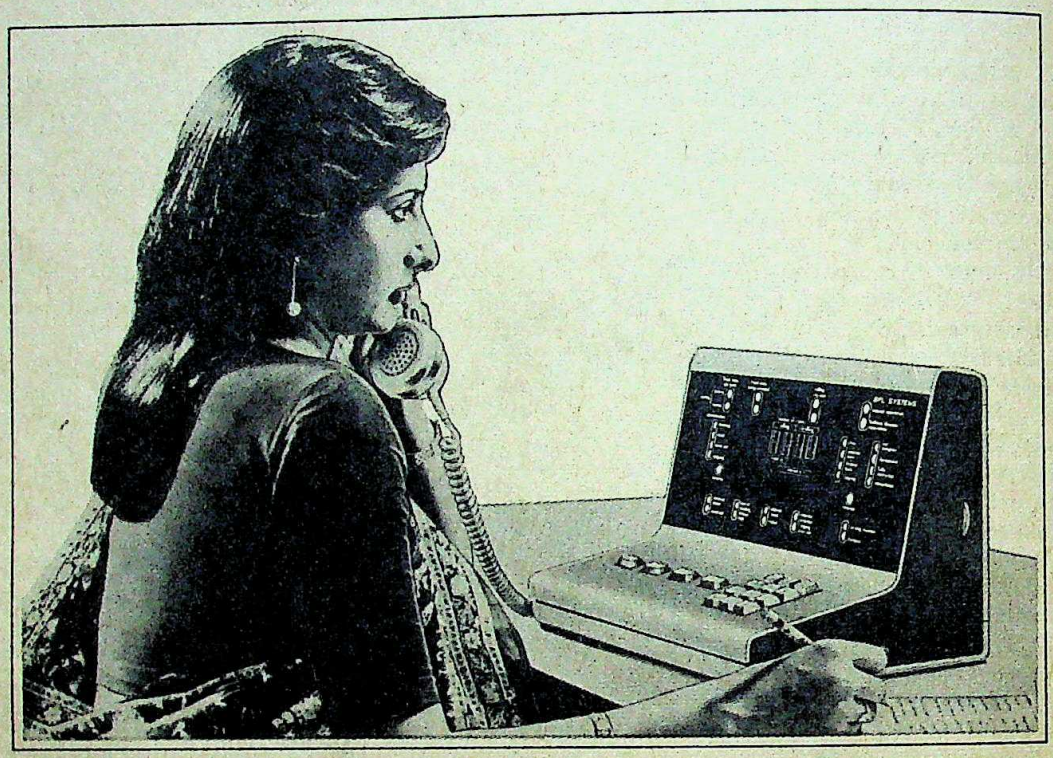

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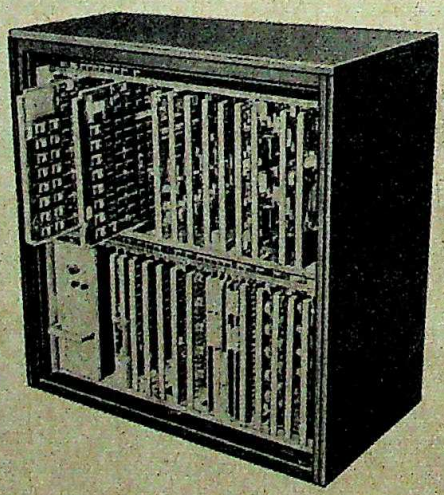

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THALASSAEMIA

The Doomed Children

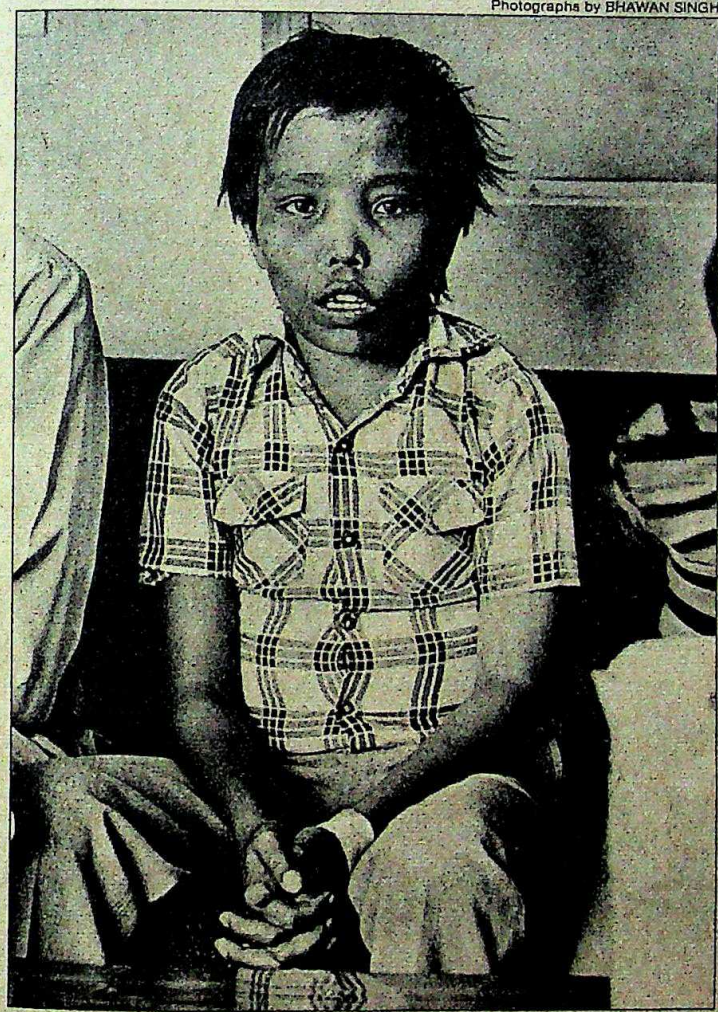
HAPPY Budhiraja, 16, of Delhi looks anything but what his name suggests. Instead his enlarged, grey complexioned face has a grim haunted look and his small stunted body appears to have been put together all wrong. He suffers from thalassaemia, a debilitating blood disease caused by the body's inability to produce red blood cells. His is not an isolated case but there are 240 other known victims of thalassaemia in Delhi, all between the ages of five and 20. They live in an agonising limbo, alternating between extreme lassitude and brief spells of normalcy. And more than anything else, these children live with the crushing certainty of a premature death. Few will survive through the teens. Most of the 72 thalassaemic children who have succumbed to this incurable illness in recent months were in their teens or even younger.

Happy is one of the two surviving children of Madan Lal Budhiraja. His is a family decimated by thalassaemia; three other sons have died and now Happy is afflicted. Happy does not attend school, because doctors warned that any injury could be fatal. He needs two bottles of blood every fortnight but often has to make do with one. Happy's sister is the only healthy child out of five. The curse has shattered other families too, where parents of tender mettle just gave up. Neerja is a schoolteacher, whose husband, an officer in the Central Government, deserted her only because she bore two thalassaemic children. One of them died and now she is bringing up the other one alone.

More heart-rending and tragic is the story of a hapless 20-year-old mother who committed suicide because she could not stand the fortnightly sight of doctors probing for a vein in the tiny arm of her year-old daughter. Now the girl's widowed father brings her to the Red Cross blood bank for blood transfusions which alone can prolong a life doomed to end prematurely.

Delhi at least has a couple of organisations which recognise the problem and do something about it. But what is the fate of similar children in other cities? How many of them have already died without knowing what they were afflicted with? The General Secretary of the newly formed Thalassaemia Foundation of India, C.L. Juneja, fears that country-wide, thalassaemia may be responsible for up to 10 per cent of the deaths of infants under one year. "Most people and even most doctors are not aware of the problem," says Juneja.

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



Blood transfusions are essential to keep these children alive and active; they live on borrowed blood. Most of them need a transfusion every fortnight and this painful ordeal has turned many of them into psychological cases: their veins have been damaged by frequent punctures and they cringe at the sight of a hypodermic needle. Six-year-old Ashima needs blood every 20 days and "sometimes the technicians cannot find her vein and 25 pricks are needed to locate it", says her father Vijay Wadhwa, 36, a motor parts dealer of Kashmere Gate.

But by far the worse predicament is of parents who see their children wasting away before their eyes. Dr M.L.Gupta, in charge of the Red Cross blood bank in Delhi, said: "The parents are fighting a losing battle. These children are practically living corpses..." Helpless, Wadhwa admits morosely: "We know such children have to go in a few years." The Wadhwas have resigned themselves to the inevitability of losing their pretty daughter, just as they lost a son some years ago.

There are two forms of thalassaemia. Thalassaemia trait (or thalassaemia minor) which is not a disease and thalassaemia major, which is fatal. People with thalassaemia trait are healthy and

Happy Budhiraja (above); and parents of affected children at the Red Cross blood bank: living in limbo

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it is found in the blood of about 17 per cent Indians, mainly Punjabis and Sindhis. If a person with thalassaemia trait marries a person with normal blood there is a 50 per cent chance that their children will have thalassaemia trait. But when both parents have thalassaemia trait, there is a 25 per cent chance that their child will have thalassaemia major and 50 per cent chance of becoming a carrier of thalassaemia trait.

Children with thalassaemia major are normal at birth but become severly anaemic between three months and 18 months. Doctors say that most of them have a haemoglobin count of 6 to 7 grams and in some cases it falls to 2 grams in summer. It should normally be 10 to 12 grams. Untreated, they die before the age of eight. Chronic anaemia weakens the heart, lowers resistance to disease and generally shortens the lifespan. The growth of such children becomes stunted, their facial bones start protruding and the skin gets dark and discoloured because of the excess iron in the system. Their sex organs are underdeveloped and the girls don't start menstruation in time. A man of 25 looks like an adolescent 15-year-old.

The only treatment is regular blood transfusions and some children need to have the spleen removed because it becomes enlarged and starts breaking down the red blood cells in the transfused blood. Parents of modest means are unable to afford or arrange prompt splenectomy operations for their thalassaemic children; in private clinics the operation costs at least Rs 10,000 and there is a long waiting-list in government hospitals. About two dozen children who urgently need to have enlarged spleens removed line up hopefully in the corridors of crowded Delhi hospitals every week to enquire if their turn has come.

Getting sufficient blood is not the only problem. An expensive treatment to reduce iron accumulation—a side-effect—has also to be undergone. The first problem of blood supply was sorted out some years ago when the Red Cross blood bank offered free blood to thalassaemia patients as long as it was available. But whenever there is a calamity or disaster like the recent bomb blasts in Delhi, there is a rush on the blood banks, and the first sufferers in the blood shortage are the thalassaemics. They then have to run to commercial blood banks and buy expensive blood of suspect quality (from professional blood sellers). The Red Cross blood bank needs 400 bottles of blood every month for thalassaemics alone. But it does not have transfusion facilities. "These children need special care and expert handling to ensure that their delicate veins do not get damaged by repeated transfusions, but that kind of care is not always available," complains Juneja of the Thalassaemia Foundation.

Gupta: fighting a losing battle

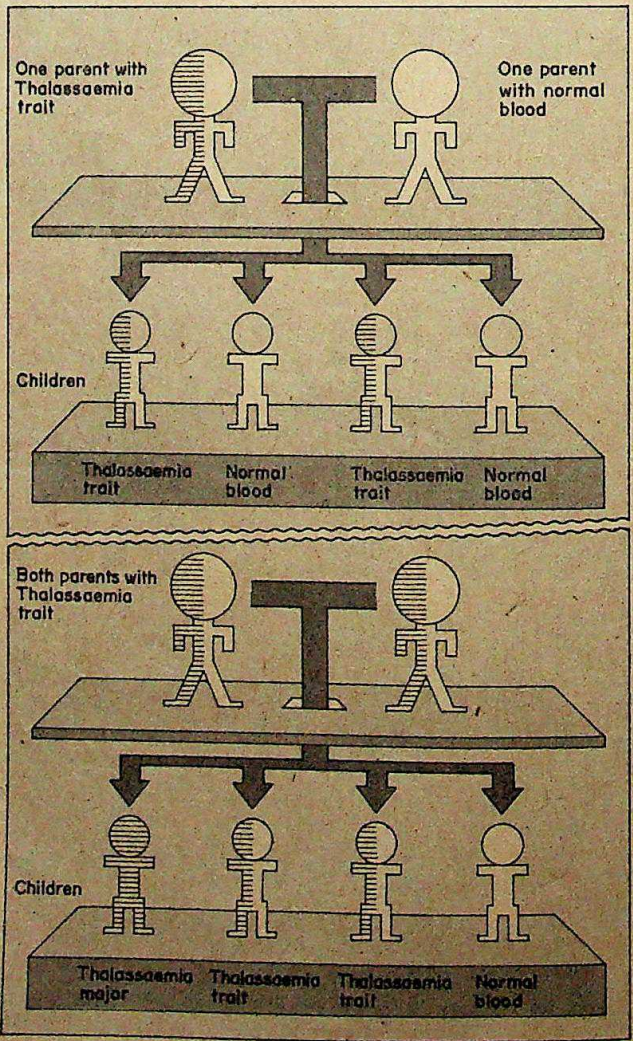

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

Because the disease is not widely recognised, there is a general lack of knowledge and awareness. Ashima Wadhwa desperately needs Desferal, a drug that combats the build up of iron in the body but was advised by a doctor not to take it. There are even instances of doctors prescribing iron tablets—which can be fatal. Some children die because blood is not available and others because transfusion facilities are not available. Ideally there should be a clinic during evening or night hours for working parents to bring in their children. "To keep these children alive we need at least Rs 24 lakh a year," said Dr Gupta of the Red Cross.

Regular blood transfusions cause iron accumulation when the red blood cells are used up but the iron content is retained. The treatment for this is infinitely more expensive. The transfused blood has to be passed through a leucocyte (white cell) filter which costs Rs 100 a piece. And to expel the accumulated iron, the patient has to be given two Desferal injections daily, at Rs 30 a injection. The monthly cost of treatment is approximately Rs 1,800. Only three of the 200 affected children in Delhi receive this treatment. As the heart is weakened by intermittent spells of anaemia and iron, heart attacks are the commonest cause of death.

Fortunately, the New Delhi Municipal Committee hospital has recently opened a thalassaemia clinic to provide transfusion facilities, leucocyte filters and even Desferal injections to about 50 children. A small beginning, for some other Sarojini is still needed to alleviate the misery of the other 170-odd children who need similar treatment. Such clinics should also have counsellors to advise people to get their blood tested for thalassaemia trait before marriage, to avoid having children if both partners have the gene.

Tragically, thalassaemia is still to be taken seriously by the Government and the medical profession. And till such time the unfortunate children like Hari have nothing to look forward to but a painful and terribly premature death.

—RAMINDAR S...

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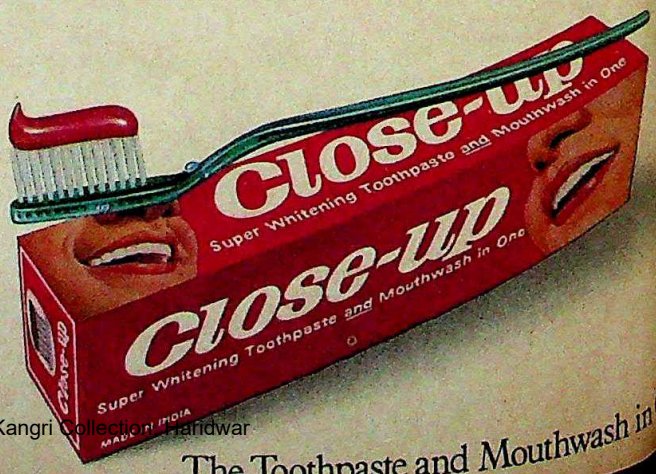

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ANDHRA PRADESH

A Rich Find

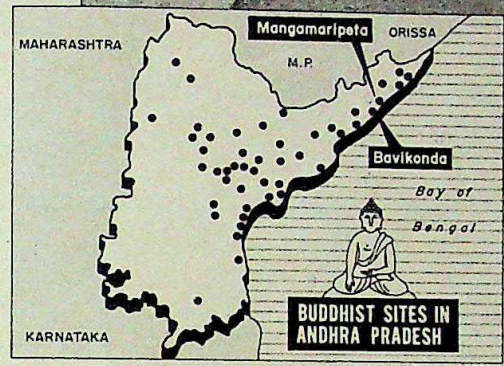
NO OTHER religion has the kind of mystical and ethereal associations as Buddhism. But more than a religion, it is a way of life that seems as timeless and unending as a prayer wheel in motion. For archaeologists specialising in its heritage, Buddhism offers a rich and bottomless bounty with every now and then an ancient *stupa* or *vihara* emerging from the mists of time as if by some design. Like last fortnight, when the archaeological community was abuzz with excited anticipation regarding the latest Buddhist excavation which has unearthed a well-preserved monastery buried under a mound in deserted Bavikonda, off the Madras-Calcutta highway and a mere 17 km north-east of the port city of Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

The site was first spotted by an Indian Navy aircraft on a reconnaissance mission in 1974. But it was not until last fortnight that the state archaeological directorate team led by Dr V.V.Krishna Sastry was able to successfully excavate the remains of the monastery and draw the preliminary conclusions.

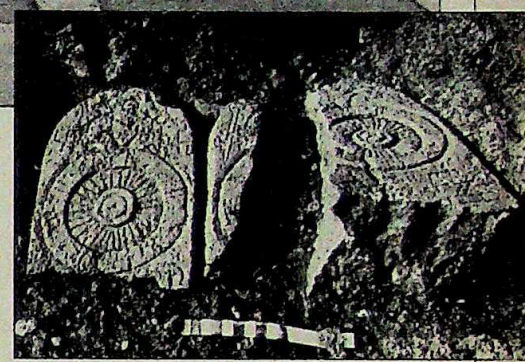
According to Dr Sastry, despite the extreme humidity and the ravages of nature, the site is virtually undisturbed. The partly excavated mound shows evidence of an advanced civilisation that is believed to have existed between 150 BC and 200 AD. Beneath the scrub and natural rock formations, the archaeologists identified the unmistakable brick architecture of a Buddhist monastery. Besides the *mahastupa*, the site has the ruins of three small *stupas* and three *chaityas* (smaller shrines)—two apsidal and one circular.

All these shrines are of the Hinayana school, which did not believe in idol worship or *avatars* like the later schools. Though no relics were found at Bavikonda, the archaeologists did find three Roman coins — two of Emperor Tiberius' reign and one of Augustus Ceasar's. This served to strengthen the belief that the Bavikonda ruins are at least 1,800 years old.

Photographs taken by the archaeological team show that the floor in front of the entry points to the *mahastupa* (main shrine) and the *viharas* (residential sections) are plastered with packed rubble and a coat of lime. The entrances of the main *stupa* leading to the *pradikshanapada* (circular path or inner circle) are enclosed by a brick railing. At a higher level opposite the southern entrance is a broken slab of *Buddhapadas* (Buddha's footprints). The triangular *vihara* apparently had 51 rooms and a congregation hall on its northern side. But these are only tentative guesses. The real picture will emerge only when the excavation of the 10-acre site is completed, which Dr Sastry thinks will take at least another two years.



Map by B.K. SHARMA



The *mahastupa* in Bavikonda (above); and the *Buddhapadas*: divine heritage

The naval aircraft had also identified another likely site in Mangamaripeta but the archaeological team decided to explore Bavikonda first as it is a smaller mound and not as steep and difficult. Says Dr Sastry: "Digging along slopes is tricky and takes longer. But Mangamaripeta will be easier once we get going. The contours of the settlement are already visible. It will hopefully give us clues as to how and why Buddhism flourished in this part of the country."

The Mangamaripeta excavation, however, will have to wait till the archaeologists finish with the Bavikonda site. Funds and manpower are scarce and the directorate can concentrate on only one site at a time.

The greatest enigma about the 47 identified Buddhist sites in Andhra Pradesh is that they possibly hold clues about how Buddhism spread in the state and who spread it. Equally intriguing, and at the same time self-explanatory, is the fact that neighbouring Karnataka has only two known Buddhist sites and Kerala and Tamil Nadu have none while there are a number of sites across the Palk Straits in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism is a major religion even today. Sastry surmises that Buddhism at Bavikonda can possibly be ascribed to the Satvahanas who were powerful and tolerant rulers from circa 200 BC to 230 AD. The facts, however, will be certain only after cross-checks with manuscripts or inscriptions. Inscriptions have been found at some of the sites but most of the relevant manuscripts are available only in Tibet and China. This has made the work of Indian historians studying the influence of Buddhism more difficult. "Eventually, we have to pore over the travelogues of Chinese travellers Fa Hien and Huen Tsang to understand the spread of Buddhism in India," Dr Sastry says.

But like the travels of Hien and Tsang, exploration is a painfully slow process and the shortage of funds only adds to the archaeologists' troubles. Andhra Pradesh, for instance, spends less than Rs 2 lakh a year on archaeological excavations and it is therefore not surprising that only 15 of the 47 identified sites have been dug up so far (*see map*). Indian archaeologists feel that without more funds and opportunities for research in collaboration with other interested countries like China, much of India's past religious history will be lost in the dark shadows of time.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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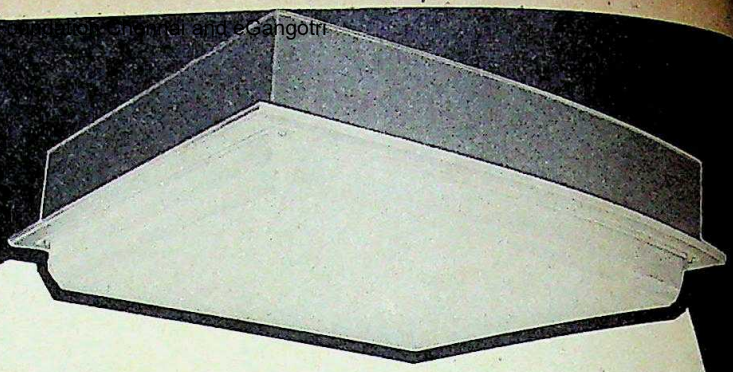

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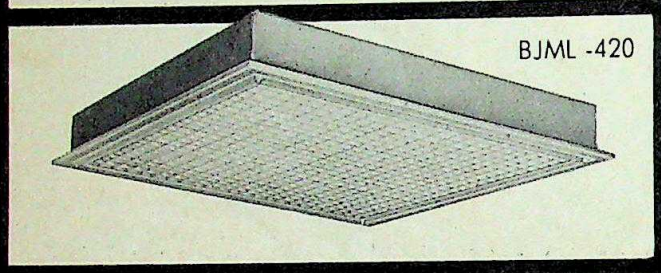

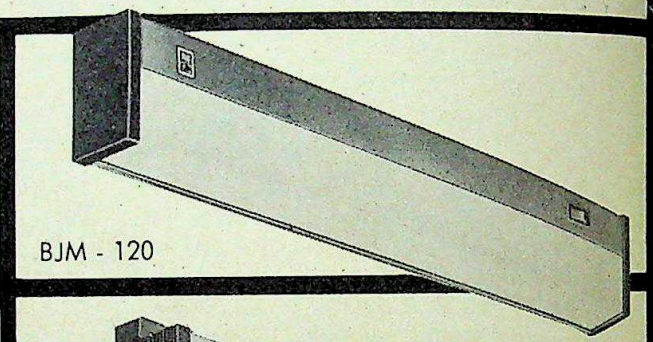

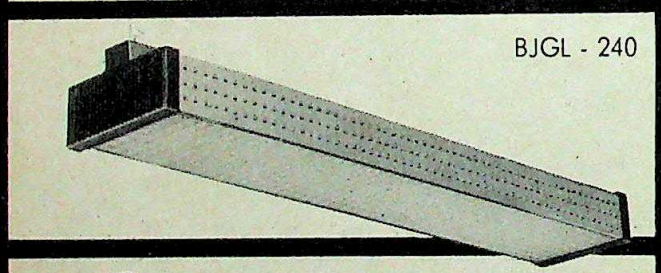

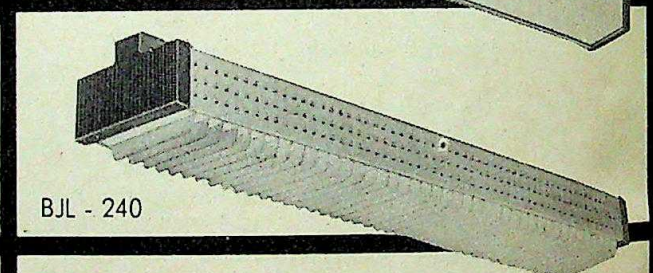

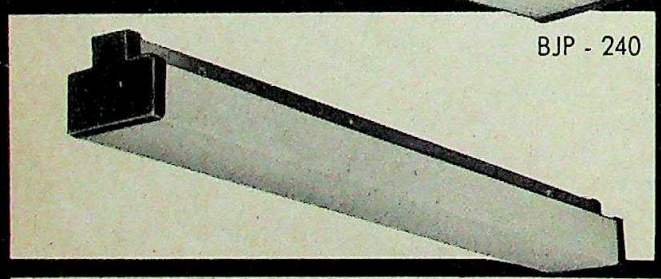

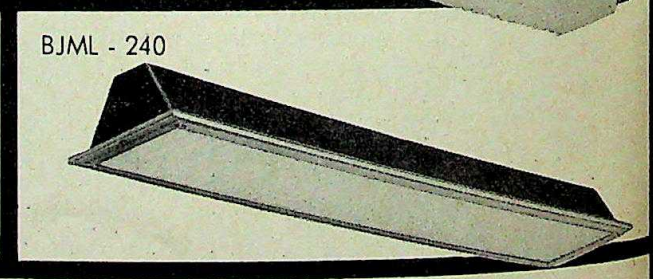

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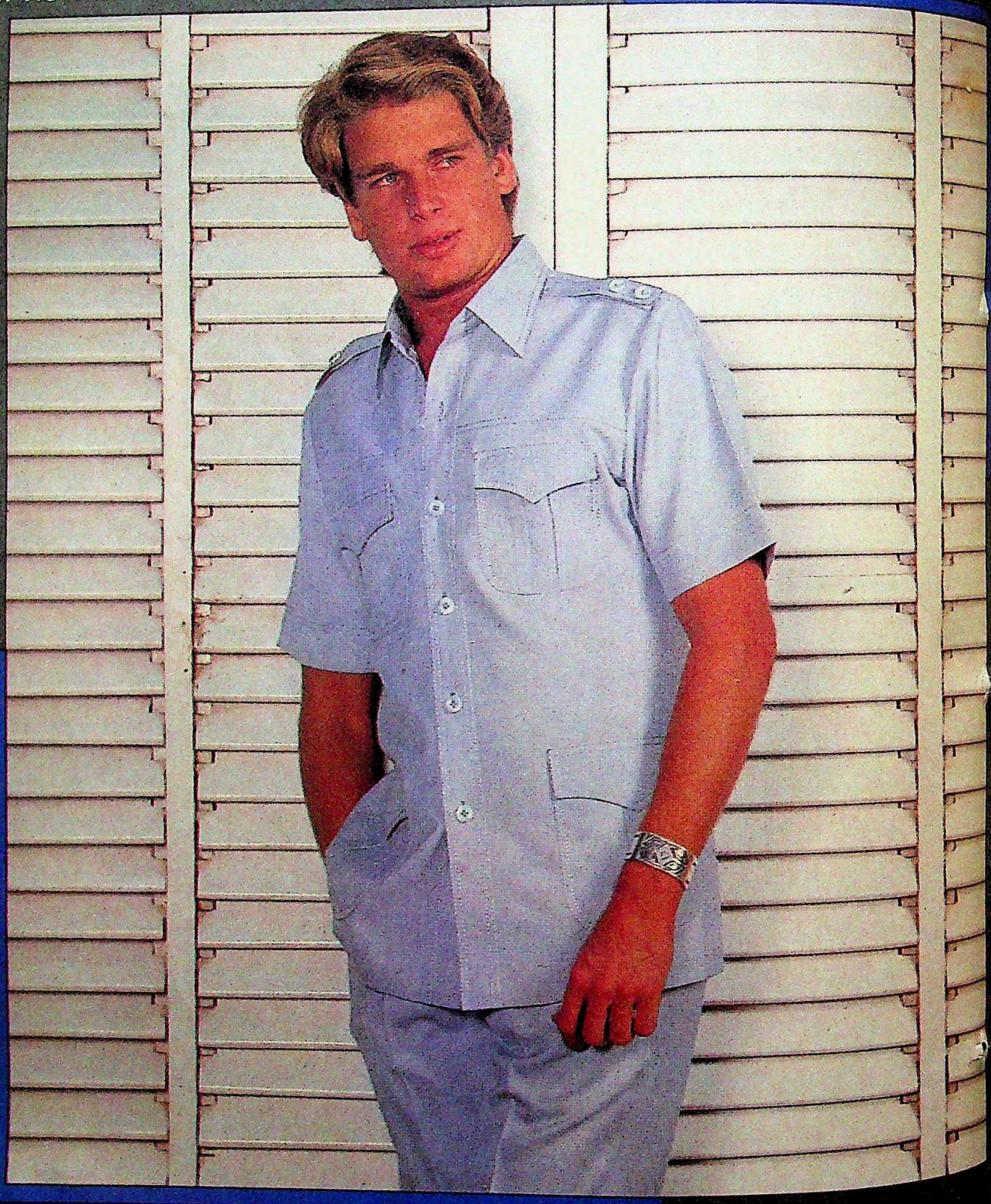

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NEUROLOGY

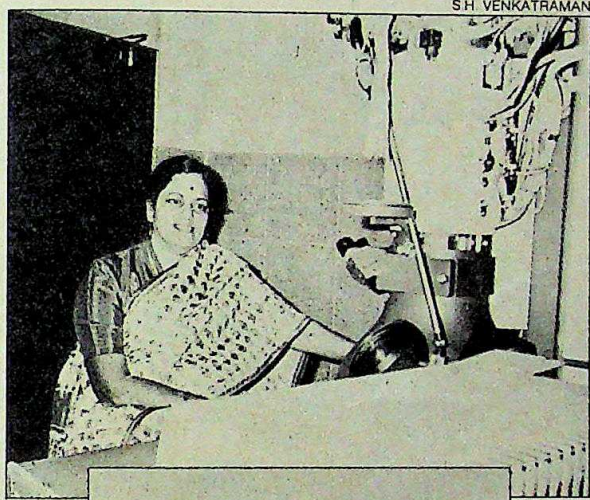
The Better Brain

THE LITTLE grey cells in Indian brains have a lot going for them. Recent medical research by some neuropathologists and neurologists has produced the interesting revelation that in Indians, brains grow senile and degenerate much slower than westerners and the number of senile persons in India is far less than that abroad. In other words, the researchers claim, the Indian brain retains its agility and sharpness much longer.

That is, of course, quite a claim. But it doesn't faze Professor R. Sarasa Bharati, head of the department of neuropathology at the Madras Medical College who has done her M.D and Ph.D. in brain tumours and devoted all her time to the study of the brain and nerve cells. It was Bharati's pioneering work which has led researchers to this startling conclusion. Basing their findings on the detailed observation of the formation of so-called senile plaques or patchy substances in the grey matter of the brain which obstruct free and quick communication between nerve cells, medical analysts say that such plaques form in the brains of very few Indians even after they cross the age of 60 whereas westerners begin to have senile patches in their brains when they cross 40 and nearly 40 per cent of the western population have senile patches by the age of 60. In India, there has been positive clinical evidence of senility only among people over 80 and that too very rarely. Says Bharati: "I have examined over 150 brains of people over 60 years of age over the last six years. Not even in one brain could I observe the formation of senile plaques although nearly 10 brains seemed to be in the initial stages of plaque formation. We can't, however, definitely say that plaques would have formed in these brains had the persons continued to live because the process of brain ageing can go on to a little extent and then stop. So I think the formation of senile plaques in Indians around the age of 60 is practically nil."

These findings, when presented at the International Women Doctors Conference in Toronto last year, were corroborated by the observations of other neuropathologists working in different Indian cities. The senile plaque forms at the point of contact between one nerve cell and another blocking the communication channels between different nerve cells and retarding the activity of the brain. But tangles of fibres within the nerve cells themselves can also impair the normal agility and resilience of the cells and thereby make the brain age and senile. Also called neurofibrillary tangles, they are further evidence of the degeneration of nerve cells and the brain. Medical studies have revealed that nearly 15 per cent of westerners over 60 have such tangles in their brains. Says Bharati emphatically: "Such tangles have not been spotted in Indian brains at all. In all the brains which came for autopsy and which I examined, I haven't seen a single neurofibrillary tangle." And her observations have been done by studying the brains under a powerful electron microscope—the first of its kind in India—which magnifies the minutest brain segments an incredible 1.2 million times.

S.H. VENKATRAMAN



> "I have examined over 150 brains of people over 60...the formation of senile plaques in Indians of that age is practically nil."
>
> Professor R. Sarasa Bharati

Some other symptoms of degeneration have also not been seen, or seen very rarely, in Indian brains. For instance, pre-senile dementia is very common in the West, so common that it was once even known as a killer disease. But it is practically absent in India. Even more curious is the case of multiple sclerosis—a disease in which the nerve processors (lines of contact that radiate from every nerve cell) lose their sheaths or what is called in medical terms as myelin. It is quite common in the West with an estimated 5 per cent of the population suffering from it. Artherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries is seen rarely in India but is a deep-rooted medical problem in the West.

Medical investigators, however, have yet to come out with a definite statement in scientific terms detailing the result of their researches. This is because the number of human brains that have been available for microscopic analysis has been small compared to the number of old people in the country. As Dr K. Jagannathan, neurologist at the Government General Hospital in Madras, put it: "The autopsy rate in India is less than 1 per cent so we cannot draw any firm conclusions about Indian brains. But still it is factually correct to say that evidence of senility has been far less in India compared to the West." Added Dr K. Logamuthukrishnan, neuro-surgeon at the same hospital: "In spite of a low autopsy rate, we can say both in terms of autopsies done and clinical diagnosis that senility among Indians is far less when viewed against its prevalence in the West."

In fact, there is some interesting chemistry to be unravelled in tackling the problem of senility. While zinc and magnesium are normally present in the human brain—for exactly what purpose is not known—aluminium has been seen in the senile plaque formations. Further, medical investigators and researchers have yet to understand what is ageing and degeneration of the brain and how it happens. In fact brain cells are very sturdy, and with adequate and continuous supplies of oxygen and glucose, can survive and function for nearly 200 years. But that apart, researchers are more concerned with the question of why Indian brains show fewer physical symptoms of senility than their western counterparts.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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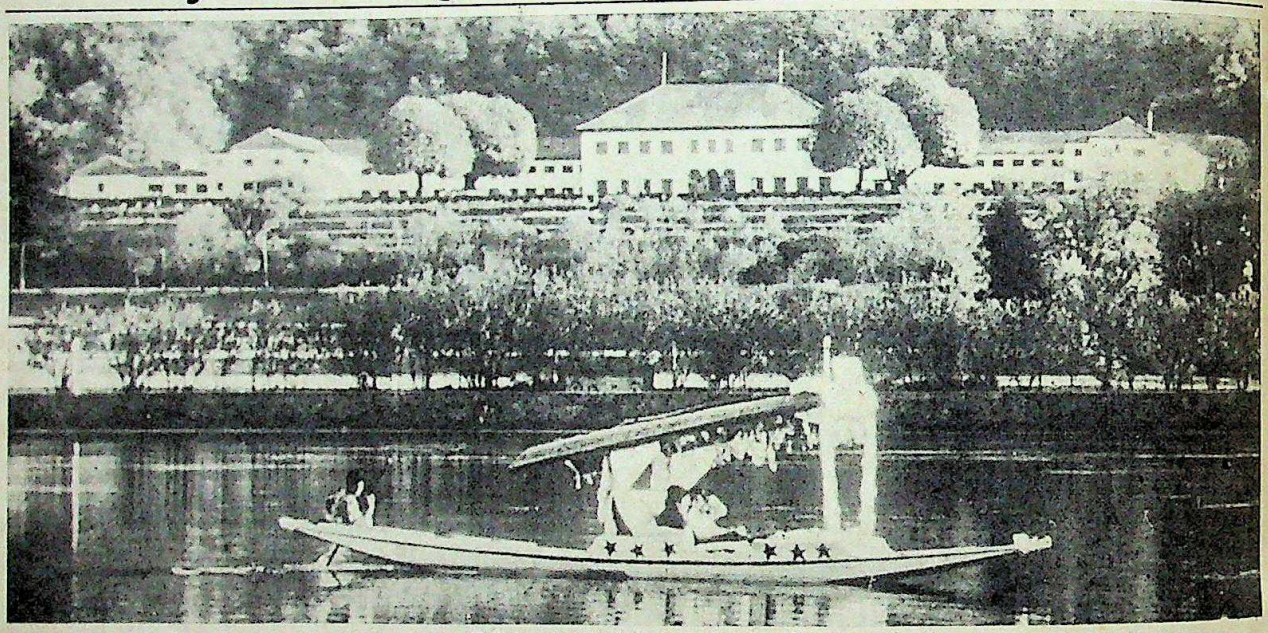

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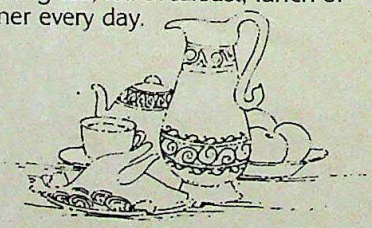

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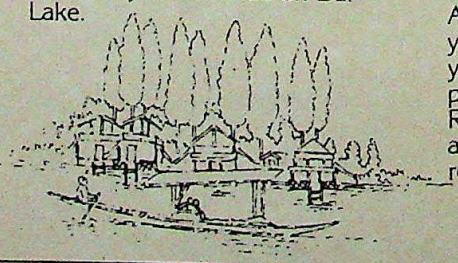

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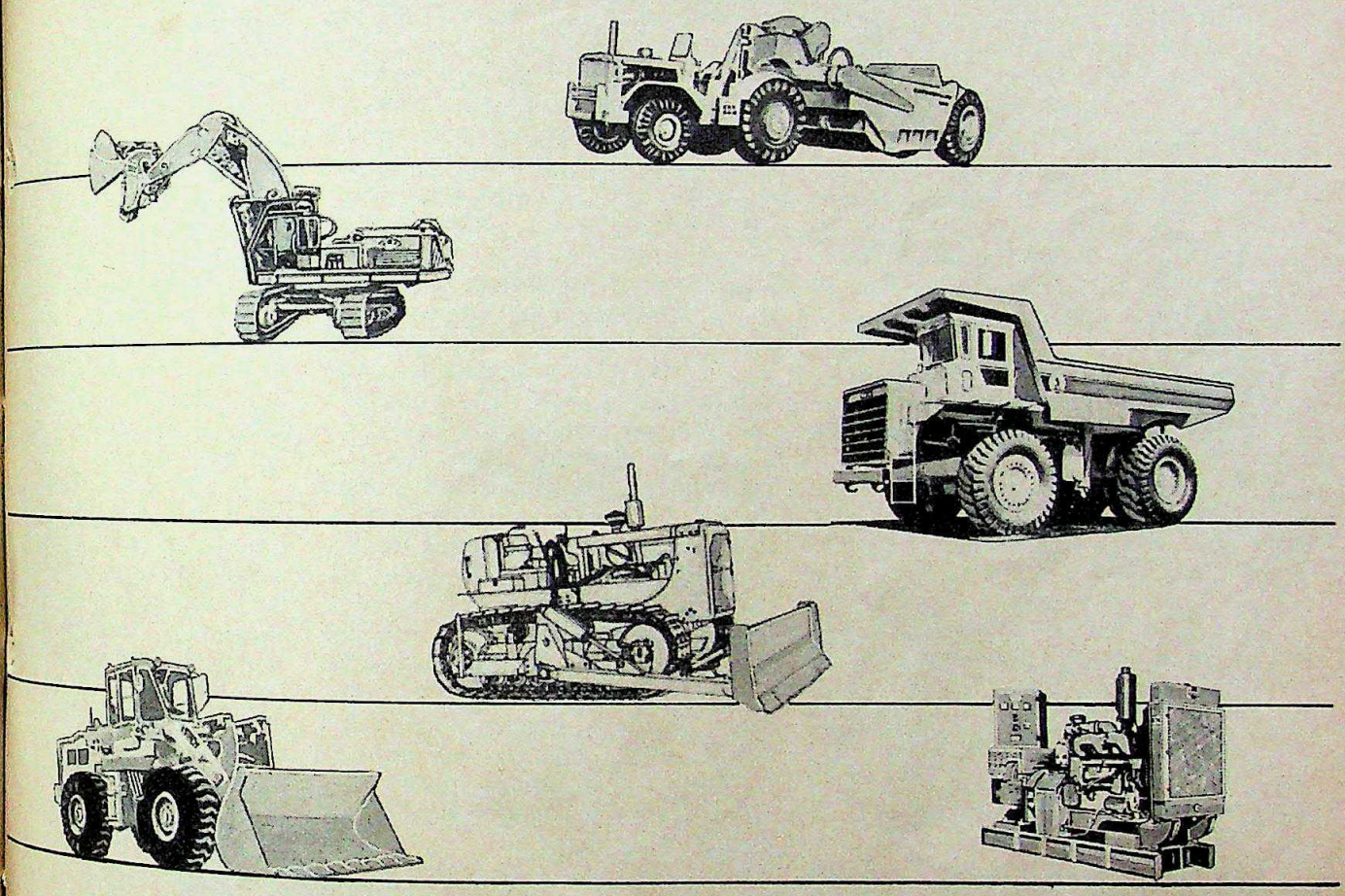

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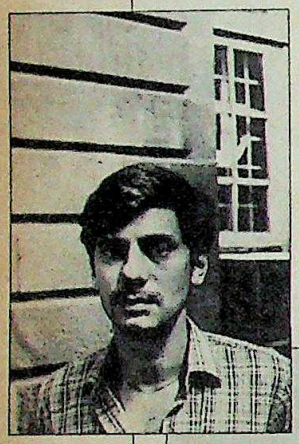
MERCHANT NAVY

A Sea of Sorrow

KAMAL Wadhawan, 26, is a thin-faced lad from Delhi who can be seen most evenings at the Seaman's Club in Bombay's salt-sprayed Ballard Estate playing billiards on the club's run-down table. Three years ago, after graduating from *Rajendra*, the training ship for merchant navy officers, he served as a cadet on board a ship belonging to a reputed shipping company, passed his second mate's examination, and sailed with the company. After a year at sea, he asked for leave to get married.

On his return, however, he was told that his services had been terminated. Wadhawan took a loan from his wife to acquire a moped agency, hoping to pay it back with the Rs 50,000 his company owed him in arrears. But even after 17 reminders, the company failed to pay his dues. Wadhawan's marriage, barely half a year old, was on the rocks and the pair finally separated. Today, Wadhawan is unemployed and cannot get a decent job because he is not a graduate and lives a hand to mouth existence on money borrowed from others. Says he bitterly: "The day I decided to join the merchant navy was the beginning of my troubles and there is no end to them"



KAMAL WADHAWAN, 26
unemployed

"The day I decided to join the merchant navy was the beginning of my troubles and there is no end to them."

Wadhawan has one small consolation: he is not alone in his jobless misery. More than 300 qualified second mates like him have been without jobs for the last two years and are either living on borrowed money or are underemployed in jobs which they were not trained to do. Their miserable situation gives the lie to the myth about the highly-paid glamorous life of the merchant navy. Says Vibhash Sarvania, 24, second mate who now works in the cargo claims department of the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI): "They lured us with visions of a glorious career. Now I am pushing a pen at a desk instead of keeping watch on a ship." Others who feel similarly let down:

► Arun Bhardwaj, 23, was denied a job by the SCI despite completing the training successfully, and had to take up a clerk's job with the Life Insurance Corporation.

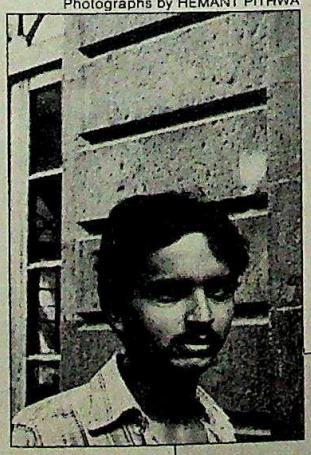
► Sanjay Handa, 22, a topper from his Jalandhar school threw up an engineering course to join *Rajendra* and later the SCI as a cadet only to find that the corporation had no job for him when he got his second mate's ticket. Now a construction assistant in Delhi he gets Rs 600 a month.

► Anuroop Chauhan, 21, passed up a seat in the prestigious Delhi School of Planning and Architecture for "the lure of the sea". But after serving the SCI for two-and-a-half years and obtaining the second mate's certificate, he still has no job.

► Sandeep Beecha, 23, got his certificate of competency as second mate last year, and also a vague promise from the SCI that he would get a job after four or five years. Now he is security officer at the Palika Bazaar car park in New Delhi.

These are all trained officers who should have been earning Rs 4,000 a month. They have already spent nearly Rs 6,000 for their training and most have served on board the SCI's cadet ships for paltry stipends and worked long hours towards the coveted second mate's certificate. Today they blame the powers that be and especially the SCI, which accounts for 70 per cent of jobs for their plight. Atul Tyagi, 25, who has been without a job for over two years now says that he sometimes skips a day's meals to cut down expenses: "They should stop running those attractive stories in *Reader's Digest* saying what a magnificent life the merchant navy offers us."

Photographs by HEMANT PITHWA



VIBHASH SARVANIA, 24
cargo claims dept of SCI

"They lured us with visions of a glorious career. Now I'm pushing a pen at a desk instead of keeping watch on a ship."

The reason why all these merchant navy officers have been cast adrift is partly the result of the current slump in the shipping industry. But more obviously because of mismanagement and planning by the authorities concerned, which meant that there were more officers in the pipeline than the country needed. The second mates point the finger at SCI and later this month the first three on a petition in the Supreme Court affirming this is coming up for hearing. The basic assertion in the petition is that SCI took a bond from all the *Rajendra* graduates who joined it as cadets to serve with the company for a period of five years after they obtained their second mate certificate and that they were required to pay the corporation Rs 50,000 as bond money in case they did not join. While officials refuse to comment on the petition, they assert that the terms of agreement under which the second mates were taken also say that if the company cannot provide employment, then he is free to seek a job elsewhere. Says Capt. R. Kohli, technical director, SCI: "Not of them can be absorbed on our ships. This is a time of slump and there are just no vacancies."

But SCI is the biggest employer of second mates—it absorbs about 70 per cent of the *Rajendra*'s graduates—and its inability to hire more of the young officers is one of the prime causes of their misery. Moreover the corporation is accused of continuing its system of direct recruitment well into the '70s, when it was clear that a slump was coming. In short, it aggravated the crisis: there were simply too many officers. Most important, the SCI is the respondent in a suit filed by a group of unemployed and underemployed second mates saying that the company is legally bound to employ them as officers. They cannot get jobs elsewhere simply because there are none to be had.

The seamen have another grouse: they say that the SCI's decision to convert as many as 2[illegible]

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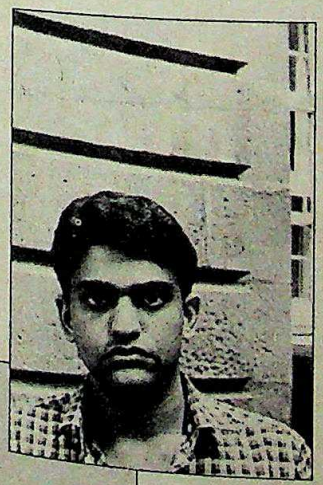
ships into cadet ships by 1983—the
ormal cadet complement of a ship is two
ree but the SCI at one time carried 20
ets on a ship—was simply to exploit
as cheap labour. The petition lists
names of nine accidental deaths and
suicides — among them D. Dash
died on SCI duty when he was
ed against the side of the *Vishwa*
in October 1984. The complainants
they were made to work long hours.
nia, who spent 23 months on SCI
says they once worked 72 hours at a
to clean the holds. "They used us
g labour, because they knew that
them a fourth in wages of a normal
and that we would do work
regular seamen wouldn't," he says
SCI officials call the charge
" and add that the cadet-ship
me was activated to ensure a
supply of officers to fulfil the
ally burgeoning demand.

The second mates tell a different tale.
Tandon, 24, who left his engi-
college in Ahmedabad and has
without a job for the last two years:
has given a few of us desk jobs on
with a consolidated pay of Rs
month and no other allowances.
not fooling us ? If they employ a
officer on the 70-odd ships they
and none of them is laid up—they
easily provide employment to half of
others assert that if not full employ-
the shipping companies could take
on for six months at a time to keep
skills from rusting. "After you
been to sea for a long time, your
weaken," says Vinod
24, now working in
at a desk job.
ternative and com-
employment is
sible for the second
as they are not
for anything else
because they are te-
not graduates.
Mohan Singh
25, hails from



NAVAL BHATIA, 23
unemployed

"Why didn't they think of the slump when they continued taking cadets? It's a callous attitude to the best talent leaving schools."

Ranchi and was pursuing a science course at Delhi University when the call of the sea brought him to *Rajendra* and unemployment five years later. Says Lamba: "The SCI gave me a temporary no-objection certificate so that I could find a job but who's going to employ me? All I know is how to run a cargo ship?" Lamba recounts how, after months of trying, he was offered a job at the Bombay Port Trust—Rs 1,000 a month all told and "means of transportation"—a bicycle "Who do they think we are? We are officers, not chaprasis."

The genesis of the problem lies, paradoxically, in the shipping boom of the late '60s and early '70s when Indian companies were buying about 15 ships a year. At that time there was an acute shortage of trained officers and Captain Kohli of the SCI says half-jokingly that Indian officers went around with their resignations in their pockets and often ships were manned by only two officers who alternated watches—the legal requirement is three officers: master (the captain), first mate and second mate, who are supposed to divide the day into three eight-hour watches.

Part of the shortage was due to the demand by foreign shipping companies for well-trained Indian officers—then trained on the *Dufferin*, a converted Ist World War troop carrier. At one time, a large number of vessels flying the Liberian and Panamanian standards were manned by Indians, working for salaries roughly four times what they would get in Indian companies. In 1977, the *Rajendra* course was shortened from two years to one year, effectively doubling its intake of aspiring captains. It was also the year that the SCI and a few other companies began taking in direct entry cadets. The result was that about 500 boys out of school joined the training programmes every year from 1977 to 1981 with 25 second mates coming into the market every month.

Unfortunately, 1977 was when the shipping slump began. Apparently nobody had anticipated this and by the time the SCI stopped taking direct entry cadets and the *Rajendra* cut down its intake by half last year, it was too late and hundreds of recruits were already in training. Naval Bhatia, 23, of Dehra Dun who joined the SCI after the *Rajendra* as an apprentice and has done nothing except pound the pavements in search of a job for the last 18 months, says: "Why didn't they think of the slump when they continued taking cadets ? It's a callous attitude to what is the best talent leaving schools."

There is, however, some hope on the horizon. For the last few weeks now the authorities at the Mercantile Marine Department and the Indian National Shipowners Association (INSA) have sat down to find out what can be done about the 300-odd highly trained—the government investment in them in terms of training subsidy comes to nearly Rs 1 crore—officers now on the streets. The solution is obvious: employ them as fourth officers on board ships, of which there are enough to accommodate all the unemployed second mates. Says Captain P.S.Barve, nautical advisor in charge, Mercantile Marine Department: "We have talked to INSA and they're going to get back to us in two weeks with a package deal."

PREET MOHAN SINGH LAMBA, 25
unemployed

"The company gave me a temporary no-objection certificate so I could find a job but who's going to employ me?"

The one obstacle to the arrangement whereby the second mates will go on board each ship is the SCI which says that unless the court case is cleared they cannot take any action. However, the corporation is not averse to the idea though the next few months are crucial for the future of the current crop of 300 unemployed. Says Bali: "All we can do is wait or try and get a degree and graduate and look for other jobs. But the sea is what we are trained for and at the moment we can't think of anything else." Captain Barve is as philosophical: "Look, after five years the slump will end. Then you will need trained manpower. These are bad times but I am sure that good times cannot but follow." But till then, the second mates are likely to drift rudderless in their sea of sorrow.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI
with SUMIT MITRA

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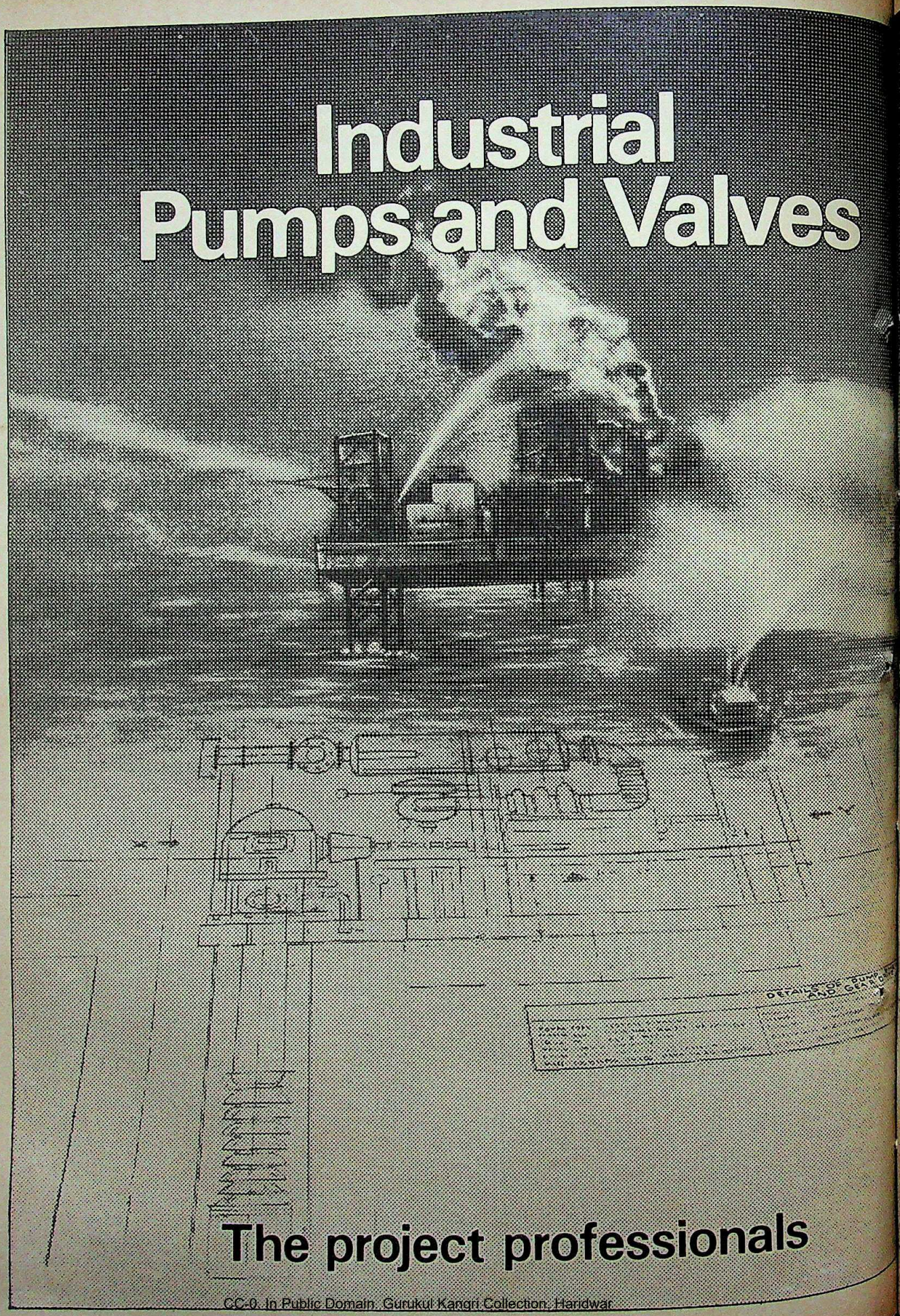

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CITIZENS' REPORT

Saving the Good Earth

SOME things need strong medicine, and it is symptomatic of the popular attitude to environment issues that it took a disaster like the Bhopal gas deaths last year to shake this country out of its complacency. For years, the worriers of the country's environment had been shouting themselves hoarse saying that India's chemical industry is the most dangerous one in the country using pesticides that are banned or severely restricted in the West. Bhopal had drama, tension and so India and the world listened. But there is much else happening in this vast country—quietly. Forests are being chopped down at the staggering rate of 1.3 million hectares a year, every river is choked with rubbish, greedy cities are gobbling up precious agricultural land—tragedies that have affected the lives of many more than a single Bhopal has.

But Bhopal has made the country receptive to the environment. And so an extraordinary 400-page volume *The State of India's Environment 1984-85* released last week should fall on more eager ears. It is the second citizens' report. The first one released three years ago, was unique in that it was the first time a group of concerned citizens—without any government funding—had attempted the monumental task of studying all aspects of India's environment. It was a great success. The second report should have a wider audience and greater success. It is well-researched, crisply written and even entertaining. It is investigative journalism at its unflinching best. Edited by Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), it has used the information and expertise of 24 voluntary organisations and 54 environmentalists spread across the country, studying the ecological processes that newspapers seldom bother about, providing thus more than a snapshot—an overview.

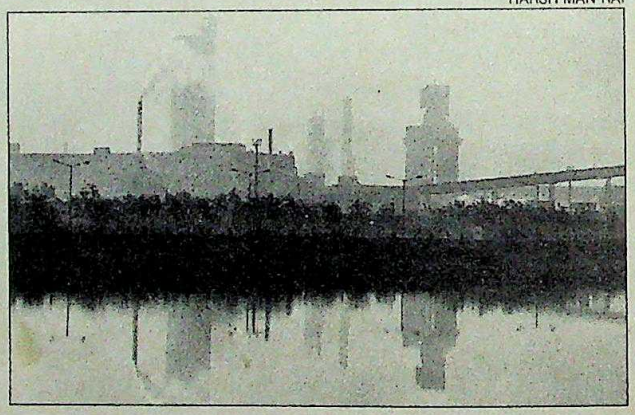
But if it is good investigative journalism, it's still not a good news story. Indeed, the report presents a picture that is almost uniformly bleak:

► India's urban population is today the fourth largest in the world. By the end of the century it will be the largest. By that time 75 per cent of Bombay's population will be living in slums.

► The colossal Narmada Basin Development Programme, which will involve the building of 329 dams, may end up costing Rs 25,000 crore. It will also displace a million people.

► The world's worst air pollution problem could be the wood-smoke inhaled by poor rural women while cooking.

HARSH MAN RAI



There are other possible Bhopals. Baroda is one, with the country's single largest concentration of heavy petrochemical industries on its periphery.

ASHOK CHADHA

► The current car and two-whe boom in Indian cities could choke th sands to death. Delhi's half-a-million m tor vehicles spew 400 tonnes of pollut daily. In Bombay, air pollution is a ma cause of tuberculosis and respirat ailments.

► The face of urban India is rapid changing. Bangalore, Pune and Del Dun, once cool, green, quiet, are to boom towns—noisy, dusty and hot.

► Hill-stations are dying everywhe With tourists pouring in, forests ha been destroyed and water crises a common.

► Thousands of workers die every y because of occupational diseases, gravest being caused by various types dust.

► There are other possible Bhopa Baroda is one, with the country's sing largest concentration of heavy pet chemical industries on its periphery.

► The mosquito has become a formid ble enemy. Researchers be lieve that the incidence o malaria may be as high as 2 million, whereas official st tistics claim only 2.1 million.

► With forests being ra idly cut down, Delhi to gets firewood from Assa over a 1,000 km away.

What man has do nature is only a reflection what man has done to na An indifferent governme has become the chief villa The report says: "The Go ernment, which owns, co trols and develops India's fo ests, dams, power statio roads, mines and a large p of its industry, is not just th protector but also the m feared destroyer of t country's environmen Again and again the envir ment and the poor have b sacrificed to high-pro high-risk industry. If a da going to bring power to cities, even though it m uproot a million tribals, then it must and after someone has to suffer progress. Needless to say never the rich and the po ful. In the Bhatti mines the Delhi-Haryana bor labourers hang precario from ropes all day to claw rock faces. They earn Rs

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ANIL AGARWAL

The Crusader

HERE is one picture: rows upon rows of box-like DDA houses, yellowing, crammed with colour televisions, cordless telephones, video recorders and people. None of the rooms look any garden. Potted plants die because there is no water and the air is thick with black fumes. Outside there is always a traffic jam. The streets are lined with slums and it takes an hour to get to the nearest grocery store. No one smiles. It's hot, hot, hot.

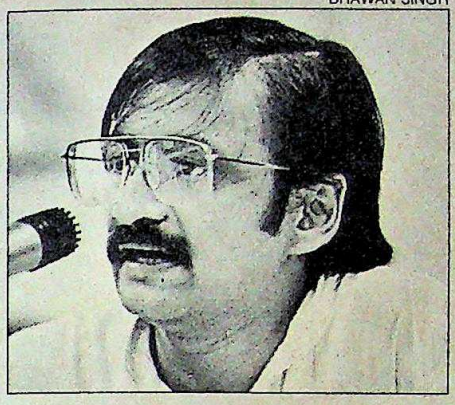
Here is another picture: the city is broken into little centres, made up of small earthen houses. The houses are small but beautifully sculpted, designed with a keen eye on weather conditions. They look lish healthy and flowers smile from every window box. There are few cars in these centres, people commute by bicycle and when they want to go to another centre, some miles away, they take a train. Here too there are televisions, an even sophisticated telephone system. But most important of all, there is fresh cool overhead, clean, blue skies.

The first is a picture of Indian cities in 1985 years. The second is Anil Agarwal's private little dream centred around the subject closest to his heart, the poor and the voiceless. "In Alexandrique, some of the wealthiest people live in mud houses, it is a fad," says Agarwal, "but here it is the only housing possible if you want to provide for everyone." It is a dream of the past that could become a vision of the future.

But then Agarwal is no ordinary dreamer. At 37, he is the chairperson of the Environment Liaison Centre in Nairobi. He is the chief architect of the report on the State of the Indian Environment. He was among the first to take on drug multinationals in a hard-hitting booklet published seven years ago. In October he delivers the prestigious World Conservation Lecture in London, an honour reportedly bestowed on him over World Bank President A.W. Clausen.

Agarwal's affair with the environment began in 1970 when he stepped out of IIT Kanpur with a mechanical engineering degree in hand. Twelve years later in 1982, he began work on a book of monumental proportions and incredible impact: *The State of India's Environment 1982*. But how did an IIT graduate

BHAWAN SINGH



Agarwal: hitting hard

in engineering—who should have been on the side of big industry—become one of the leading international voices on the environment and its greatest enemy: irresponsible industry ?

Agarwal doesn't quite know himself. He started out like any other young student, with dreams of going West. After IIT, he got admission to the University of California in Los Angeles. But some instinct told him it would be better to wait. Ten days before he was to fly off, Agarwal sent a letter instead, saying that he would not be joining.

Environment was nowhere on his life schedule. Journalism was. In June '72 he flew to Stockholm to cover the UN Conference on the Human Environment for *The Illustrated Weekly*. Soon he became a full-time science journalist, first with *The Hindustan Times* and then with the *Indian Express*. During that period came the famous Chipko movement. "That was my first understanding of the relationship between the individual and the environment," says the bespectacled Agarwal. The thinking process had begun.

The next few years were traumatic ones. Agarwal got married and had a daughter, but she was a spastic child. The Emergency and its constraints were frustrating him. As it happened, he got a job with the International Institute for Environment and Development in London where he spent three-and-a-half years. "But my confusion about the environment remained," he says, "to get rid of poverty you need rapid industrial growth. Maybe we shouldn't worry about the environment so much, I thought." The mechanical engineer from IIT had still not been outgrown.

When he returned to India in 1980, Agarwal set up the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in a cramped little office in New Delhi's Nehru Place and recruited four people to help him. Those were the first five concerned citizens. Agarwal was getting famous. Dressed usually in a khadi kurta and jeans, he was getting to be known as the one who talked a lot and was always ready to stick his neck out. A year later, he attended a seminar in Penang where he read a report on the State of the Malaysian Environment. "Why not a similar one on India ?" he thought. Except India was not exactly the size of Malaysia. The only way to do it and do it fast would be to compile a citizen's report.

The response was phenomenal. Says Agarwal: "What that book did for the first time was that it rammed home the argument that the environment is being destroyed and the poor are the first, sometimes the only people to suffer."

The CSE began to redefine poverty. "It doesn't matter how rich village women may be through development," says Agarwal, "what matters dammit is how long she has to walk to collect fuel and fodder for her family." That is also where his ingenious concept of the Gross Nature Product comes in. It is a concept based on nature which has no price tag on it but which is heartlessly destroyed by the Gross National Product. By '82 people had begun to blame development for their problems. The mood had changed.

It was also time to start work on a second report. However, the picture was still bleak. There had been no reversing of the destructive trends. "Every passing year had meant only worse destruction," says Agarwal. Moreover, he feared something else: "We are reaching the carrying capacity, not of the land, but of women. Even a day before delivery pregnant women are working."

"But what is most frightening," says Agarwal, "is how millions and millions of people are going to survive." By the turn of the century, the cities would have spread like a cancerous growth gobbling up all agricultural land and greenery in sight. "Unless we rethink here, we're going to be in terrible trouble," says Agarwal. Thus, his dream of city centre with their mud houses. "Environment is an idea whose time has come," says the report. But as he looks at it, Agarwal also realises that the battle is going to be long and hard. "Saving the environment is a very long term struggle," he says, "let's be clear on that."

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and since 1978, 400 have died in Bhatti. "The master of that dust-choked hell," reveals the report, "is the state itself."

The story of India's environment is one of the cities bleeding the country for their own benefit. Yes, there have been government afforestation programmes but the trees planted—eucalyptus, pine, teak—all serve the needs of urban industry. As the report says: "The very same process of commercialising the forest resource base that led to massive deforestation is also behind afforestation today. India's afforestation is, thus, as anti-people, as its deforestation."

The march toward annihilation and doomsday seems rapid and inexorable. But, fortunately, the report does not hang its head in despair. Between the lines and gloom, there is an understatement of hope, that all is not lost—yet. Almost every chapter—divided into easy-to-digest subjects like land, water, atmosphere, habitat and so on—has paused to think of possible solutions. Indeed the report claims that population is not India's major problem, it is land management: given proper use of land resources, the country could feed well over three times its current population. If the country has enormous problems, it also has enormous potential. One solution could be involving the landless in afforestation. "Some 5 million to 10 million landless families could be settled on these lands, making it the country's largest land reforms programme."

Similarly, through the use of tanks—"a technology as old as the Ramayana"—India could store a quarter of its rainfall and occupy only 3 per cent of the land area. Again, small earthen dams for water harvesting are both, ecologically sound and economically profitable. Then, again, for the success of slum upgrading programmes, the key issue is security of tenure, a system that has worked admirably in Hyderabad. Through its analyses, the report shows the impact that voluntary groups and non-governmental organisations can have in suggesting reforms in the country's environmental structure. As it so succinctly puts it, its role is that of the environmental opposition.

But what is most remarkable about the report is that—unlike government hand-outs—it always keeps people at its centre. It worries about the millions of nomads who have to trudge miles and miles with their cattle as grazing lands degenerate; fisherfolk who find that industrial effluents have polluted their rivers so that no fish will survive and who must now move toward the swelling cities to become bonded domestic servants; tribals who are forced to turn upon the forests they have so long lived in harmony with. It describes their plight poignantly: "Finally when the family has starved for two days, and there is no hope of getting any food, employment or a loan, the tribal family goes into the forest at night where they cut headloads of wood, walk 60 km to the nearest town, sell it at half the price, buy grain at double the price and walk back to feed their children." Many later move into the cities and become slum dwellers, the wretched of the earth who no one loves, "ecological refugees" who have given up the fresh air of the jungles to live in filthy townships.

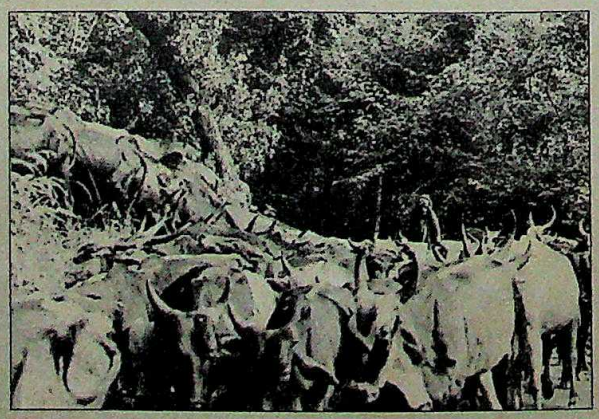
But if people are at the centre of the report, at its very heart are women. Women, the quiet, always taken-for-granted beasts of burden, most affected by the destruction of biomass. Women in rural areas spend up to 10 hours daily fetching fuel, fodder and water. Even pregnant women work 14 to 16 hours a day, walking 1,400 km a year. Their day begins before the cock crows and ends late at night, before fuel inefficient stoves where they inhale benzo pyrene which in three hours is equivalent to 200 cigarettes. As their men migrate to towns in search of work the load on those bony, bejewelled hands only increases.

If the old world is dead, there are at least faint indications that a new one is getting ready to be born. Most encouraging of all is the increasing concern with the good earth and its bounty. Even if education has not reached the poor, awareness has. Witness the Chipko and Appiko movements where tribals and mainly women, hugged their trees to prevent them being felled. The tribal has now realised that government claims of development only mean money and advantage to some fat man in a far-off city. They no longer want cash compensation for being displaced by dams and mines—they want land for land. Environmental activism has already stopped two dams—Silent Valley in Kerala and Bedthi in Karnataka. Strong protests have also led to litigation against limestone mining in lush Dehra Dun. The report's ultimate message is in its shared statement of concern: "Nature can never be managed well unless the people closest to it are involved in its management." There is still time to act, however gloomy the scenario may look. Otherwise there is worse to come.

—SIMRAN BHARGAVA

BHAWAN SINGH

Millions of nomads have to trudge miles and miles with their cattle as grazing lands degenerate. Women spend up to 10 hours daily fetching fuel, fodder and water.



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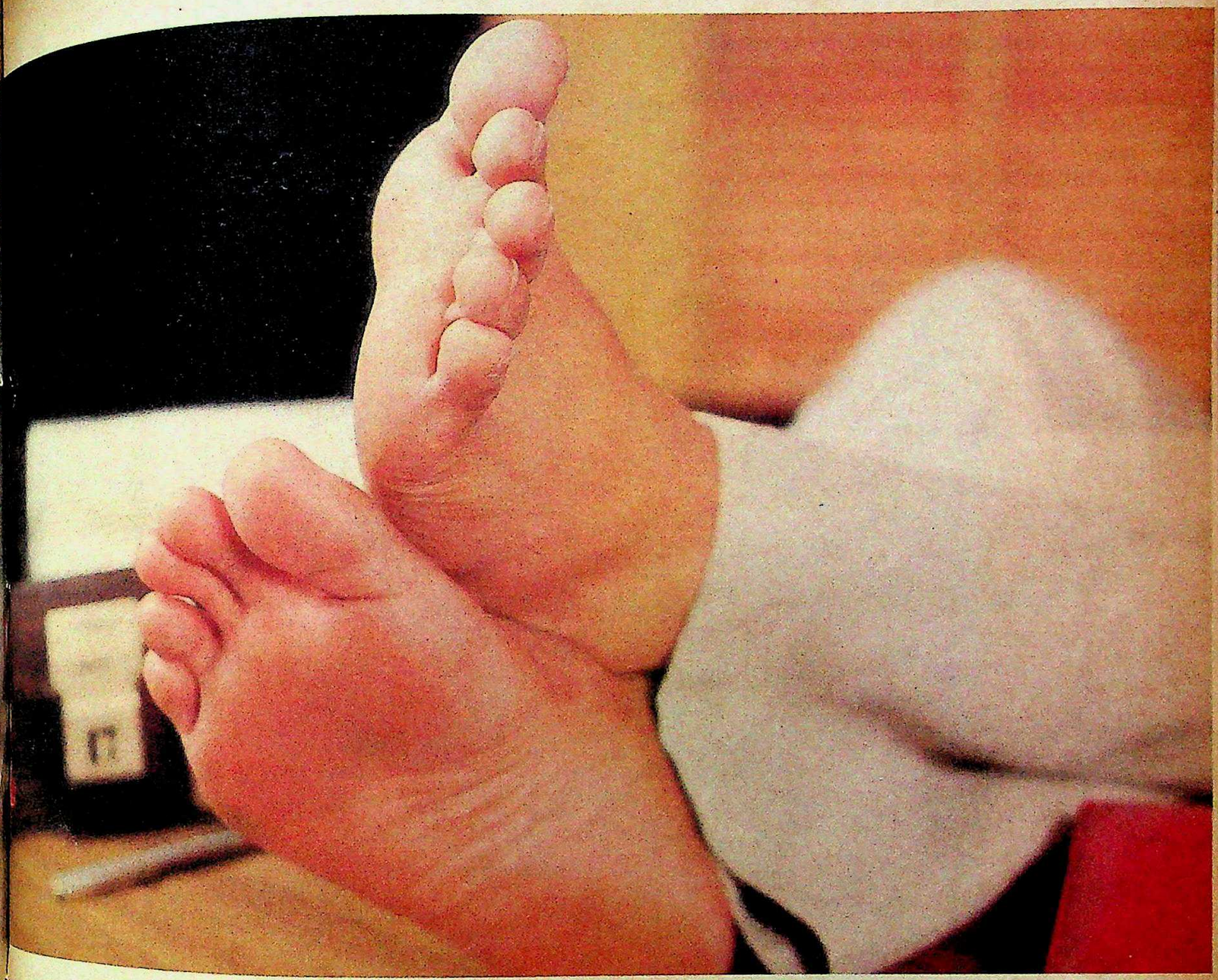

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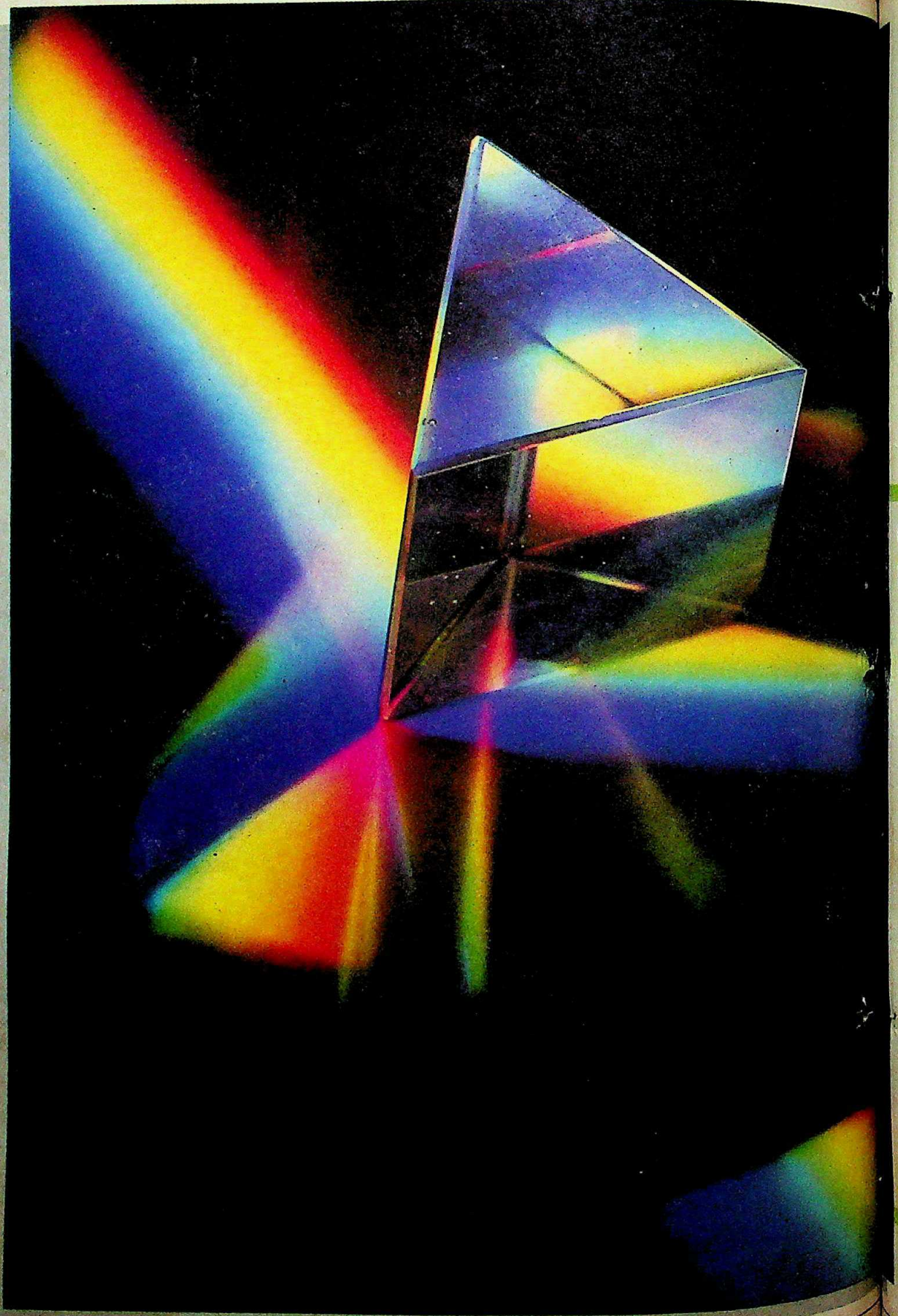

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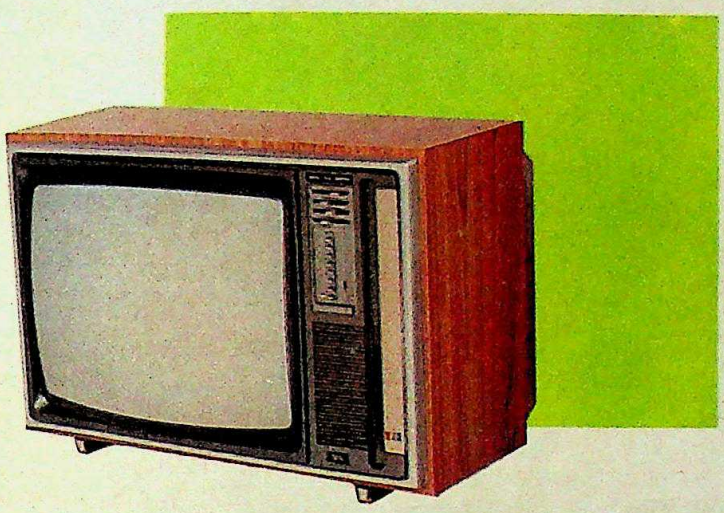

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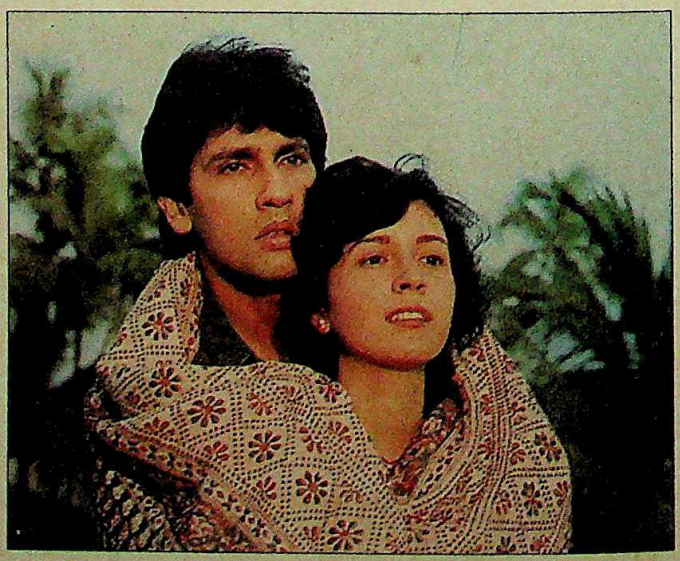
◆ She is a princess, he a commoner—and never mind how it happened, it happened. This year princess **Lakshmi** of the royal family of Travancore, who is also a painter decided to take a beau—**Monu Nalappad**, 34, the high profile editor of Kerala's leading newspaper *Mathrubhumi* Dismayed at her lowly choice, her blue-blooded parents dismissed their journalist son-in-law as a write-off and boycotted the recent wedding that had all the prudes of Kerala's high society shaking their holy heads in horror. Said Nalappad: "We wanted a quiet wedding. We are both against obsolete customs." Quiet though the registered wedding was, quite a few bigwigs turned up including Chief Minister Karunakaran, former maharaja Chithra Tirunal—and Kamala Das mother of Nalappad who suddenly found she had a princess for a daughter-in-law. The blissfully wedded couple have meanwhile moved over to a small home, half the size of the outhouse of the palace.

C. RATHEESH KUMAR

Nalappad and Lakshmi: unconventional start

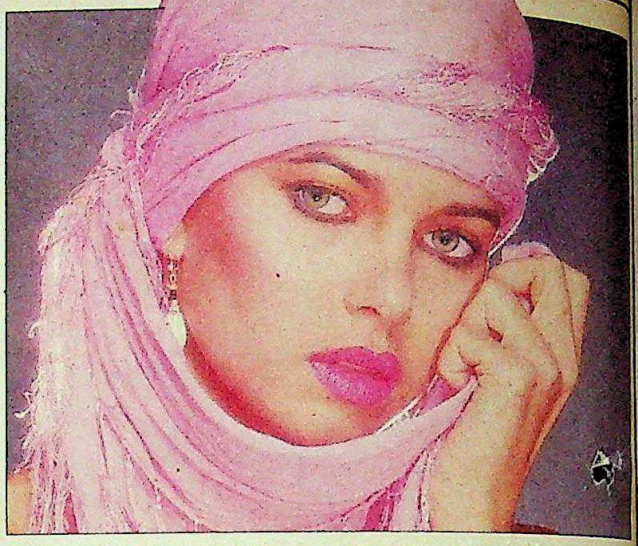
◆ Most people would blush a brilliant red or fade into a deadly white before they talked of their illegitimacy. Not so **Mahesh Bhatt.** He first said it—"I am a bastard"—loud and clear in a magazine interview. Then he went and told the full story of his *Janam*—in a film of the same name which will premier on television this month. "All art is autobiographical. It has to be," said Bhatt. This piece of heart-art features **Kumar Gaurav**—and it's not another silly teenie-bopper weepie. Gaurav gives a striking performance as an illegitimate child who grows into a film-maker with just one ambition: to get on top of the pop, played by Anupam Kher. Obviously, for both Bhatt and his hero, mum's not the world.



A still from Bhatt's *Janam*

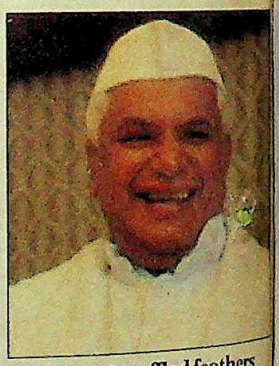
◆ First Bombay, then London is the way most ambitious Indian models would want to go about it. **Aliya Knightley** preferred to do it the other way.

Daughter of the London-based *Indian Express* columnist Phillip Knightley, Aliya walked straight down the continental catwalk, shining armour and all, to hometown Bombay where she has since been luxuriating in Garden silks and Lux bubbles. "London is very competitive and bitchy," she says, "There are thousands of models. Here you have only hundreds." Now Aliya wants to do some more serious work—she has recently begun writing for *Mid-day* and plans to pursue it regularly. "Oh, I'm just out to have a good time," said the little chip off the old block. Well, when you're 20, tall and gorgeous you can have it any way you like.



Aliya: flying high

◆ The scene was the sedate Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha but the hullaballoo was as exciting as any in a boy's high school classroom. Indeed it could have been a high school class considering the issue at stake was a brilliant first division—N.D. Tiwari's. Flourishing the examination certificate in his hand, Lok Dal whip Satrudha Prakash said stated that the Uttar Pradesh chief minister had passed his intermediate exam in 1982 with a high first division. The star pupil himself did not look so proud. Though the marks were not his, the point had been made: Tiwari has announced an official inquiry into the rampant corruption that has blank school certificates selling on the streets of Lucknow. Later, he said pedantically: "Some people take even politicians for a ride." Though out of class, he was make sure he is still in form.



Tiwari: ruffled feathers

—Compiled by SIMRAN BHARGAVA

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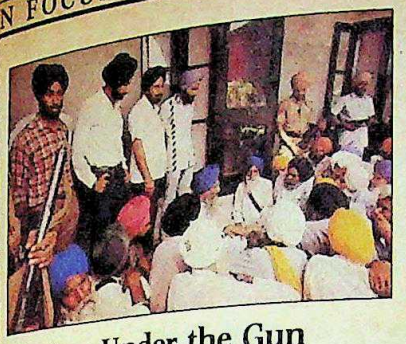

Election Under the Gun

The campaign for the Punjab elections, threatened by violence and calls for boycott, got off to a late start amidst unprecedented security and a widespread feeling that the Congress(I) has fielded weak candidates in order to let the Akalis win.

COVER STORY 56

Living in Fear

The killing of Congress (I) leader Arjun Dass in Delhi focussed uneasy attention on the other prominent targets supposedly on the terrorist hit list. A special report examines how the life-styles of five key targets have changed under the threat of the gun.

SPECIAL REPORT 22

When Bouquets Run Out

For nearly a decade she was the supreme siren of the Bombay film industry, her dazzling physical assets reinforced by her cool professionalism. But where is Zeenat Aman now ? In a candid encounter she reflects on the aftermath of stardom.

CHANGING SCENE 78

A Timely Acquittal

Haryana's wily Chief Minister Bhajan Lal survived another crisis last fortnight as the Justice Jaswant Singh inquiry into his alleged misdoings cleared him of all charges. But the manner in which the inquiry was conducted only fuelled the controversy further.

INVESTIGATION 84

Back to the Battlefield

The crisis in Sri Lanka snowballed as fresh violence erupted in the island. The deportation of key Tamil leaders boomeranged badly, pushing the rebels to the wall and raising fears of a "final assault". An on-the-spot report from Colombo.

NEIGHBOURS 96

Taming the Devils

Arriving in Colombo with the label of World Champions, the Indian cricket team were in for some rude shocks. Outplayed by a Sri Lankan eleven in every department of the game in the first two Tests, Kapil's men sought refuge in blaming extraneous factors.

SPORTS 130

CONTENTS

COMMENT 9
CAPITALOOK 12
VOICES 14
INDIANOTES 19
SPECIAL REPORT
Hit List: Living In Fear 22
CURRENT EVENTS
Terrorism: Shock Tactics 26
Gujarat: The New Force 28
Thakkar Commission: Grasping at Straws 33
Rajasthan: Transfer Spree 39
Karnataka: Janata Jam 40
Tamil Nadu: Return of the Heroine 45
Jammu & Kashmir: Side Show 46
Kerala: Denouement 47
Andhra Pradesh: Fighting Back 48
Congress(I): Big Brother 53
West Bengal: Hard Lessons 55
COVER STORY
Punjab: Election Under The Gun 56
STATENOTES 72
CHANGING SCENE
Zeenat Aman: When the Bouquets Run Out 78
INVESTIGATION
Bhajan Lal: A Timely Acquittal 84
CRIME
Naxalites: The New Offensive 93
NEIGHBOURS
Sri Lanka: Back to the Battlefield 96
SCIENCE
Halley's Comet: In Waiting 100
TRADE WINDS 105
BUSINESS
Industrial Safety: Under a Cloud 106
Voltas: Changes at the Helm 113
MMC: Pruning Plans 119
Wimpy: Burger Split 120
Moulded Luggage: Mobile Market 125
ITDC: Akbar's Loss 126
The Markets: Bulls Retreat 128
The Economy Monitor 129
SPORTS
Cricket: Taming the Devils 130
Racing: Reining In 132
EDUCATION
Bihar: Varsity Row 134
LIFE-STYLE
Mysore Palace: Right Royal Battle 140
SPECIAL FEATURE
Football: The New Mercenaries 144
EYE-CATCHERS 152

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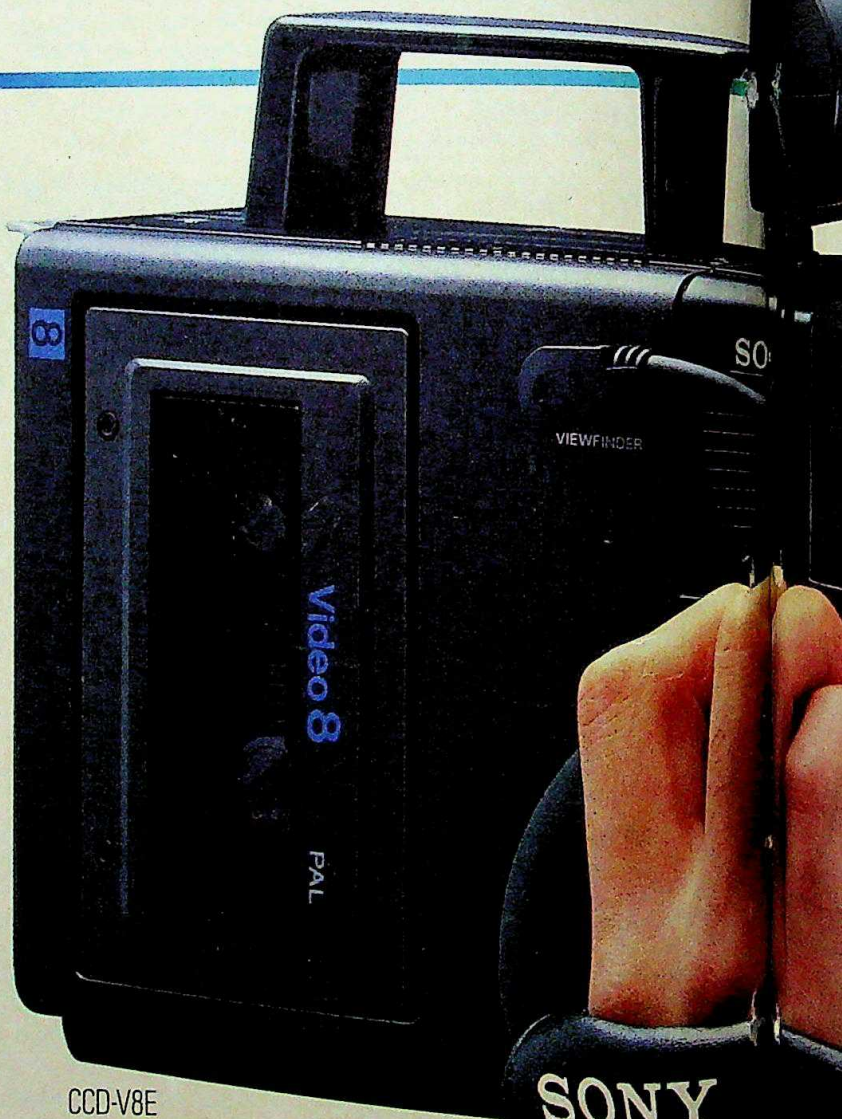

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CCD-V8E

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And for even greater picture quality, the CCD-V8 also uses Sony's sophisticated M&F Head.

THE POWER TO GO ANYWHERE.

Six different power supplies give the CCD-V8 the versatility to go where other camera recorders can't. And its compact size and easy operation ensure that it will always add to your fun. Not get in the way of it.

Take it everywhere. Vacationing. Sporting. Outings. Weddings. In the front of a concert hall. On the back of a motorcycle. Even in the middle of a lake.

In fact, just about the only thing CCD-V8 won't do is bore you.

INCOMPATIBILITY? IMPOSSIBLE.

Even if you already own a VCR, Video 8 still offers unlimited potential. The CCD-V8 easily lets you transfer tapes to any other format. And together with its optional Tuner/Timer unit, it can be used just like a conventional home video deck.

SONY'S HISTORY PROMISES A BRIGHT FUTURE.

Sony has long been known as a leading innovator in every area of video technology — from professional to consumer. Which virtually guarantees the success and further development of Video 8 for years to come.

True, it's the world's smallest video format.

But with Sony behind it, it can't be taken lightly.

8 Video 8

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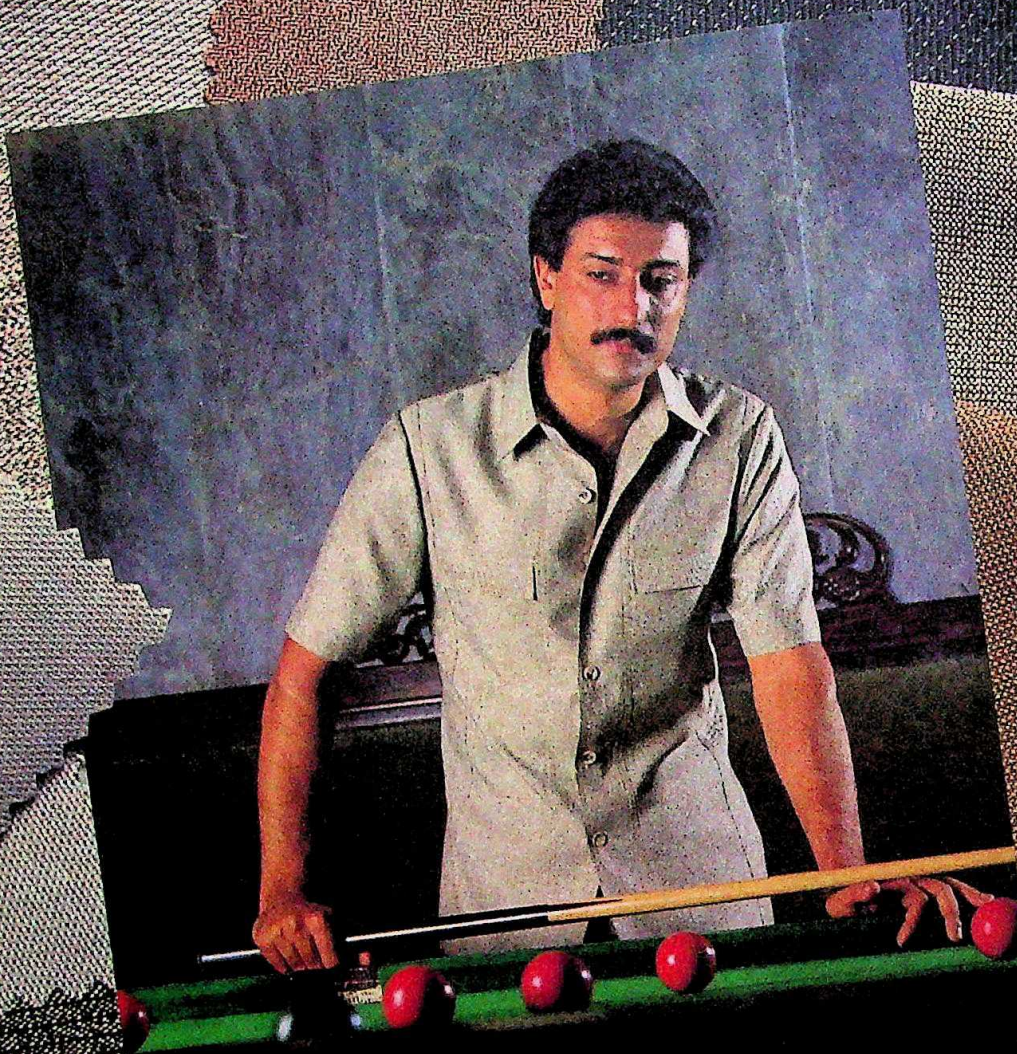

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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE
VOLUME X NUMBER 18
FOR THE FORTNIGHT SEPTEMBER 16-30, 1985

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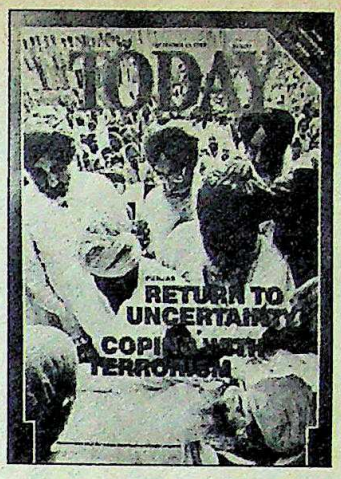

TRAGIC COMMENT

The assassination of Sant Longowal ("Return to Uncertainty", September 15) is more a comment on our existing security arrangements, or rather lack of it, than on the nefarious activities of the extremists. The moment Longowal signed the historic accord, he must have figured on the hit list. Under these circumstances it was the duty of the concerned authorities to see that Longowal was protected.

Madras **K.VAITHEESWARAN**

HIGH AND DRY

The plight of over 350 second mates of the Merchant Navy ("A Sea of Sorrow", September 15) highlights how miserably the Shipping Corporation of India is functioning. The corporation has shown no interest in the past two years to find a solution to the growing problem.

Second mates who reported back to SCI in mid-'83 were asked to wait for eight months before they were given a call, over 20 months have passed and all are still waiting. To add to the problem, the SCI says that it will take another 60 months before it can employ them. SCI has more than 150 ships and only about 30 are sailing with fourth officers on board. It is difficult to understand why the corporation is reluctant to fill up more than the 100 existing vacancies.

New Delhi **SUNIL KUMAR**

■ I am extremely grateful to you for giving the rightful exposure to the plight of the second mates. Can one imagine a second mate working for Rs 20 per shift at the Bombay docks. That is what I am doing to make both ends meet. The shipping companies particularly the SCI have deliberately flooded the market with second mates, they made us sign one-sided bonds because at that time they needed us. Now every company related to the shipping industry is exploiting us.

Bombay **SURYA NARAYAN SINGH**

YOUNG HOPEFULS

It is a healthy and welcoming trend that many of our members of Parliament ("The New Breed", August 31), all newcomers, are showing remarkable progress in their new role. Unlike the professional politicians these newcomers are showing a sincere concern towards the current problems of the people. Still more appreciable is the fact that these persons belong to the Congress(I), a party that has earned the reputation of having MP's for name's sake. I hope these professionals will inspire the others and restore the true spirit of the parliamentary system.

However, I take strong exception to your partisan attitude in selecting only the ruling party members for whom there is no dearth of manpower, resources or influence to get things done. You have done grave injustice to some of the newcomers of the Opposition whose performances in the House as well as in their constituencies are extremely good.

Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu **H.SOMASHEKARA**

■ India has indeed been awaiting the advent of a competent, educated, action-oriented, zealous young crop to head the seats of government. Perhaps the comfortable economic status in addition to the totally new outlook regarding political ideals of the new breed of parliamentarians should help clean out corruption which is the main shackle that hampers India's forward march. It is not a cakewalk to prove oneself on the political arena, where innumerable critical lenses are focussed, nevertheless the events of the last ten months fill the vacuum of a bereaved nation with a definite sense of achievement.

Nasik **VIRA KOMARRAJU**

■ It seems that the slumbering Parliament has suddenly got up to do business. In the past the unuttered rule for the MP's of the ruling party was to defend the Government and attack the Opposition. The opposition members had also developed the habit of attacking the Government in all its policy

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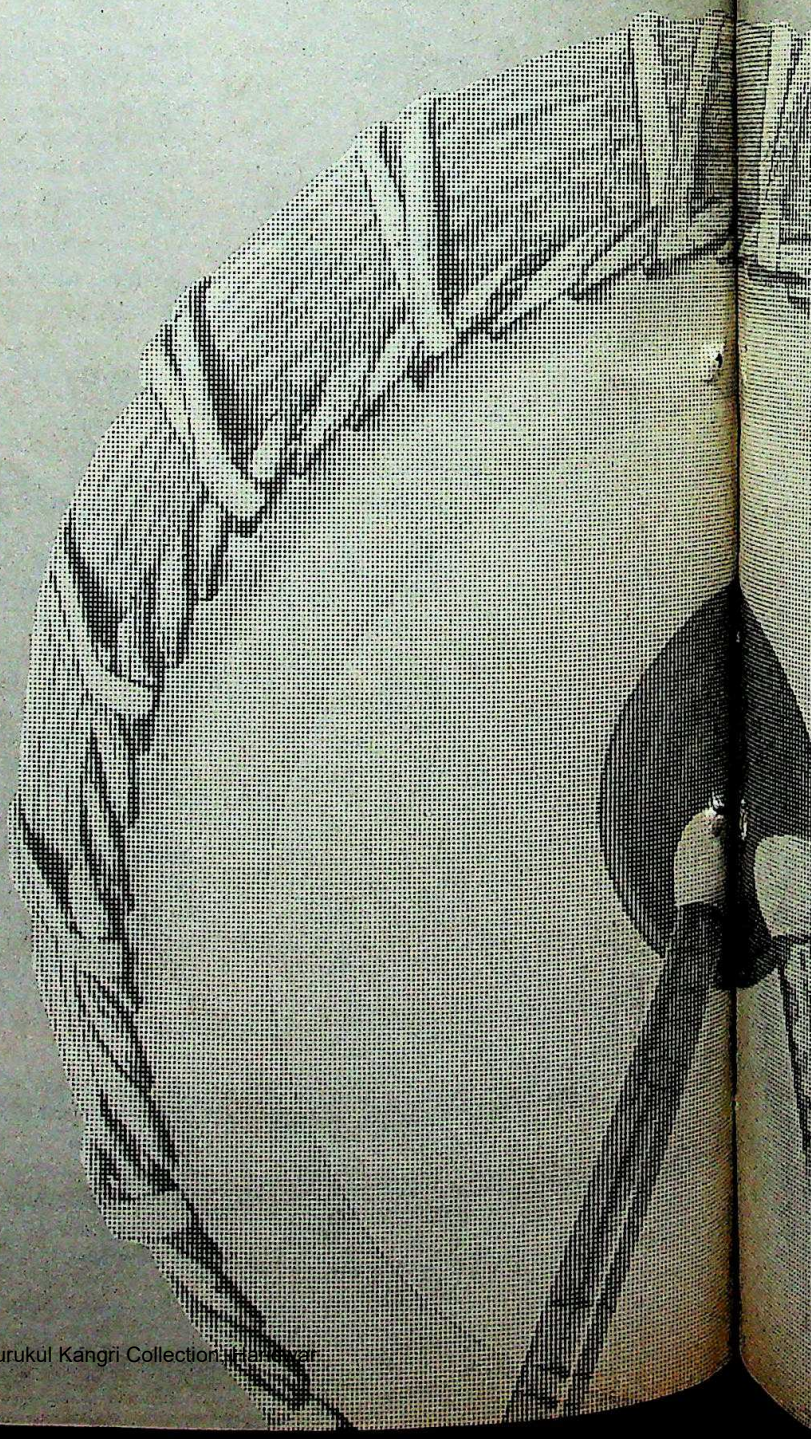

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matters. But Rajiv Gandhi's catalytic personality and approach to solving problems have given a new impetus to our Parliament.

Nalco Nagar, Orissa — BIBHU PRASAD MISHRA

DUBIOUS REVOLUTION

Your article "Revolution on the Road" (August 31) is quite interesting. It is incomprehensible that the automobile industry in India, which has been producing 'almost junk' over the last 35 years, has suddenly woken up to the need for providing new cars, albeit borrowing outdated technology from every available source from all over the world. Or is it the sign of growth of neo-rich in the country, who are keen to purchase cars to flaunt their wealth.

New Delhi — V.SAGAR

■ With reference to your excellent report "Revolution on the Road" (August 31) there has been an error while quoting our Chairman Mr K.Mahesh. You say that our new brake pads have a 40 per cent longer life span but costs 60 per cent more. The figures in fact are the other way round, the life span is 60 per cent more and the cost increase is only 40 per cent.

Madras — V.R.JANARDHANAM, *deputy general manager, Sundaram-Abex Ltd*

The error is regretted. —Editor

FIRM STAND

With reference to your report "Maruti:Costly Lessons"(August 31) your correspondent says that he met me and my colleague Mr K.K.Gupta, and quotes Mr Gupta as saying that "buying a Maruti car is inviting an accident. Our budget for this year has been ruined because of Maruti accidents." You also quote me as saying that "of the 625 claims car owners shot till July end, 600 were for Maruti owners. Oriental has shelled out Rs 18 lakh this year to Maruti drivers."

The above statements purportedly made to your correspondent are not true. They are false and denied.

New Delhi — SUSHIL KUMAR AHLUWALIA, *senior divisional manager, Oriental Insurance Co*

We stand by our report. —Editor

PLUG FOR PRIYA

Referring to your special feature "The Rajani Phenomenon" (August 31), the write-up is highly exaggerated. The article with the eulogising titles like 'Durga' and 'Joan of Arc' look like a plug to help Priya Tendulkar get films.

I belong to the most populous and corruption-ridden state—Uttar Pradesh. And I can say that Rajani is certainly not as great a success as you want us to believe. The truth is that, it is a serial in which they give impractical solutions to some real problems.

Lucknow — DHIRESH BAHADUR

■ Rajani is a new cult, the cult of the superwoman. I wonder whether an image like her inspires ordinary women to struggle in everyday life or whether it only makes us feel acutely inadequate. For we are unable to achieve the sort of instant solutions that Rajani does achieve. On TV she manages to solve things: in real life her solutions are inapplicable. Most of us know that the police is neither sympathetic nor even accessible to the ordinary woman in distress; nor is the press or courts. All these Rajani has used as her 'solutions'. Thus illusions and falsehoods are thrust upon us week after week.

Certainly there is potential in characters like Rajani—at least she is an active, thinking woman. But the parameters within which she acts and thinks are so rigidly defined. She launches attacks on corruption—but never questions its source. She patronises other women. By no stretch of the imagination is Rajani the ultimate in liberated womanhood.

Delhi — DEEPTI MEHROTRA

OLD IS GOLD

It is very disturbing to know that the magnificent buildings like the GPO, high court, the collectorate, Writers' Building, that dominate the Dalhousie Square area of Calcutta are likely to be demolished to make way for skyscrapers ("Wiping Out History", August 31). I am not against development. Multi-storeyed buildings are probably the only solution to the ever-increasing demand for space. But certainly not at the cost of magnificent, historical, colonial structures. Even the alterations and additions to these buildings should be done while retaining the old style and character of the buildings.

Necessary steps should be taken to stop demolition of Calcutta's architectural heritage, otherwise tomorrow Victoria Memorial will be on the hit list.

Nagpur — RAVI K.BHARGAVA

■ Memorandums have been submitted to the appropriate authorities of the city, expressing strong reservations to the proposal to bring down any historical monument. It is felt that the new multi-storeyed buildings besides spoiling the skyline, would also create severe congestion in an already congested area. In view of other repercussions, it is suggested that new constructions be made outside the city's periphery.

Calcuttans have still to recover from the guilt of seeing the destruction of the magnificent Senate Building of the University of Calcutta almost two decades ago. While many countries, including Capitalist and Socialist, have declared entire cities as conservation zones, it is a pity that we cannot even preserve a small area like Dalhousie Square. It is forgotten that these colonial structures need to be protected not for its association with the pre-Independence era but for the sake of history.

Calcutta — YATISH PRASAD

FOLLOW THE LEADER

We are really indebted to you for having published the article on the Punjab & Sind Bank ("Loans to the Dead", August 31) and exposing the misuse of the government-sponsored schemes meant for the benefit of the poor and its exploitation for the benefit of the corrupt officers.

New Delhi — JASBIR SINGH

■ In 1981 several allegations involving misappropriation of crores of rupees were levelled by members of Parliament against Inderjit Singh, the then chairman of the bank. The finance minister assured necessary action after investigation by the Reserve Bank. A senior officer of the RBI was deputed. He submitted his report in early '82. However, the findings did not suit the ministry, so the decision on the report was postponed. The RBI deputed the same officer to conduct a thorough inspection of the PSB. He not only confirmed his earlier findings but also brought to light the serious malpractices by other top officials of the bank. As expected no action was taken against anyone. On the other hand all the involved persons were promoted. If this is the state of affairs at the top level then why blame and punish a 'poor' branch manager like Daljit Singh Bedi. It is a known fact that the juniors follow in the footsteps of their seniors.

New Delhi — SANJEEB MAITRA

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Hunger Amidst Plenty

SUDDENLY, the plentiful availability of food in India has become an embarrassment. The Government has more of it than it wants, and doesn't seem to know how to get it into the stomachs of underfed millions. The procurement and storage agencies have no warehouse space left, and large amounts of wheat are reported to be rotting out in the open. A variety of measures have been proposed in the hasty effort to get rid of the unwanted riches: exports by private traders, exports by the Government, open market sales in the country, and an expanded food-for-work programme. None of them have got very far yet. Private exports have been a non-starter because India's prices are too high for overseas markets, government exports to the Soviet Union, Rumania and elsewhere have run into problems (including that of quality), open market sales are yet to begin, and the food-for-work programme (renamed the National Rural Employment Programme) continues at a relatively insignificant level.

This is both bizarre and scandalous. Some 300 million Indians go underfed every day, without the money to pay for the foodgrains waiting for consumers in government granaries. The stocks, which have increased from 16 million tonnes two years ago to the region of 30 million tonnes now, will cost the Government over Rs 500 crore in storage, handling and interest charges alone this year, and the food subsidy will run up to well over last year's already staggering total of Rs 1,100 crore. More than Rs 8,000 crore of bank credit is estimated to be locked up just now in the grain stocks, as good an example as any of inappropriate use of scarce capital. The situation is now about to get worse, with yet another bumper *kharif* harvest maturing in the fields. It seems certain that a good part of this harvest will finally rot in open godowns, while episodes like the one in Kalahandi recur every now and then.

There is no excuse for this state of affairs. The present embarrassment should have been foreseen. Private commentators had in fact warned of precisely this. Yet no advance action was taken, and none of the initiatives conceived since April, when the Government finally woke up to the problem of overflowing silos, have led anywhere as yet.

If the failure to act in time makes the Government culpable, its insensitivity to the absurdity of an underfed nation trying to export foodgrains is even less defensible. Exports are not, and should never be, sought as a way of getting rid of unwanted food stocks. In any case, there is no case for subsidising consumers abroad, most of them more happily placed than Indians, by exporting foodgrains at a loss. Measures to increase domestic consumption constitute the only acceptable solution. And the food-for-work programme—which places food directly in the hands of the hungry while giving them work at the same time, work that helps build national assets—should be the first priority. Domestic open market sales are a subsidiary option that will shift the storage burden from the Government to private traders while forcing the open market prices to come down.

The food-for-work programme was first conceived in the late 1970s, when a similar 'problem' of foodgrain surpluses forced the Government's hand. This was gradually wound down to a relatively small-scale operation in subsequent years, when the surpluses were eaten up and the country began importing foodgrains once again. Now the wheel has turned full circle, and the Government should immediately get down to the business of expanding the national rural employment programme, and tackling the administrative problems that led to leakages and corruption the last time around. If stocks have to be drawn down immediately, open market sales can be an effective solution since market prices currently rule higher than the Government's procurement price.

NINAN

Meanwhile, some basic issues relating to Indian agriculture have been raised by the current predicament. The failure of the export effort shows that Indian wheat costs far too much to produce and store. Yet every kilogramme of wheat procured and then off-loaded by the Government bears a substantial subsidy, while upstream raw materials (like fertiliser) are supplied to farmers at a subsidised rate. An international price disadvantage despite all these subsidies (and such hidden benefits as underpriced—if not entirely free—electricity and water) points to some serious flaws in policy, which seems to have fostered a high-cost agriculture that is as uncompetitive as the country's equally high-cost industry. Quite apart from making the question of exports virtually academic, it is an unfair imposition on a low-income economy in which most people spend the bulk of their money on food. The irony is that the country's farmers remain unhappy with the prices they get.

Quite apart from all this, food has now become a major burden on the Central exchequer, with the subsidies on this accounting in a large measure for the mounting current account deficit in the budget. If a good hard look is not taken soon at what has brought about this dangerous and potentially disastrous situation, we could soon have the supremely ironical Indian foodgrain equivalent of the milk and butter mountains in the European Economic Community. That is certainly far better than being an international basket case, but it is not what should have resulted from two decades of the green revolution. And it is not what will, in the ultimate analysis, help feed a still hungry nation.

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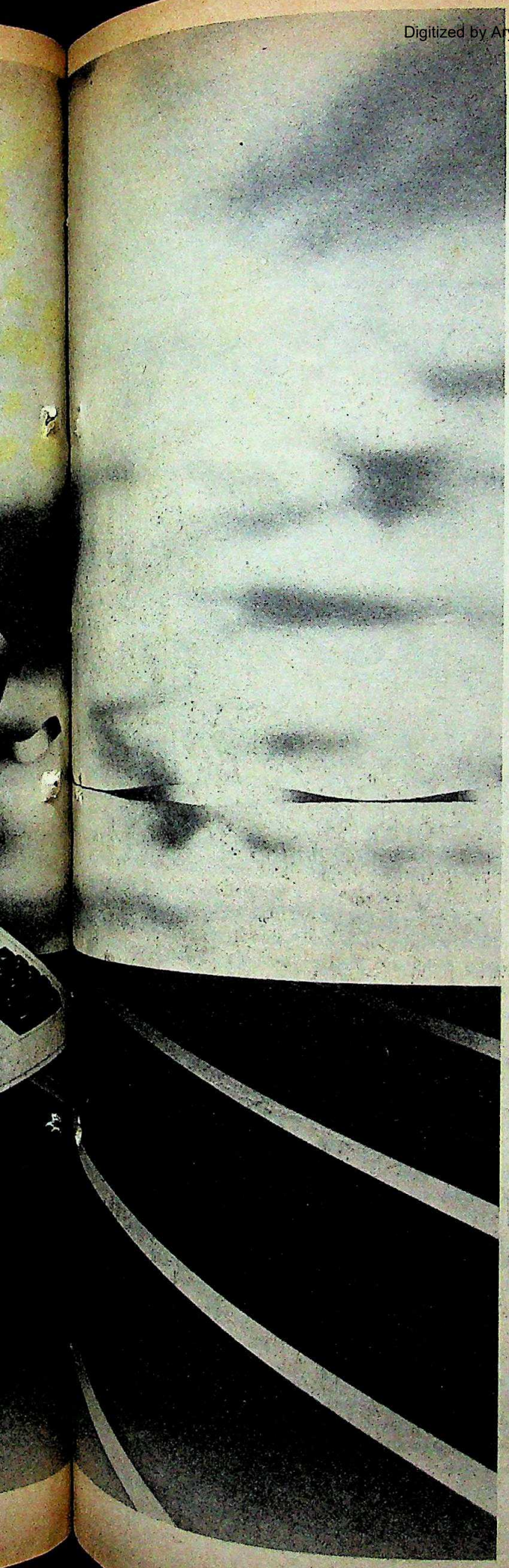

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Red Herring

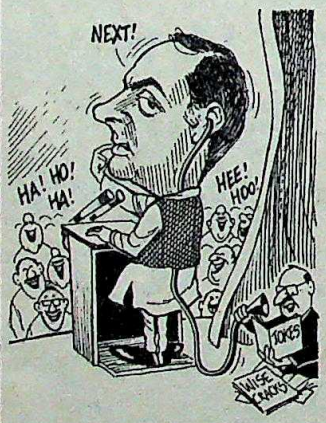
● Like a bad coin, India's most wanted terrorist Lal Singh seems to crop up everywhere, or so people imagine. He has caught the imagination of the police who blame him for the Makens and Arjun Dass murders, and the public who see a Lal Singh lurking in every dark corner. So it wasn't very surprising that the police last fortnight took serious note

of a tip-off that Lal Singh was travelling to Jammu on Indian Airlines Flight 421, which starts from Delhi and halts at Chandigarh and Jammu before reaching Srinagar. Many people on the flight had noticed the similarity between the stocky, wavy-haired passenger occupying the window seat 6A in the Boeing aircraft, and the picture of Lal Singh published in the Delhi papers that morning. The smart passenger, who had a sinister looking scar on the bridge of his nose and was flashily dressed in a pink shirt, grey trousers and white shoes, drew attention by making a couple of trips to the toilet at either end of the aircraft.

Some deplaning passengers must have informed the authorities at Chandigarh of their suspicion because the police went into action the moment the plane took off from Chandigarh for Jammu. Police commandos cordoned off Jammu airport and surrounded the plane the moment it landed. Nobody was allowed off the plane for over an hour and the "suspect" was led away and interrogated. Only after repeated protestations of innocence was the passenger able to convince the police that he was the relative of a local Jammu politician. Obviously, this time Lal Singh turned out to be literally a red herring.

Made to Wit

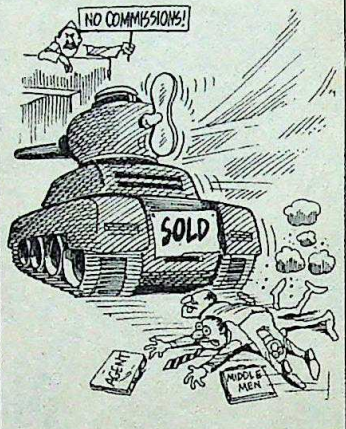
● Few can remember the witty remarks made by Mrs Gandhi, principally because she made so few of them. Things are different with Rajiv, and the changes in the tone and texture of prime ministerial speeches reflect not just the new prime minister's own style but also the calibre and varied abilities of the men around him. The punchline-packed witticisms on the similarities between politics and billiards, delivered at the inauguration of the world bil-



liards championship in July, were really contributed by S. Vasudevan, joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Secretariat. And the crack about the Indian role in the Boston Tea Party, made during the visit to the United States last summer, was authored by Ambassador K. Shanker Bajpai. But Rajiv has his own personal contributions too, notably the "I have a dream..." bit in his address to the US Congress. And surprisingly enough, the mention of *swadeshi* in Rajiv's Independence Day speech from the Red Fort resulted from the advice given in the right quarters by a journalist who pointed out that in the centenary year of the Congress, the prime minister should not fail to make a point about the continuing importance of the *swadeshi* spirit.

Men at Arms

● When phones rang simultaneously in Europe's busy arms bazaar, the message from New Delhi had an



electrifying effect: the biggest manufacturers were called over for an urgent meeting. Word went around that India was to clinch a new defence contract. But when they reached New Delhi, there were no contracts to be signed. Instead, the bosses in the Defence Ministry came up with an unusual request: "Please do not offer any more commissions." The reference was to the past practice of the major giants in the arms business who vied with one another in offering huge commissions to middlemen who boasted of high political connections. If that request shocked them, the companies did well to keep a straight face—under the new dispensation all deals with commissions are being looked at suspiciously.

X-Rated

● The film opens on a sinister note. The title flashed on the screen says 'Agent X 1985' and then the camera pans to battle-dressed mercenaries going through their paces

with the sound of gunfire in the background. The mystery, however, is not so much in Agent X or the film—a television feature on the notorious Frank Camper, who runs the Alabama mercenary training school where Sikh terrorists, including Lal Singh, were trained—but in the surreptitious rounds the film is making in the capital.

Currently the exclusive property of the Government of India, the film, most of it an interview with Camper, was first shown to the prime minister and his security aides and then screened for selected MP's. But officials have since been acting unusually coy and possessive about the film, having occasional showings for select audiences but acting very hush-hush about where exactly the film was obtained from. It seems to be an uncut version of a television report made by one of the regular US television networks since there is a voice on the soundtrack that keeps chanting: "Okay guys, cut." Since Camper's views have received fairly wide publicity, the film no longer merits any kind of secrecy. Camper comes through as articulate, but contradicts himself when he says that he asks his students to leave their politics at home before they come for training, and that he doesn't knowingly train terrorists. But viewers are still left mystified as to why the government of India seems to be treating the film like it contains Pakistan's latest nuclear secrets.

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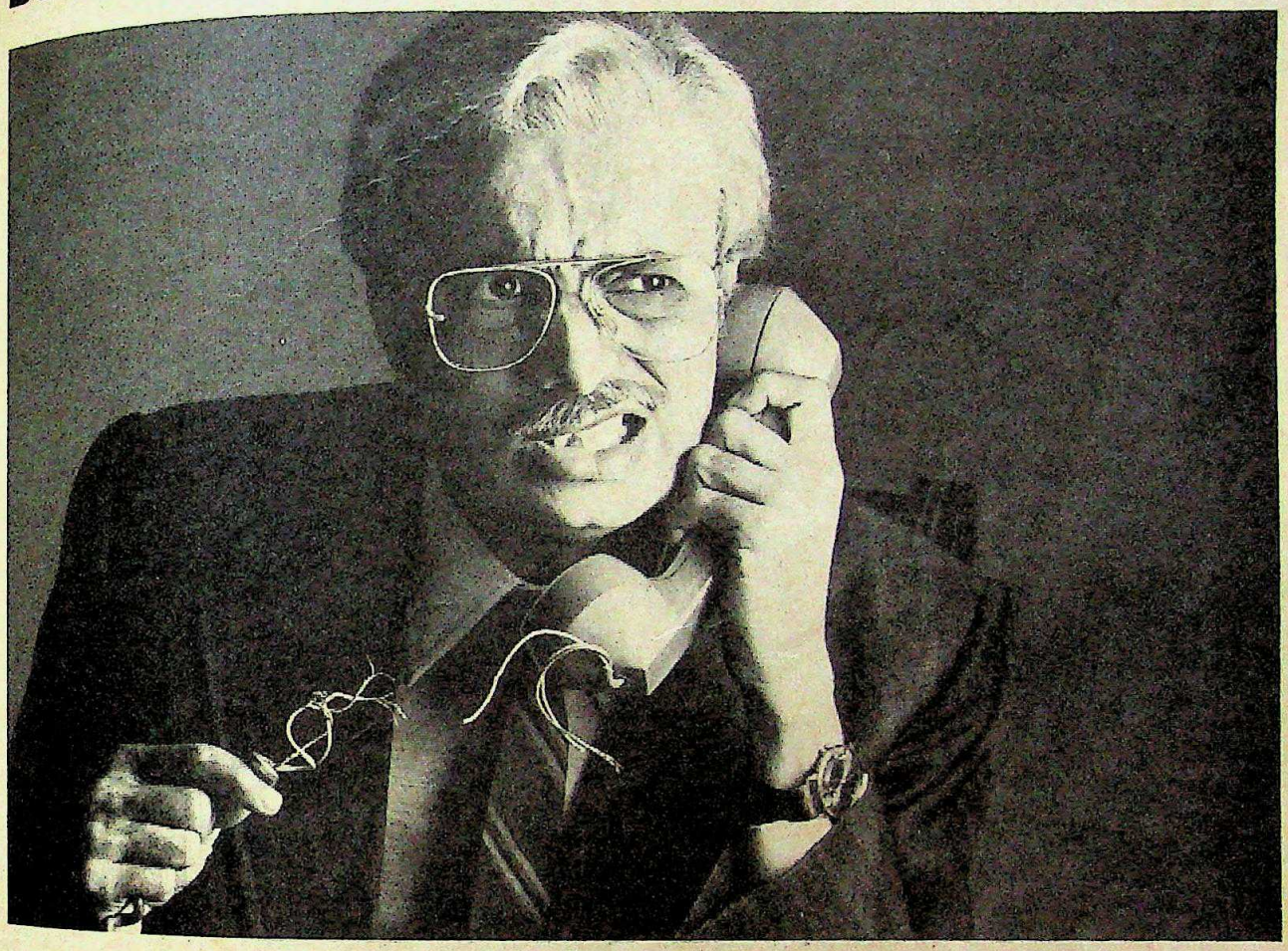
DOES A VITAL CONTRACT HAVE TO BE IN TOKYO BY DAY AFTER TOMORROW?



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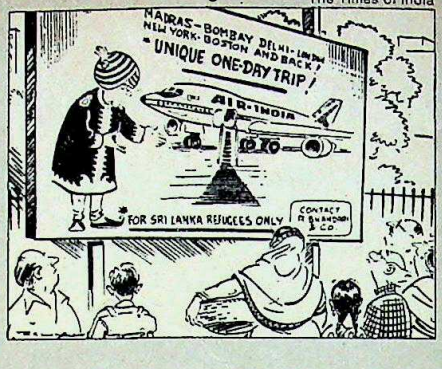
The Times of India



● *Security against hidden terrorists has to be in the form of an offensive. If the state tries to hide behind a wall or in a gigantic foxhole, then wild dreams of hidden danger will be conjured up.*

■ RANJIT GUPTA, former West Bengal IGP in *The Telegraph*

● *Under Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress (I) party is being replaced by a modern managerial elite innocent of the mechanics of political action... This way, the party may be reduced to a bunch of sycophants of the type in Bihar who have raised the bizarre suggestion that Sonia Gandhi should be made the party president.*

■ NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTY in *Mainstream*

● *Sikhs in general want me to join politics. The* AISSF *has assured me of financial support if I contest the (Punjab) elections no matter which party I join.*

■ BIMAL KHALSA, widow of Beant Singh, Mrs Gandhi's assassin, in *Sunday*

● *The greatest enemy of India today is not Pakistan or China but Indians themselves. No enemy can possibly weaken the country so effectively as Indians can.*

■ NANI PALKHIVALA in *The Sunday Statesman*

● *People were sent to the UK to research me and they did everything short of finding out what time I go to bed. But eventually truth won. Today, I am appreciated for what I have done.*

■ SWRAJ PAUL in *The Illustrated Weekly* of India

● *We acquired arms training from the* PLO*—one of its constituents the* PFLP*—and some African and Western countries I can't name.*

■ UMA MAHESHWARAN, leader of PLOT, Tamil militant group, in *Current*

● *In my estimation there are only five great media institutions in the modern world...the BBC, Time magazine, Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and Ananda Bazaar Patrika.*

■ AVEEK SARKAR, editor of *Ananda Bazaar Patrika*, in *The Week*

● *A lot of people told me that in the World Cup final in Australia I played for that Audi. Why not? It's a gorgeous car. I was willing to pat half-volleys but I damn well was not going to get out.*

■ RAVI SHASTRI in the *Express Magazine*

● *Till I was 17 or 18, I was very innocent. Till that age, I didn't know what it was all about, the heartaches and pain and love. Then, when I learnt about these things, I got stuck forever.*

■ REKHA in *The Hindustan Times*

● *People here don't believe in talent. Only star value. One hit and they run after you. One flop and they are all gone.*

■ PADMINI KOLHAPURE in *Filmfare*

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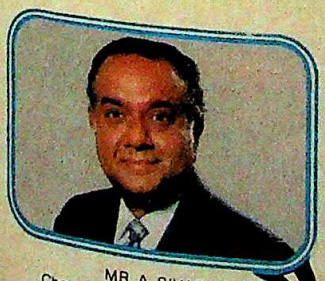

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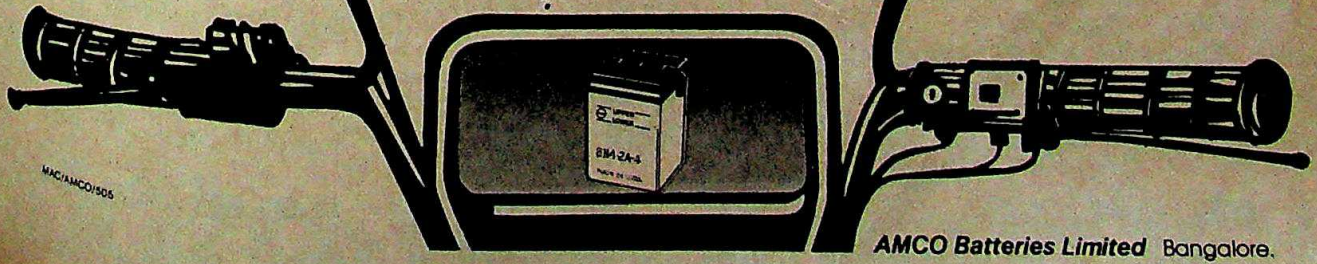

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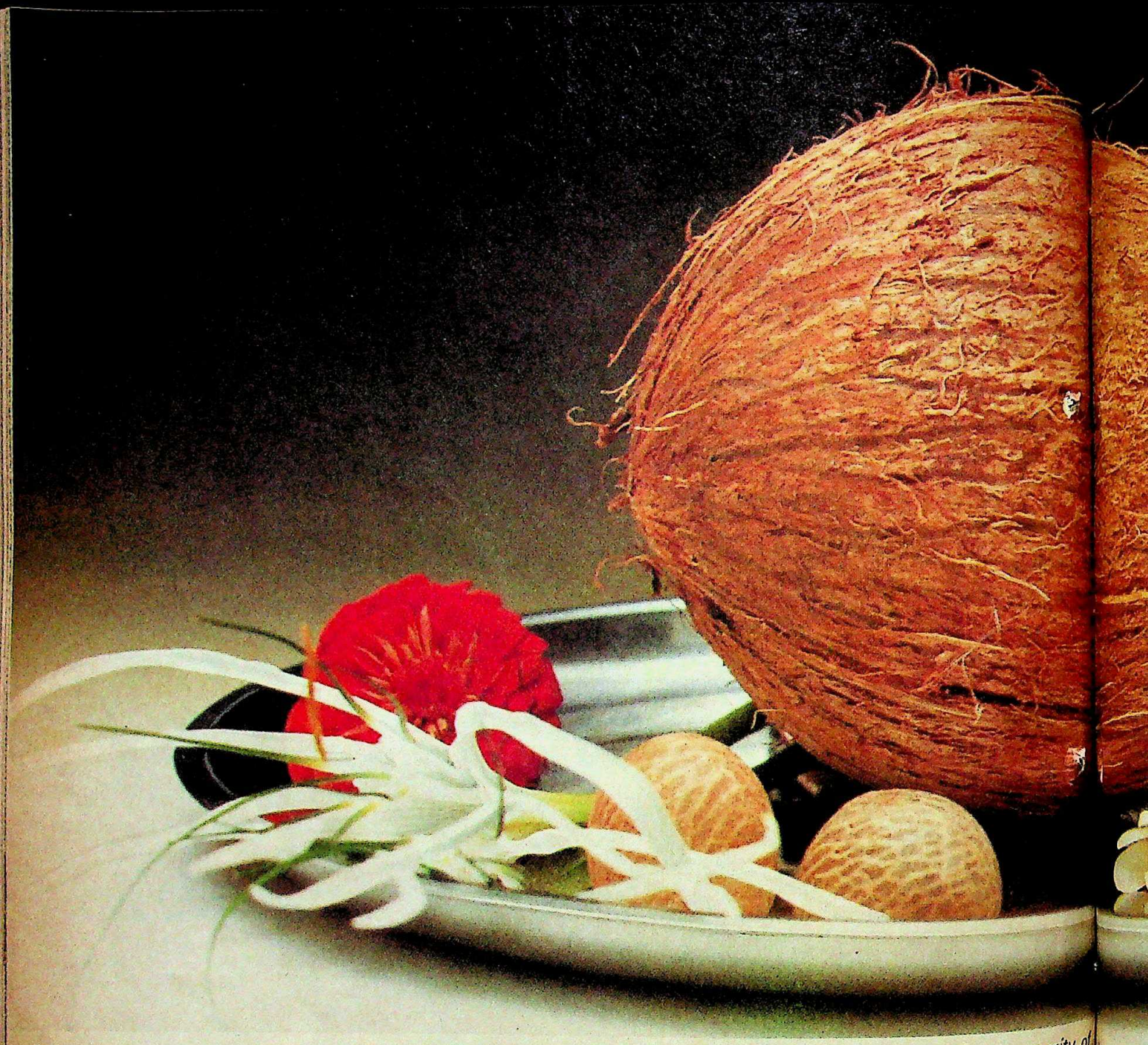

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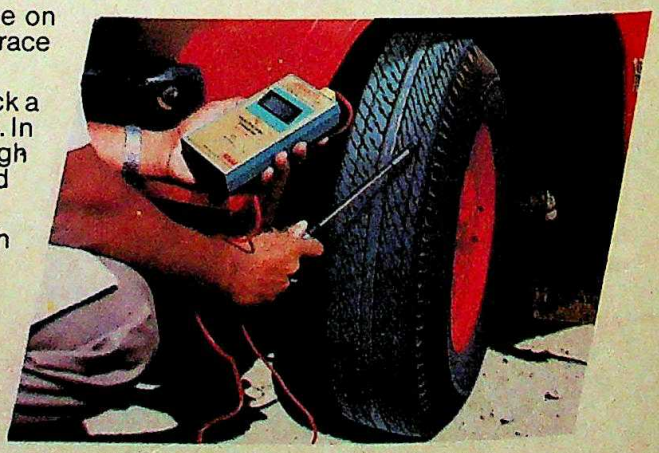

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FERRYING PAINS

■ One of the get-away-from-it-all places for the Bombay-bruised is Manori, a quiet island approached by a ferry. The women of Manori carry their vegetable and fish produce every day to town, crossing the water in a boat which looks as if it's going to sigh and sink any minute. However, as the fare on this boat is one-tenth that on the bigger and much more secure water sprite run by BEST, nobody minds.

Last fortnight, however, the rickety raft broke down and the grumbling women, laden with dried fish and fresh vegetables were forced to take the BEST ferry. The conductor licked his chops and went energetically clambering over baskets to demand his Rs 1.60 from each passenger, plus an additional charge for the luggage.

The journey doesn't take five minutes and almost half the women had still to cough up when the ferry was close to land. Already, some of the women were grinning widely at the free ride, when a sharp order from the conductor made the helmsman spin the wheel around; the ferry took off for open sea and stayed there until everybody—men, women, children, dried fish and damp pumpkins—had paid up. That's called being taken for a ride.

LANGUAGE HACKS

■ The pitfalls of translating from one language to another are well-known. But how deep they are has become bewilderingly clear to a group of Ahmedabad students who began to give the much-delayed SSC examinations last month. The very first question paper—physical education theory—was laid out in both Gujarati and English and while the Gujarati section was comprehensible, the English section, to put it mildly, was not. Samples:

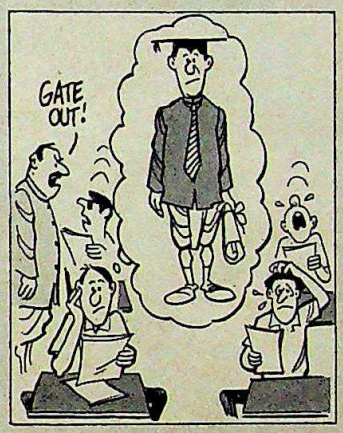
When gate bones points?

In the game when the ball are broken? What will you do?

How will given number of winner in the 100 metres run?

What are the timing of men and women in kabaddi?

And so on and so forth.



Frantic querying ascertained that the questions had been translated by a group of clearly asinine hacks. But the paper had to be answered and after much heart-searching over whether 'when gate bones points' referred to the bonus points one gets or gate in cricket, the students read the questions in Gujarati and answered them in English. What mark men gate afterwards is yet to be made clear.

STICKY OFFERING

■ There are few Ralph Naders in this country and the name of the game in bazars, big and small, is adulteration. Thus, stones find their way into rice, yellow powder into turmeric, etcetera, etcetera. The authorities, in this as in everything else, seem to be ineffectual.

But there is one gentleman who is not: the municipal health officer of Shimoga in Karnataka. He received information that a group of grocers were selling junk butter in Gandhi Bazar. Gathering a posse of babus, he rushed to the bazar and caught the merchants of melange red-handed. Ordinarily, he would have jailed them and asked for a heavy fine to be levied but he was an imaginative person and decided to try God when everything else had failed.

So he took his guilty group to a nearby statue of the god Basava and made them swear a majestic oath that they would never, never, never again in their lives mix anything into anything—except for gin and lime. They swore, so help them Basava, and in a grand if sticky finale, the entire mound of adulterated butter was poured over the statue as an offering. What the God felt about such tainted libation has not been recorded.

SOUND TRACK

■ The night locals in Bombay are usually the haunt of beggar-singers laden with all kinds of instruments from a battered harmonium to a tuneful violin made from an earthen pot, a bit of wire and a slat of wood. The audience consists of third shifters going home, drunks and the homeless.

Last month, the 12.15 a.m. from Borivli to Churchgate had a smattering of the city's low *monde*. At Mahim, a blind harmonium hacker got on from one entrance of a carriage and a tanpura thrummer, one leg missing, from the other. Both nearly came to blows—obviously one was poaching on the other's territory. The motley residents of the carriage called for a contest to decide who would work the carriage.

The blind man's fingers raced as they never had before over the keys, his voice rising sonorously through the octaves as he sought to drown out the endearingly monotonous twang of the thrummer and his partner's drumming on a Postman oil tin. In the end the blind man won—but alas, there were only two stations left and half the audience had gone.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

LINTAS-M MRF NCT 17a

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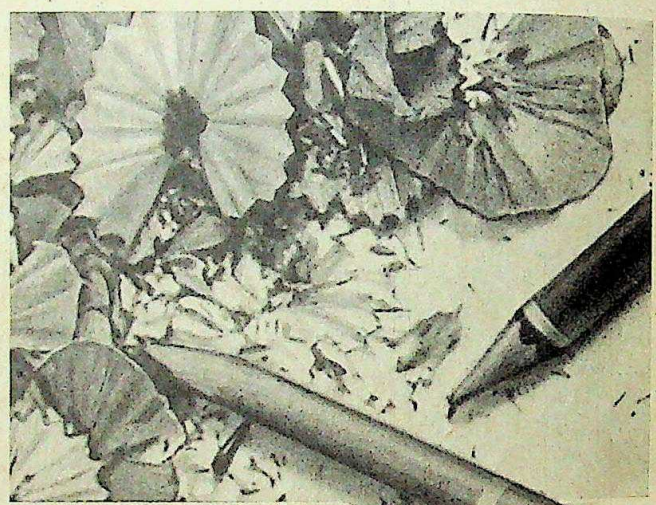

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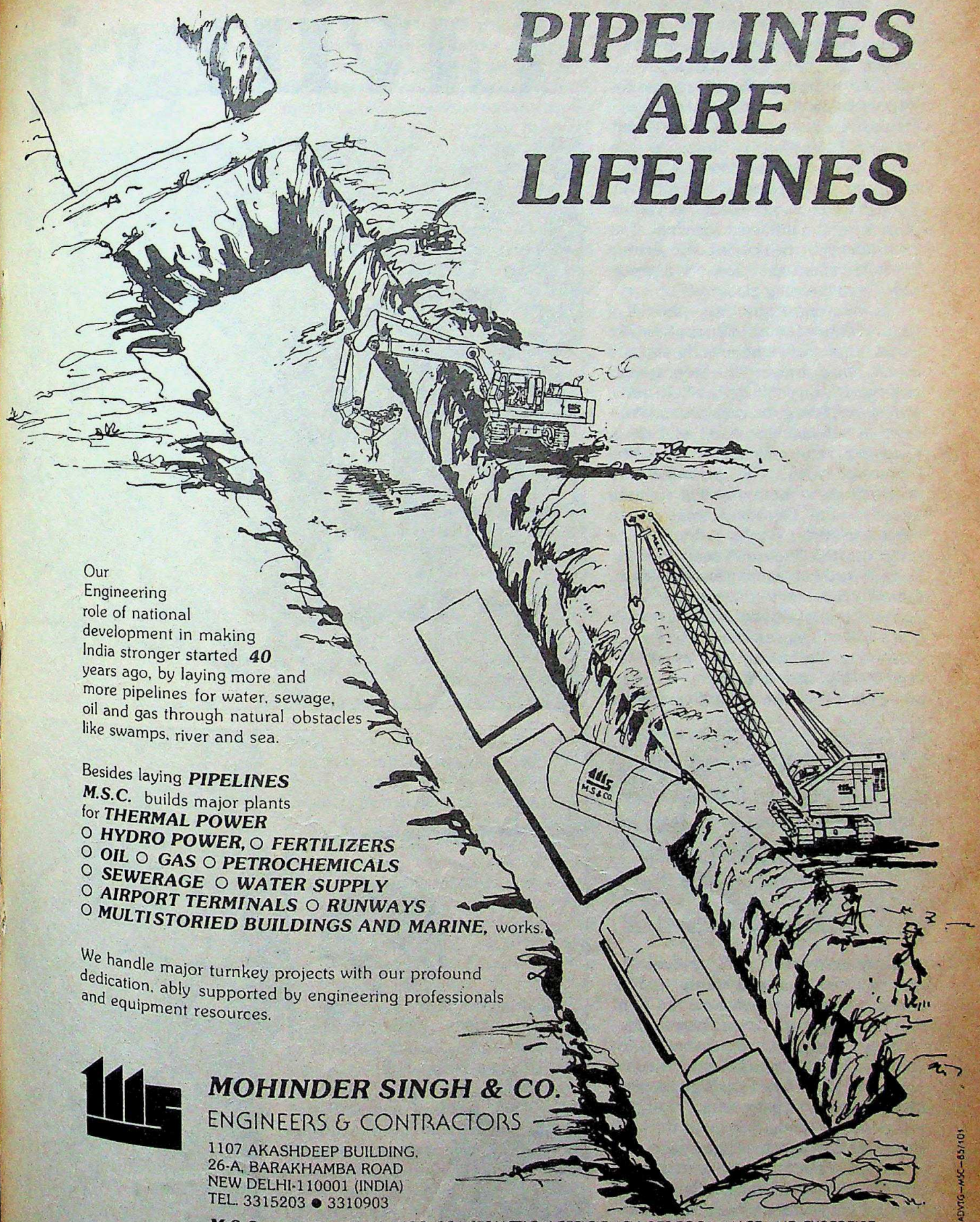

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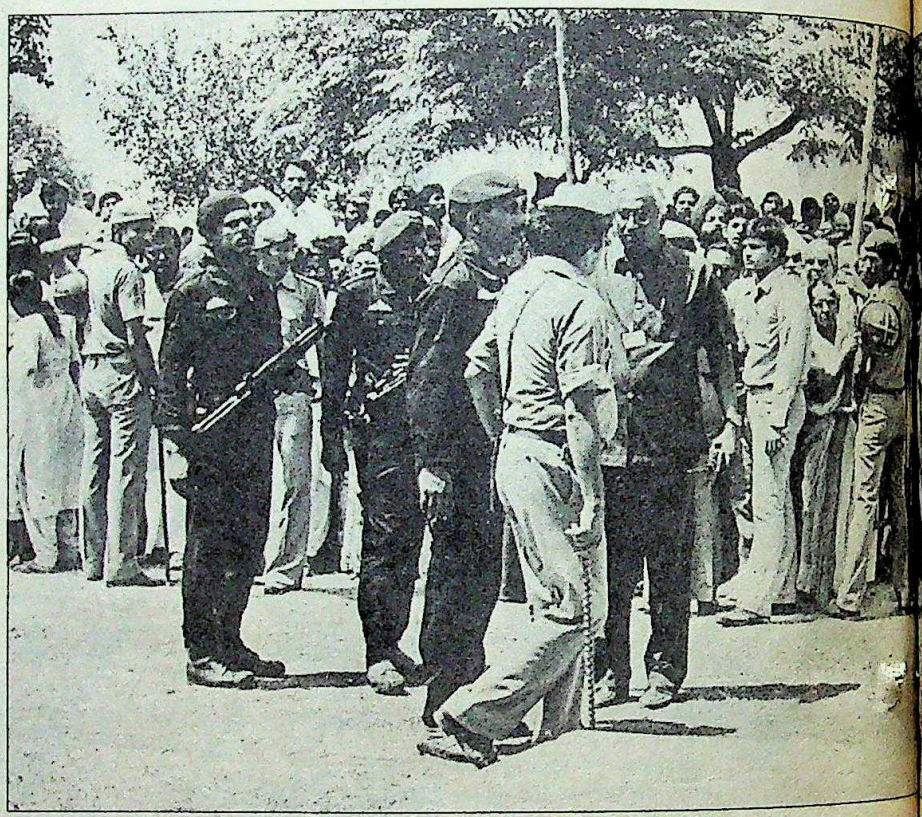
HIT LIST

Living in F

THEIR life is as vulnerable as that of a silkworm, protected only by a cocoon of security. On the wide sunlit streets of New Delhi's VIP districts, their homes, looking deceptively secure from outside, are stalked by death night and day. The prime minister, his cabinet colleagues, a few secretaries to the Government, some MP's, some Congress(I) leaders and businessmen—altogether 106 people in the capital now live permanently in the shadow of assassination. Though life flows on as usual, and public postures are maintained somehow, fear permeates even their households, altering life-styles, affecting expressions and attitudes, and breeding gloom.

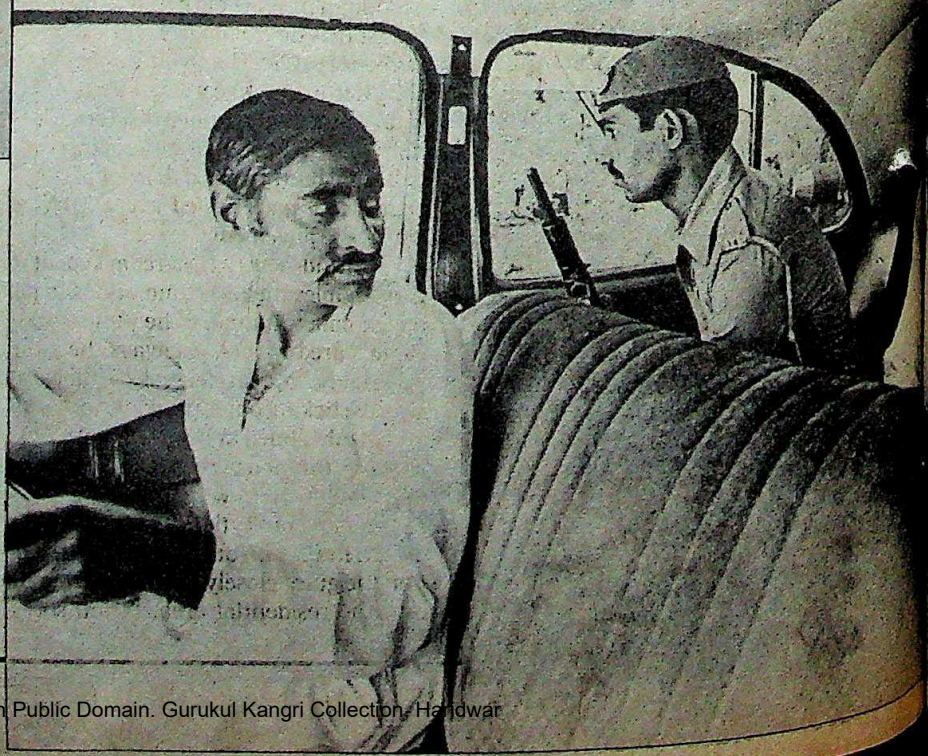
Lalit Maken, Arjun Dass—the roll of death in the past two months has been like a *memento mori*, heightening the fear and consequently drawing the security nets closer and thicker. Altogether 2,000 men, armed with Sten guns, carbines and West German sub-machine guns, and using nearly 500 vehicles, guard the lives of the threatened men. The personnel are drawn from as many as five separate agencies—the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF); the Border Security Force (BSF); the Intelligence Bureau (IB); the Delhi Armed Police (DAP); and the newly-formed crack unit under the Cabinet Secretariat, the National Security Guards (NSG). Twice bitten, and now very shy, the gun-toting Praetorian guards of the capital's high-risk citizens are now an omnipresent tribe, escorting their charges



> "It is over a year now since I've been to a movie. Yes I'm safe. As safe as Lalit or Arjun felt perhaps."
>
> JAGDISH TYTLER

to every destination, frisking even the nearest of relatives and taking security not only up to their doorsteps but right into their living-rooms and bedrooms.

There are, of course, categories involved in the threat assessment of the men in the net. The "Very Very High Security Risk" (VVHSR) category, which really involves people thought to be at the very centre of the terrorists' gun-sight, includes but a handful of people—the prime minister; Home Minister S.B.Chavan; Agriculture Minister Buta Singh; Parliamentary Affairs Minister and prominent Delhi MP H.K.L.Bhagat; Cabinet Secretary



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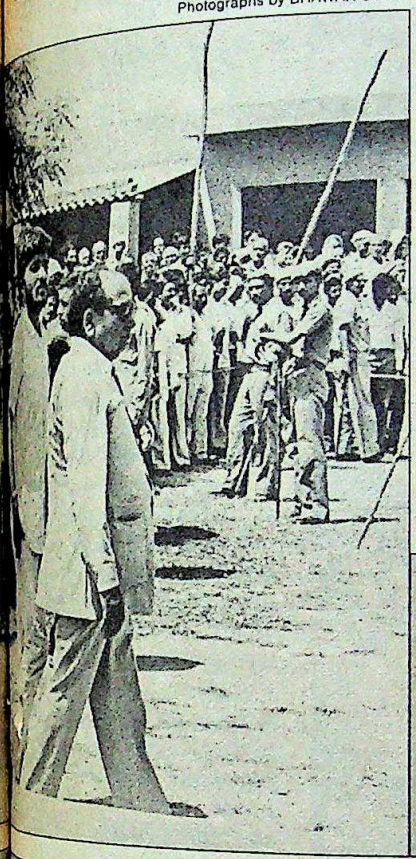
n Fear

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



P.K.Kaul; Home Secretary R.D.Pradhan; and All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) Joint Secretary Jagdish Tytler, who is also a prominent Delhi MP and a well-known butt of terrorist revenge.

There is a middle category of "Very High Security Risk" (VHSR) people which, apart from other ministers and secretaries to the Government, includes men like Sajjan Kumar and Dharam Dass Shastri, former Delhi MP's who, through the controversial report compiled by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), had been implicated in the riots of November last year. This category also includes Delhi Sikh leader Jathedar Rachpal Singh; city Mayor M.S. Saathi; as many as four metropolitan councillors; and, oddly, Tejwant Singh, managing director of the Skipper group of companies, the builders who were instrumental in the reconstruction of the Akal Takht Sahib at the Golden Temple in Amritsar as a part of kar seva.

Tired within but anxious to put up a brave front, the men in the security cordon are exposed to a harrowing nightmare. Together they form a touching mosaic of men under mental siege, caught as though in some dark tunnel of history that shows no exit door. Some examples:

JAGDISH TYTLER: The two-storeyed house of Tytler in the Karol Bagh area is now conspicuous even from a distance. There are five security vehicles, including a CRPF van, constantly parked in front of it, with armed DAP men posted every 10 yards along the pavement.

A brand-new red intercom kept at the gate enables the NSG commandos to pass on the caller's name. If the visitor, at this stage, cared to look sideways, he would invariably find at least two Sten gun barrels sticking out of the waiting vehicles and firmly aimed at him. Once cleared at the gate, the men with the metal detectors have their turn to work over him. Thereafter, two of Tytler's own followers, drawn from the Youth Congress(I), question the guest closely before showing him into the residential area. "I am sorry", says an amiable Tytler, "but I hope you'll agree that all that precaution is really necessary."

Nobody will really disagree with him. Last fortnight, Tytler received at least half a dozen threatening telephone calls from Montreal, New York and London, apart from the countless menacing letters that he keeps receiving from Punjab and the rest of the country anyway. The language differs, but not the content. Besides, some letters pointedly refer to the PUCL-PUDR report on the riots which contains an annexure giving a list of "those alleged to have instigated violence and/or protected alleged criminals". Tytler's name is sixth on that list.

The evidence produced in the report in justification of including Tytler's name in the list is tenuous. The only testimony that has been cited is that of a letter to the PUCL saying that Tytler had barged into a press conference of the then commissioner of police, Subhash Tandon, on November 6 and had told Tandon: "By holding my men you are hampering relief work." Latching on to this sentence it went on to insinuate that Tytler was actually interfering in police work or even trying to get his men, arrested for having participated in the riots, released.

But Tytler, who admits having spoken those words, explains that the "men" are neither his private goons nor those detained for rioting, but the 350 Sikh refugees waiting at Sadar police station to be shifted back to their homes at Malkagunj and Roshanara Road areas under police guard. According to him, the Hindu leaders, who had come at his behest to take the marooned Sikhs back home, were waiting at the police station, but the authorities were repeatedly failing in their promise to provide CRPF pickets for the Sikhs. "It was at this point that I barged into the commissioner's room and told him the exact words—by holding my men you're hampering relief work," Tytler says.

It is indeed hard to assume Tytler to be a Sikh-baiter. He is himself a Sikh by birth whose father was killed during the Partition riots at Kunjrawalla across the border. Tytler was only three when his mother, a devout Sikh, crossed over and came to Delhi. His marriage to Jennifer, who is now the principal of the Tytlers' family school, was solemnised according to Sikh rites, by the Granth Sahib.

The charges against him may be debatable, but the threat to his life is real. As MP from the Sadar constituency, he has to meet at least 300 people daily which he mostly does at home; visiting his office at Gurudwara Rakabgunj Road only on

> **"No Congressman is ever afraid of terrorism."**
>
> H.K.L. BHAGAT

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unscheduled timings and in cars that he keeps changing, borrowing them from friends. For him, the front balcony to the house is out of bounds. "It is over a year now that I have been to a movie," he says. Friends and relatives have now stopped calling the Tytlers over for a dinner because "I hate to be conspicuous with even my hosts being frisked for security reasons". Worst of all, Tytler, who is 41, confides that he has written out his will and has transferred his joint accounts in the name of his wife. Does he feel safe with all the securitymen guarding him with such demonstrated vigour? "Oh yes, I'm safe," says he with a wooden smile, "as safe as Lalit or Arjun felt, perhaps."

"I'm now only an ordinary citizen. But it is always good to a take few precautions."

DHARAM DASS SHASTRI

"I have stopped going out anywhere now. I don't even go to my bank."

TEJWANT SINGH

DHARAM DASS SHASTRI: The charge of involvement in the riots cost Shastri his nomination from the reserved constituency of Karol Bagh. "Now it may cost me my life," says the bearded, bespectacled Harijan leader of the Congress(I). Immediately after Arjun Dass's killing, the security ring tightened around Shastri, with BSF commandos trailing him everywhere in a hired car with a DLY licence plate and DAP personnel wielding metal detectors checking every visitor.

Again, the anonymous telephone calls to Shastri reiterate his role in the November riots and cite the PUCL-PUDR report as the source of information. The report says, in a chapter entitled "Role of Congress(I)": "Similarly in Anand Parbat, Congress(I) councillors like Bhairava, Mahendra and Mangat Ram, considered to be loyal followers of the Congress(I) MP Dharam Dass Shastri, were named as the main culprits. In Prakash Nagar, Congress(I) people were carrying voters' lists to identify Sikh households."

Shastri's contention is that the people named in the report as councillors from Anand Parbat are actually not so and there is no area called Prakash Nagar in Karol Bagh. "The entire PUCL-PUDR report," according to him, "is a figment of imagination of a handful of people who were trying to fish in troubled waters."

But the justification offered by him is unlikely to cut ice with the authors of the so-called hit-list—the dark merchants of death constantly lurking in the background. "I'm an ordinary citizen now, not an MP. But I am not demoralised," says the dapper politician, clad in his trademark safari suit. But the peppy words only highlight the fear inside. Shastri has stopped attending the family's cooking gas agency and makes public appearances only rarely, knowing that it might result in his presence gradually fading away from public memory. "It is always good to take a few precautions," he mumbles while boarding the car, with the security vehicle in tow, that would carry him from the "political office," far from his former constituency, to his fortress-like home.

H.K.L. BHAGAT: The spacious bungalow of the Union minister for parliamentary affairs, on Prithviraj Road now resembles a busy forward army outpost. Its lawns are dug up for the laying of high-voltage power cables that would light up the front. Inside, one hears the constant tap of the mason's hammer: a baffle-wall is coming up here; a badly-exposed window is being sealed up there; at another corner, a reinforced concrete sentry-box is being installed. The NSG commandos in their black dungarees, wielding machine pistols, are visible not only on the lawns but right inside the house. Bhagat functions mostly from home these days, and feels caged. Last fortnight he gave way to his yearnings and, as it is his old habit, took an hour off to join friends at a coffee house—his regular haunt on Sunday mornings for the past 20 years. But the securitymen encircled the place, checked every corner of the restaurant with bomb detectors, and waited outside with guns at the ready until the object of their vigilance left the place. It made no one happy: neither Bhagat nor his friends.

The PUCL-PUDR report mentioned Bhagat as having had an indirect hand in the carnage in the trans-Yamuna area, particularly the worst-affected Block 32 at Trilokpuri. But Bhagat's associates say

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that the Labana Sikhs residing in that area were all resettled by Bhagat himself from their earlier dungeon-like homes at Kasturbanagar. More significantly, in December 1984, barely eight weeks after the carnage, the voters of the same Block 32, who were carried from their camps under police escort to the polling booths to exercise their franchise, cast 95 per cent of their votes in favour of Bhagat. The question asked by Bhagat's supporters is: if he had really been responsible, directly or otherwise, for the mayhem why did he still remain so popular?

Yet Bhagat's name tops the PUCL-PUDR list of "politicians who had instigated violence" which, he insists, is "the source-material for the terrorists' hit-list, if any." Like all politicians haunted by the fear of a sudden strike, Bhagat too is struggling to pass it off as business as usual, being occasionally seen at public places, just as he spiritedly turned up at the funeral of Arjun Dass at great personal risk. But household members testify that his hours of meditation at the family temple inside his personal residence at Model Town has gone up. On the wall of his bedroom is hung a portrait of Guru Nanak—his lucky mascot—within a day of installation of which he was appointed a minister. He prays by its side every morning now. He is no longer his old, ebullient self, full of good humour and loquacious defence of his party. He has of late become forgetful, petulant, morose—like a man who has not slept well for quite some time. He gives a start even when a family member suddenly enters his room, for the perfectly innocuous purpose of serving tea to him and his guests.

TEJWANT SINGH: With his flowing salt-and-pepper beard, 45-year-old Tejwant Singh, managing director of the Skipper group of real estate and construction companies, looks every inch the merry businessman hardly perturbed by the political turmoil all around. But informed people know of Tejwant Singh's contacts in the Congress(I) and his long-standing friendship with Buta Singh, the Union agriculture minister, as well as with President Giani Zail Singh. But his friendships alone would not have brought him into the vortex of terror had he not taken up the job of re-erecting the Akal Takht Sahib in Amritsar after Operation Bluestar. Charging not even a paisa, Tejwant Singh personally supervised the reconstruction of the 17th century temple, made of white marble and plaster. "I did it in the spirit of kar seva. If my own house needs repairs, shouldn't I carry them out ? If my Guru's house is in disrepair, isn't it my duty to see that things are put right again?"

But his name was mentioned in the press, and he got immediately bombarded with threats. And, after the assassination of Arjun Dass, the contingent of BSF and DAP guards promptly took up posts, guarding his office on Barakhamba Road and his palatial house on Prithviraj Road. "I've stopped going out anywhere now. I don't even go to my bank," he says with the embarrassed smile of a man unused to functioning through troubled times.

BUTA SINGH: "Traitor". "Dog of India". "Death to you". These are but some of the mildest endearments that mark the threatening letters pouring in hundreds into the house of Buta Singh, Union agriculture minister and the lone Sikh in Rajiv Gandhi's Council of Ministers. A devoted Sikh, and a sturdy Congressman who had not yielded an inch even after being excommunicated from the panth by a *hukumnama*, Buta Singh had been rated by intelligence services as one of the most likely targets of terrorist attack. And he has lived so long in the shadow of death that it has altered his attitude to life.

Every evening, he listens to the *kirtan sohla* which is indeed his own benediction. "I belive in the words of the *Gurbani* that say the time of your death is destined and is more definite than the time of your birth," he says. But there is much more than sheer fatalism that marks the current life of Buta Singh. He still visits Punjab, having gone to his home state four times since the July accord between the Centre and the Akali Dal. But he meets people only in closed offices, or within the secure innards of an agricultural university. He mostly flies, and his tour schedules are seldom announced. Buta Singh can no longer pray at the gurudwara with his family members. "I go alone, say my prayers, and come back. I cannot go at fixed times."

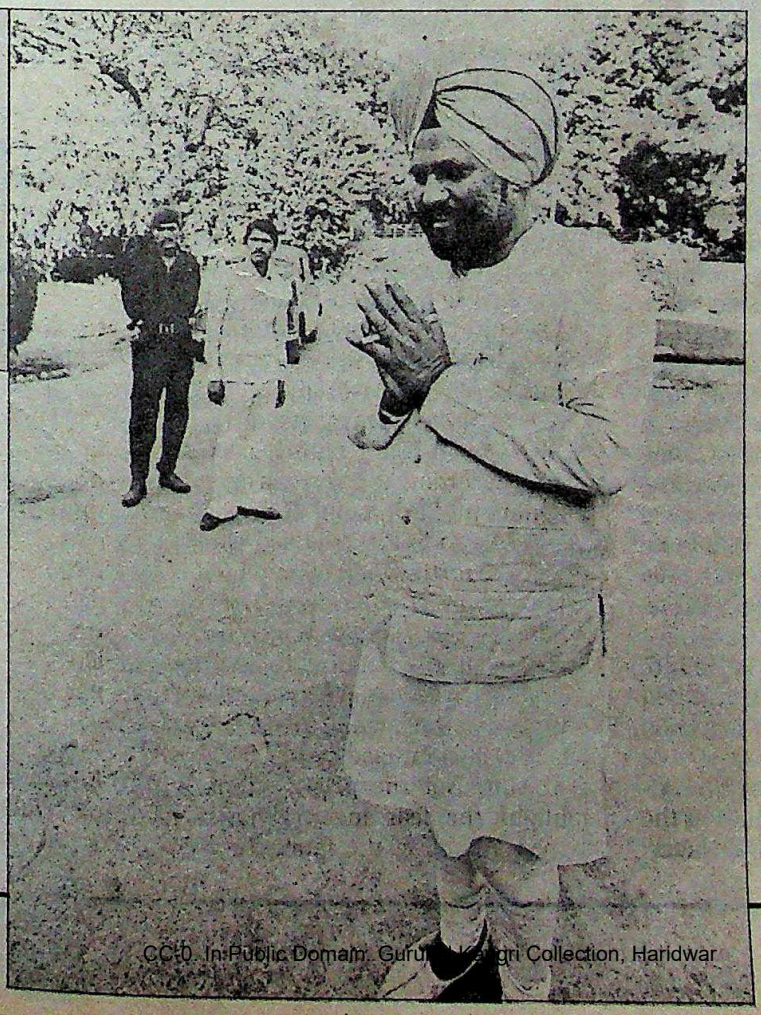
His residence on Ashoka Road is guarded by nearly 100 securitymen who frisk over 200 visitors, mostly Sikhs, who see him every morning. He has recently been advised to see fewer people but that is a tough demand considering the fact that there is no other Sikh leader of comparable stature in the Government. Even last year, he was in sole charge of the largest post-riot relief camp at Gurudwara Nanaksar in Wazirabad where 10,000 refugees were concentrated. As works and housing minister at that time, he handed over flats at Trilok Vihar to the 300 widows who had lost their husbands and other relatives during the riots.

In the game of survival against terrorist attacks, risks are always high. "But the spirit," Buta Singh said, "always dies earlier than the body." The politicians in the terrorist death row are trying to fight off this agonising death of the spirit, but with varying degrees of success.

—PRABHU CHAWLA and SUMIT MITRA

"The spirit always dies earlier than the body."

BUTA SINGH



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TERRORISM

Shock Tactics

IF THE assassination of Sant Longowal gave grave cause for concern in government circles, worse was still to come last fortnight when terrorists struck again in the heart of the capital in broad daylight, gunning down Congress(I) councillor Arjun Dass. Timed as it was when elections had been announced in Punjab and less than five weeks after the brutal shooting down of Congress(I) MP Lalit Maken and his wife, the dramatic killing set off panic buttons in the North Block nerve-centre that houses the Home Ministry: officials responsible for security were severely reprimanded by Home Minister S.B.Chavan and overnight the capital was converted into a fortress with gun-toting policemen taking up vantage points, for the second time in five weeks.

Under pressure to produce results the Delhi police swung into action making wholesale arrests including that of Jagdish Singh, described as a prominent wanted extremist after he consumed poison in the form of potassium cyanide powder kept in his shirt pocket and killed himself within minutes of his detention. But in a move that evoked sharp criticism from a section of the Sikh community, Harmeet Singh, a Delhi University lecturer along with five others was picked up and booked under the Terrorists Act. Harmeet Singh was an active Akali Dal(Longowal group) leader in Delhi and although he had known Bhindranwale initially, was said to have severed all connections with extremists of late. His colleagues in the college have condemned his arrest but the police justified the move on the plea that those arrested were closely associated with Jagdish Singh.

Despite the crack-down the police were able to come up with nothing new and had practically no leads to follow in the Arjun Dass killing except to form the most obvious conclusion that it was the handiwork of terrorists who saw both Maken and Dass as having allegedly played a leading role in the anti-Sikh riots immediately after Mrs Gandhi's assassination. Initial police investigations have again raised the suspicion that Lal Singh, the US mercenary camp-trained terrorist, also accused of the Maken killings, may have been one of those involved. His photograph was identified by Shyam Sunder, an ex-policeman who witnessed the Dass slaying and actually chased the assailants for a while before being driven back by gunfire. Besides the manner in which the hit was effected was almost a repeat of the Maken incident, where a stolen two-wheeler scooter was used, with two men doing the firing while the third remained on the scooter all set for a quick getaway.

In some respects the Dass killing was more daring. The office where he was gunned down is in the centre of a market-place less than 100 yards away from the busy Safdarjung flyover which, at that hour of the morning, was thronged with office-going traffic. That the killing was professional was proved beyond doubt because the terrorists relied on speed and were obviously trained marksmen. One of them first shot the security guard dead at a pace of about 15 feet before spraying the other occupants of the office with a Sten gun.

But what the slaying also revealed was the undoubtable fact that the Delhi police are just not equipped to cope with terrorist attacks of this nature. Dass was provided with a bodyguard armed only with a pistol. Further, the Delhi police

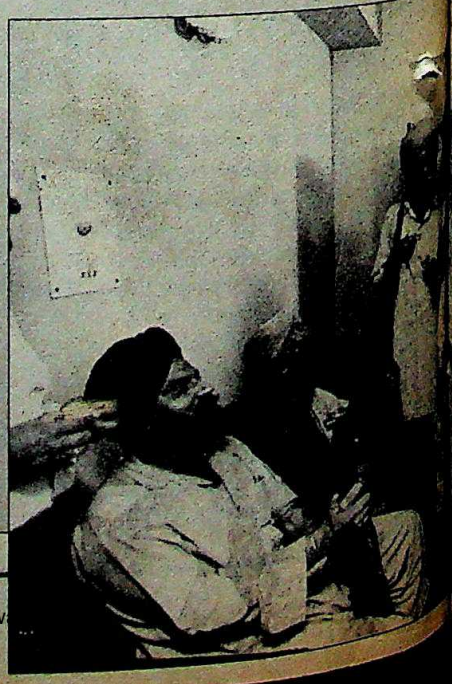
LONGOWAL INQUIRY

Gross Failure

IF THE Government is serious about tackling the terrorist threat, then it would appear to have some embarrassing basic lessons still to be learnt. The detailed inquiry into the assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal on August 20 has revealed that there was "gross failure" on the part of the massive security detail assigned to protect the life of a man who was then recognised as the number one terrorist target after Rajiv Gandhi and President Zail Singh. This included 200-odd police and CRPF jawans led by Superintendent of Police Jeet Singh and a dozen Punjab Armed Police (PAP) commandos who comprised the inner security cordon. The Punjab governor's security adviser, Lt-General Gauri Shankar visited Sherpur, where the Akali leader was gunned down, on three separate occasions in the course of his detailed investigation, and has come up with findings that are shocking.

These include the fact that none of the commandos were anywhere near Longowal. According to one senior source, they were actually sipping tea at a roadside tea-stall when the first shots rang out. Jeet Singh, the man in charge, was some distance away, relaxing in the house of a friend in the village and only reached the spot after the assassins had fled. "We never in our wildest dreams expected such a cavalier attitude," admits a senior Punjab security officer. Jeet

Longowal's PAP security guards relaxing after the accord: 'gross negligence'



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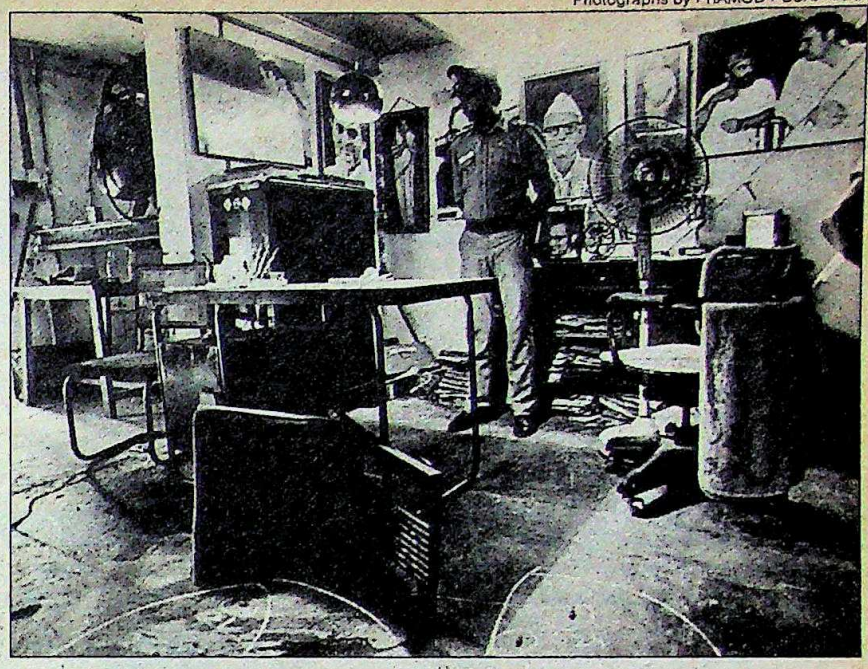

Dass' office after the terrorist attack (right); and grieving relatives at the funeral

moved with unaccountable sluggishness from the time the incident was first reported to the control room. The incident occurred at 9.20 a.m. when three men in a green-coloured scooter drove into Laxmibai Market where Dass' office was located. The killers had chosen the time well, just before the shops were due to open. Dass himself was sitting in his chair with a diary opened in front of him. Others in his office were Baldev Raj, his younger brother, Mukesh Bhatt, his personal assistant, Rajendra Upadhyaya, a job seeker and Mahadevi and Parvati, two women who had come to see the councillor.

Upadhyaya and the two ladies were sitting on a bench outside with the security guard standing a few feet away. In the words of Upadhyaya there was initially nothing suspicious about the two clean shaven men, one carrying a bag, who drove up to the office. They asked him whether Dass was in the office. When Upadhyaya replied in the affirmative one of the assassins whipped out a revolver from the bag and shot the security guard, constable Vijendra Singh, who did not even have time to reach for his pistol. The killers then entered the small cramped office where Arjun Dass and the others had little hope of defending themselves or escaping the sudden hail of bullets. When the police reached the spot, the bloodstains and some 29 spent bullets were the only evidence left of the brutal and merciless attack.

The irony was that the shooting attracted no attention with the main road barely 50 metres away and the scooter-borne assailants merely joined the busy traffic going towards the Safdarjung flyover and vanished literally into thin air. The police reaction no doubt helped in the escape. The control room was informed at 9.25, five minutes after the incident and a police jeep was dispatched. Simultaneously, the district police was informed. But it took them several minutes to verify and report back to control. The other districts were informed at 10.15 a.m. and road blockades were set up by 10.30, exactly one hour after the incident by which time the terrorists had ample opportunity to abandon the vehicle and make their getaway.

ngh, along with DSP Balwant Singh, head constables Kewal Singh and Kartar Singh and a constable have been dismissed. Five others have been suspended.

But what has really baffled everyone, including Governor Arjun Singh, is the fact of Jeet Singh being put in such a sensitive position. Jeet Singh had earlier worked under Simranjit Singh Mann, the Punjab police officer who resigned after Operation Bluestar and is now detained under NSA. Further, Jeet Singh's screening for the post of security head for Longowal revealed many shortfalls, none of which seemed to have been taken into account. More intriguing is the fact that key terrorist Sewa Singh, an ex-constable, who allegedly masterminded a number of murders in Punjab and has now fled the country, was Jeet Singh's personal bodyguard when he was DSP in Faridkot. In a previous screening exercise, the committee had recommended Jeet Singh's compulsory retirement but strings were pulled and instead he was posted to the PAP.

The sorry tale does not end there. Twice, during meetings of security officials to discuss Longowal's protection, state intelligence chief, M.C. Trikh asked his colleague in the PAP, IG (operations) K.P.S. Gill, not to assign Jeet Singh the task since his record was questionable. Gill had agreed and another officer, Gurbachan Singh Mann, had been selected in his place. For some still inexplicable reason, Jeet Singh was posted instead on August 19. The same day, the state CID sent an urgent signal demanding his replacement. Gill reacted to the message and replied that he would be replaced after three days. The delay was to prove tragically fatal.

— GOBIND THUKRAL

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The only positive element in the killings was the tightening up of police procedures. Police Commissioner Ved Marwah has initiated measures to reduce the response time in the control room as much as possible, now geared to within three minutes of a telephone call. A system of mobile patrol cars constantly on wireless standby has also been introduced so that police vehicles can reach the spot within minutes of an incident. But clearly the Government is at fault for failing to respond to frantic pleas for an overhaul of the existing police system.

In a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Delhi Administration some weeks before the Dass killing, Marwah had suggested a thorough overhaul of the Delhi police. He had pleaded that instead of posting guards armed only with pistols there should be at least two guards, one armed with a Sten gun. He also re-emphasised the need for more and faster vehicles and more up-to-date communication equipment. Delhi Administration officials however denied that there was any move initiated by Marwah, as reported in the media, to bring in officers with the right training from outside.

After the incident officials in the Home Ministry are now examining schemes to set up specific anti-terrorist squads in strategic cities. The other aspect is better communication and proper briefing. Most of those manning the roadblocks set up an hour after the Dass killing did not have a clue as to who were to be stopped. A few had been told to stop all two-wheelers but generally only those driven by Sikhs were stopped when it was well known by then that the terrorists were clean shaven. Says an intelligence official: "A useful roadblock within minutes of the incident over a 5 km area would have been sufficient."

Police officials investigating the murder, however, seemed confident that the interrogation of those arrested so far would provide vital clues. Meanwhile security measures have been beefed up for others on the extremist hit list. The residences of MP Jagdish Tytler, former MP Dharam Das Shastri and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, H.K.L. Bhagat—named in the PUCL report as having masterminded the Delhi riots—have been provided with security guards from the specially-trained Special Frontier Force, the crack commando unit. But eventually, that, as the Dass murder demonstrated, is a case of too much too late. —RAJU SANTHANAM

GUJARAT

The New Force

IRONIES never cease in politics and the latest in Gujarat, which is ruled by its first-ever tribal chief minister, is that the installation of Amarsinh Chaudhary has led to the re-emergence of the powerful high-caste Patel community as a dominant social force. And the man who symbolises this Patel power, and who has emerged as the power behind Chaudhary's throne, is the Health Minister, Vallabhai Patel, 62, a frailly-built farm leader from Saurashtra.

Vallabhai: power behind the throne

Chaudhary's predecessor, Madhavsinh Solanki, had deliberately alienated the prosperous Patels—and paid the price for it—but it is clear Chaudhary will not make the same mistake.

In a way it was inevitable that the "Chhote Sardar," as Patel is affectionately called by his clansmen, would shoot into prominence after Chaudhary took over in early July. The two major problems that he inherited from Solanki—the anti-reservation agitation and the strike by high-caste government employees—were largely a legacy of Solanki's confrontation with the Patels. And Vallabhai Patel proved crucial in getting both sets of agitationists around. First he won over Shankerbhai Patel, the leader of the Parents' Association spearheading the anti-reservation agitation, to score the Chaudhary Ministry's first major breakthrough within days of taking charge. Then, in under a month, Patel, in collaboration with Finance Minister Arvind Sanghvi, persuaded the government employees to call off their 73-day strike.

But Patel's crucial role in the twin breakthroughs, which brought peace to the state barely received the attention it deserved. His new-found importance was more than evident when the land-grab scandal involving an influential industrialist Popatbhai Patel, hit the headlines (INDIA TODAY, August 31). Popatbhai was arrested by Rajkot Collector Devendra Kumar Sikri but Patel barely concealed his intervention in favour of his friend which led to the industrialist's prompt release. His move somewhat sullied his reputation and today Patel looks back upon it with regret. As he said: "I will now try not to say anything like this again. I am new to the ministry and do not know what I should not say."

Starting out as an instructor in his native village of Koliyakhad in Rajkot district with the Gujarat State Cooperative Union, Patel grew into a major figure in the cooperative movement in the state when he started the Rajkot Lodhika Sangh, which is now the largest cooperative of groundnut farmers in India. With the groundnut farmers firmly behind him, he entered politics in the '70s when he realised that entering the portals of power was the surest way of guarding his constituency's interests. He often said publicly that ideologically he belonged to no party; he was in politics only because it was pragmatic to be so. Thus from an independent MLA he switched to the Janata Party when the Babubhai Patel ministry was in power in the mid-'70s, redesignated himself as an independent when the Janata moon waned and finally joined the Congress(I).

As a farm leader he was known for his hard work and his mastery over details but as a minister he has failed to impress bureaucrats. Senior health ministry officials say that their minister spends most of his time pleasing party MLA's by transferring officials on their recommendations. Vallabhai's "mercurial" temperament has also attracted flak since it has resulted in impractical and often illogical decisions being taken. However, with the Patel lobby backing him to the hilt, he is batting on a very good wicket. And as the land-grab scandal indicated, what matters these days is not what or whom a person is but the backing behind him.

—RAMESH MENON

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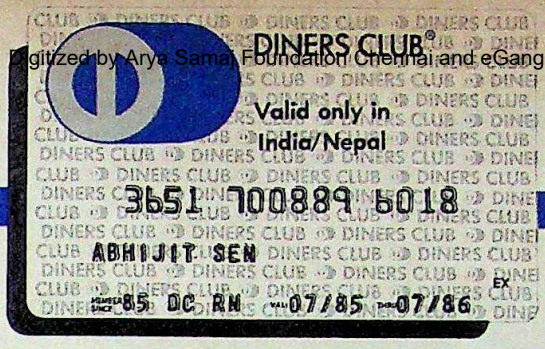

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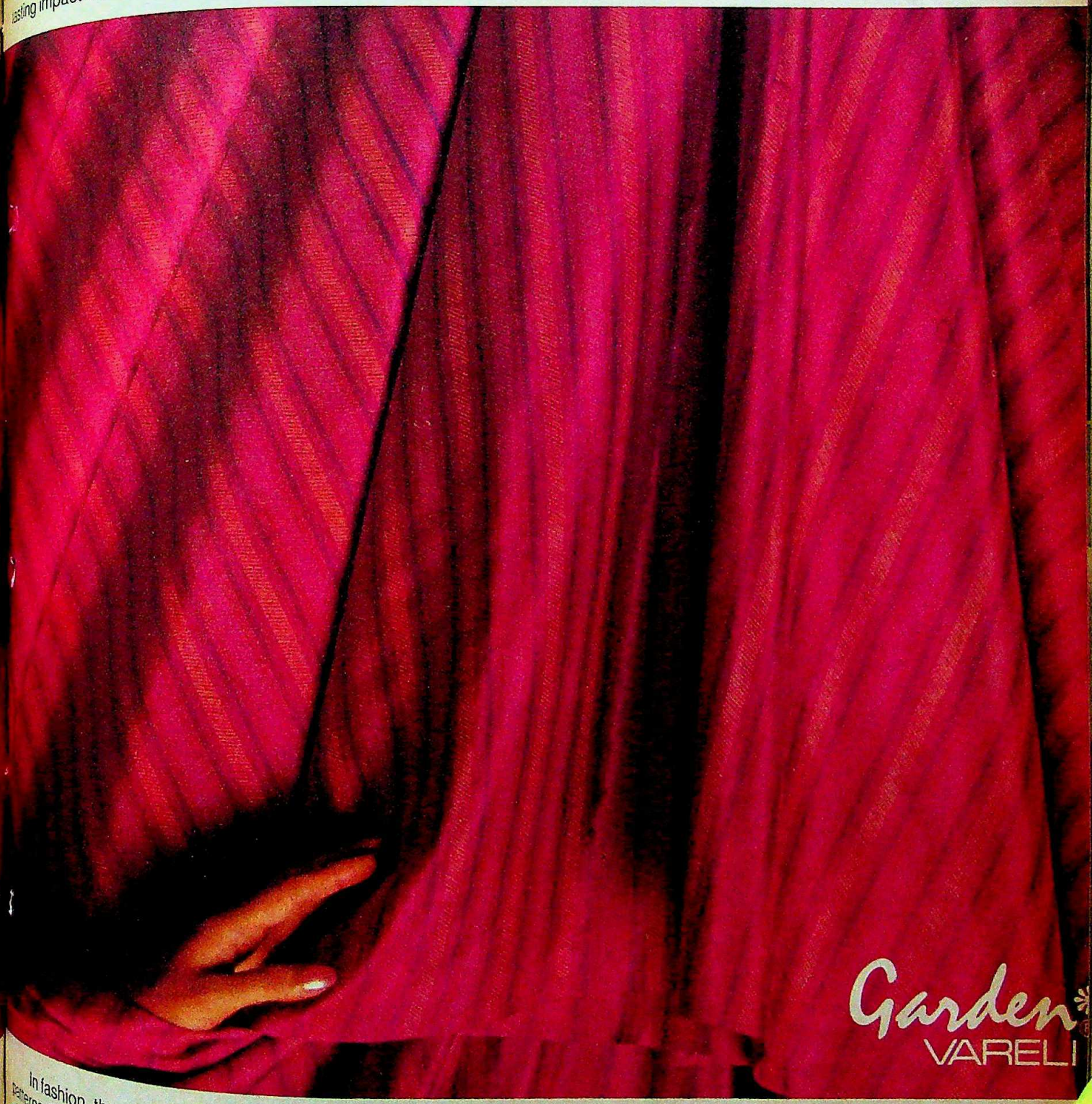

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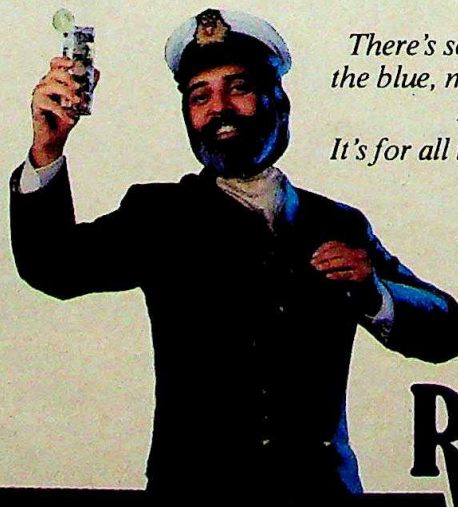

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THAKKAR COMMISSION

Grasping at Straws

THERE could, paradoxically enough, be no better way of keeping alive the memory of the late prime minister Indira Gandhi than by the various commissions and hearings established to probe the manner of her death. In one corner of the capital, the judicial trial of Satwant Singh, one of her suspected assassins, has laboured into its sixth month of prolonged hearings. In the centre of the city, in one corner of Vigyan Bhavan, the Anand Ram team set up late last year to probe the possible contours of the conspiracy, is still to submit its findings. And in another corner of the Vigyan Bhavan complex, the Justice Thakkar Commission set up to examine the security lapses that led to the assassination which was to submit its findings by May 19, has sought a six-month extension.

In the light of the growing menace of terrorist attacks on well-known public figures, the Thakkar Commission's report has perhaps acquired the most urgency. But so far, the in-camera hearings have revealed sadly little. The commission headed by Justice M.P. Thakkar, a sitting Supreme Court judge, was set up in the middle of November last year to examine the following points: the delay on the part of doctors to attend to Mrs Gandhi at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences the lapses on the part of security personnel; the sequence of events leading to Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the conspiracy behind the murder.

With the commission yet to get a detailed report from the Anand Ram team regarding the conspiracy surrounding Mrs Gandhi's assassination, it is likely that it may not be in a position to establish the involvement of other assassins in the plot, if any. The commission has recorded the statements of the doctors who attended on Mrs Gandhi and Delhi police personnel and obtained testimony from several policemen who are likely to be cited as key witnesses. Recorded statements include those of S.R. Gupta, deputy commissioner of police, who was in charge of security at the prime minister's residence. H.D.Pillai, the additional commissioner of security (both of whom were suspended), Subhash Tandon, the then commissioner of police and R.K. Dhawan.

The questions are obviously based on investigation done by the Anand Ram team and the testimony of witnesses. So far, the trend of testimonies obtained by the commission appears to suggest that: Sikh security personnel were visibly upset over Operation Bluestar, a fact not reported at a sufficiently high level; Sikh guards had been removed from the prime minister's house immediately after Bluestar and retained following a protest by the prime minister herself; practically no intelligence existed about a possible attack on the prime minister by her own guards.

Going by the kind of evidence tendered before the commission nothing seemed to go right with those entrusted with the prime minister's security. Barely a few days after Operation Bluestar in June the Sikh security guards in the prime minister's house were removed. But on June 19, R.K. Dhawan called a deputy commissioner in charge of security and asked him why the Sikhs were removed. The police officer reportedly confessed that this was done as a precaution. Dhawan is said to have conveyed Mrs Gandhi's displeasure. The official was asked to show a list of the number of Sikh security guards on duty. There were nine (out of about 400). Dhawan then told the official that by lunchtime the guards would have to be posted back in prominent places so that they were in full view of Mrs Gandhi. The order was implemented.

Justice Thakkar: pursuing red herrings

HARI OM GULATI

Subsidiary concerns and the delay on the part of the Thakkar Commission have raised doubts about whether the probe will eventually be able to come up with anything concrete.

Two senior officials, Pillai and Subhash Tandon, protested against the decision at a meeting on June 22 where M.M.K. Wali, the then home secretary and R.N. Kao, security adviser, were present. The officials have told the commission that they had opposed the decision and their suggestion that the move should be reconsidered was turned down. The officials were prepared for a compromise—the guards should be increased so that the Sikhs could be kept under watch. Another reference to the Sikh personnel in the prime minister's security cordon was made in the middle of July, this time by the Intelligence Bureau (IB). In a message to the security head of the Delhi police, the IB pointed out that there should be a check on the Sikh security guards in the prime minister's house. The IB report apparently did not specifically refer to any threat but based its report on a general assessment of the situation—actually within days of the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft by, among others, a security guard attached to former law minister Jagannath Kaushal. The IB request, according to a letter written by the Delhi police, was agreed to. But whether this was actually done remains a matter of conjecture.

The security district to provide protection to the prime minister at her residence, office and her room in Parliament House, was provided with four men specifically to undertake checks on her security personnel. Besides, there were about a dozen officials of the Special Branch inside the prime minister's house who were assigned solely for

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picking up local intelligence. Clearly, they failed to do so.

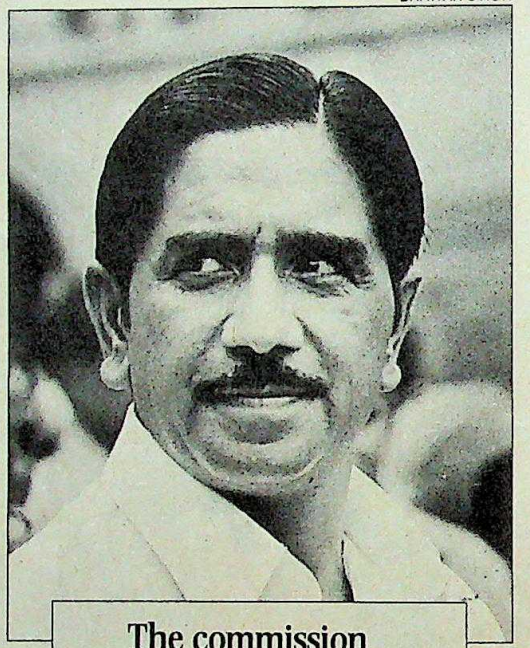
The commission also appears to be examining in detail the manner in which both Satwant and Beant exchanged duty so easily and found locations at the gate where Mrs Gandhi was shot. There was a provision for an armed sentry and a plainclothesman at the gate. Satwant, who was in the outer perimeter, told a head constable looking after the duty chart that he wanted to be close to the toilet since he was suffering from diarrhoea. Beant told another duty officer that he wanted to report on October 31 instead of the previous day and work on the 7.30 to 1.30 shift.

The basic point, says a senior security official was whether there was any intelligence at all on the possible involvement of Sikh guards in the prime minister's house. In the evidence tendered before the Commission both Tandon and Pillai, the head of security, have pointed out that the IB had no knowledge of any threat from her own guards. The only threats mentioned by the IB were from terrorists who had escaped during Operation Bluestar, others who were abroad and deserters.

"The entire security was geared to face a threat from outside", points out one official, "which was why the forces were beefed up, the road leading to 1, Safdarjung Road was blocked and any number of escorts and special task forces were provided to Mrs Gandhi on her visits outside the house or office. According to some of the officials, she was not happy about the extra force used. When she realised that the road to 1, Safdarjung road was blocked she refused to hear of it. Security officials then approached Rajiv Gandhi and got him to convince her that it was necessary. The main difficulty for the Commission would be in detailing the administrative and security lapses in the context of her preferences as opposed to the action of individual officers.

That there was enough scope for confusion resulting in the conflict between the IB and the Delhi police is easier to establish. All orders were passed in the name of the Delhi Administration held accountable for the prime minister's security, but neither then Lt-Governor Gavai nor the Union home secretary ever attended any meetings connected with her security. There were only two officials who attended all meetings, Tandon and Pillai. The meetings were also attended by B.M. Kapoor, then director of the IB and S. Ramurthy, joint director IB, specifically involved with the prime minister's security. The IB has an important advisory role vis a vis the police. In legal terms it had no accountability but in reality it became a powerful body whose advice was at times virtually an order. Disclosed one official: "Security officials were pulled up by the IB when the prime minister's car missed stopping at a particular point by a few feet, how can they now get away and say we were mere spectators?"

BHAWAN SINGH



The commission has appeared more obsessed with the role of Dhawan than with security failures.

What made the confusion worse confounded was that there were too many cooks stirring the broth; the special security district of the Delhi police, later the Special Task Force of the IB and finally the National Security Guard under an official from the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). What added to the confusion was that in the general post-Bluestar panic, advice on security matters was coming from all directions. For instance, during the security arrangements connected with the Independence Day function, security heads in the Delhi police and the IB were surprised when told that certain additional security arrangements were being contemplated by Dr P.C.Alexander, the then principal secretary, and then home secretary Wali. One of the proposals was to have a bullet proof glass cage behind which the prime minister would be seated. The proposal was rejected by security officials. Officials point out that by then there were too many "experts" who thought they knew everything about security, often offering contradictory advice.

With the commission already under the pressure of time, it may not look into these aspects in any great detail. But some officials who are in the dock for their alleged security failure are demanding a thorough examination of the facts. Besides Pillai and Gupta, others who were suspended or transferred were Tandon, Ramurthy and Kapoor.

Moreover, the commission so far has appeared more obsessed with the role of Dhawan than it is with security failures. He was basically questioned on whether Mrs Gandhi was scheduled to step out of her house at 8.30 in the morning to meet Peter Ustinov at Akbar Road. Her diary, maintained by Dhawan, showed that the timings were changed. Was the decision to redeploy Sikh security guards taken by Mrs Gandhi and conveyed by Dhawan or did he do it on his own? And did Harinder Singh, then first secretary in the Indian embassy in Oslo, actually recommend to Dhawan that Beant should be taken to Oslo. Dhawan has replied that the timings were changed because of an unexpected delay; that Mrs Gandhi conveyed important matters like security details through him and that he did not know Harinder Singh at all.

Such subsidiary concerns and the delay on the part of the Thakkar commission have raised doubts about whether the probe will come up with anything concrete or even suggest long term measures to improve security. The commission's adviser, T.N. Subramaniam, is a retired intelligence official unfamiliar with specific security matters. Officials called before the Thakkar Commission have complained about the manner in which they are being questioned, which is more in the nature of a witch hunt than identifying and plugging security loopholes. The conclusion at this point is that the only probable outcome of the probe will be that some more heads will roll with nobody any the wiser.

—RAJU SANTHANAM

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RAJASTHAN

Transfer Spree

HERE today, where tomorrow? That is not an idle question among Rajasthan's three lakh plus government employees as large-scale transfers carry on well into September. Mass transfers are the rule in most states, and Rajasthan is no exception, but two factors make the ongoing changes in administration stand out. For one, the sheer number has been higher than in recent years and, for another, the period over which they have been carried out has been unusually extended.

No estimates or even guesstimates of the number of employees transferred are available. Indeed, there cannot be for, as an official says: "The ministers themselves do not know how many people they have shifted." However, figures involving senior officials give some indication of the scale. Twenty- three out of 27 district magistrates, 22 out of 27 superintendents of police, 19 out of 27 secretaries to the Government and 12 out of 16 special secretaries have been shifted out this year.

To start with the transfers did not evoke much comment. After Chief Minister Harideo Joshi was sworn in on March 10 this year, a reshuffle at the highest level of bureaucracy was expected. And so it happened that the chief secretary and the director-general of police were changed. Moreover, the summer is the traditional period for effecting transfers. What did invite comment was the manner in which they were conducted. Ruling party legislators made a beeline for Joshi because he had under his charge more than three dozen departments including major ones such as home, public health, engineering and general administration (INDIA TODAY, July 15). This situation still persists as the much expected cabinet expansion is yet to take place.

There are obvious advantages in this for Joshi: by obliging the MLA's with officials of their choice the chief minister earns their obligation. The problem has arisen because neither Joshi nor his ministers seem to have had either the heart or the courage to put their foot down. June end brought a government ban on transfers on the eve of the delayed assembly budget session but that was not the end of the matter. In early August, obviously under political pressure, Joshi lifted the ban and opened the floodgates all over again.

Now the rot has gone deep and wide. Let alone legislators, even sarpanches of villages have arranged transfers of accommodative patwaris. In one case, orders from the Chief Minister's Secretariat related to a lowly nakedar from a municipality. For the entire range of government employees—clerks, teachers, assistant sub-inspectors of police, sales tax inspectors, doctors, engineers et al—the two magic words are pull and push. In 'lucrative' departments such as education, police, irrigation, public health and engineering, the transfers on ministerial instruction easily outnumber routine transfers ordered by department heads which conform to established rules and procedures.

> **No guesstimate of the number of employees transferred was available as the ministers themselves do not know how many people have been shifted.**

The official explanation is that most officials were due for transfer anyway but there are innumerable cases where logic is significantly absent. In at least ten cases, cancellation orders came on the heels of shifting orders. Rajendra Pal Singh, managing director of the Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation, was made special secretary, relief, but was back within days at his old post. Four Rajasthan Administrative Service officials were transferred between end June and early August but the orders were cancelled later on. The transfer orders of five young IAS officers were cancelled within two weeks of being issued. One of them was shifted from Jhalawar to Kota to Jalore and to Jaipur in the one month.

The process has been so illogical that Governor O.P. Mehra, who has to approve transfers of all senior personnel, has made bitingly sarcastic comments on several lists of officials put up to him. In at least one instance the governor intervened to stop the unjustified transfer of an official in the Public Works Department. Yet, considering the mess, Mehra has shown considerable restraint in avoiding a confrontation with the Government by exercising his prerogative only sparingly.

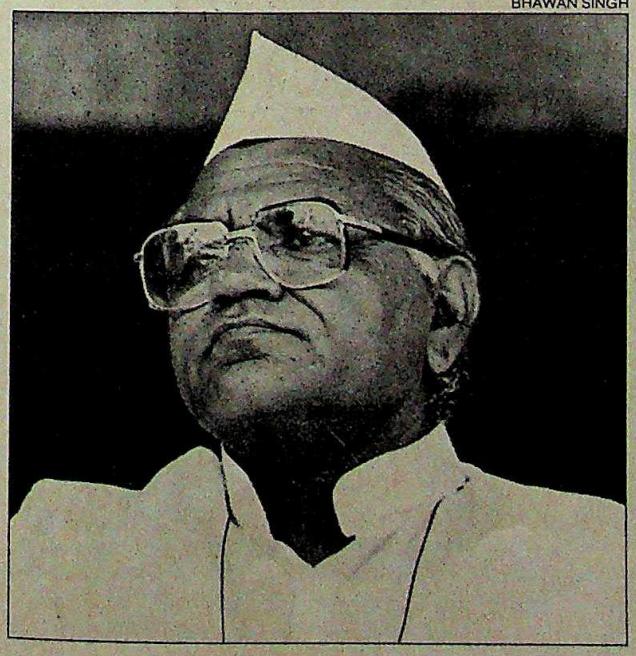
If the number of politicians including legislators hanging around ministerial chambers is any indication, arranging transfers has its own rewards. Indeed, according to one Congress(I) leader, Joshi has received several complaints of his partymen influencing transfers for monetary gain. But the crucial question is whether Joshi will care to act against them and thereby demonstrate some political statesmanship.

Transfers have meant considerable hardship for parents whose children are at school since the academic session has already begun. Naturally, official work has taken a back seat. In the words of a senior official: "The major preoccupation of officials at this juncture is to keep their seats secure. And to be honest, I don't blame them." Cynicism in bureaucratic ranks has fathered many wry 'transfer jokes'. One of them goes like this: When should a transfer be taken seriously? If cancellation orders do not follow within 30 days.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Chief Minister Joshi: illogical moves

BHAWAN SINGH



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KARNATAKA

Janata Jam

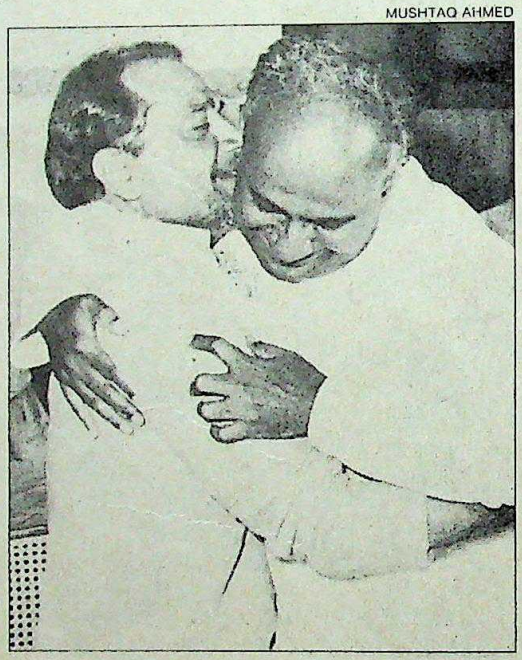
WHEN Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde was asked to participate in a fancy dress competition for the annual legislators' day celebration in Bangalore last week his choice of a costume in a way reflected the political role he has typecast for himself. Dressed in brilliant red, he came as Veerabhadra, the mythological deity in Yakshagana plays who destroys all evil. And as Hegde, his face covered with layers of red and white paint, pranced around brandishing a sword, many of his erring MLA's did not fail to get the message.

For the evil that Hegde was warding off in real life did not stem as usual from the Congress(I) but from his own partymen. Only a week before a local newspaper had reported that the powerful Vokkaliga community lobby led by Public Works Minister H.D. Deve Gowda had met over dinner to voice their discontent over Hegde's leadership. To add to Hegde's discomfiture, members of the Congress(I) in the legislative council were on their feet demanding to know how stable the Government was after the so-called Vokkaliga "revolt". Belittling the whole episode, an unruffled Hegde told them: "There is no conspiracy against me. There is no need to have one because I have said earlier that I would not cling to the chief ministership but would give it up before my five-year term was over."

But backstage a different kind of drama was being enacted. A visibly upset Hegde called up the 24 Janata Party Vokkaliga legislators who attended the dinner and asked them to explain their behaviour. Reportedly, Hegde told them: "It (the meeting) has damaged the image of our party and introduced an element of uncertainty. We must stand united." And then he added: "If it's a question of leadership I will resign as chief minister here and now." That dire threat had its effect and in the next few days all the MLA's involved denied that any rebellion was brewing. Said a chastened Deve Gowda: "Do you think I am a fool to question Hegde's leadership? We all know what happened to the Janata Party (when they ruled at the Centre) in 1977."

Although Deve Gowda now describes the dinner as only a "social gathering" no one has any doubts about its true purpose. Ever since Hegde romped to power again in March last with an absolute majority of 139 in a house of 224, the state's two major communities, the Vokkaligas and Lingayats, have been grumbling about the second-class treatment they have been getting. In his torrid first term, Hegde was accused of pampering these two communities but in a bid to shake off this image, this time around he gave equal representation to all sections when he formed his 30-member ministry. Although between them the two major communities constitute two-thirds of the party strength in the Assembly, they had to be content with seven ministers each. The backward classes with only 29 MLA's were given eight ministerial berths and the Scheduled Castes with 22 MLA's were given six. Says Hegde: "I gave a definite backward class tilt because for years these sections of the society have been neglected and it was time they got a fair deal."

MUSHTAQ AHMED



Hegde with Deve Gowda in happier days: the 'enemy' within

But this approach has led to a lot of heart-burning among legislators from the major communities. This surfaces mostly as pointed criticism of some ministers. Home Minister B. Rachaiah, who belongs to a Scheduled Caste, has been the target of sustained attack from the major communities, who accuse him of propping up officers from his caste group. They are upset that he has not acceded to any of their requests for transfer of officials. Education Minister M. Raghupathy, a backward class leader, has been subject to severe criticism for trying to fix the quota of reserved seats for students on the merit list at 60 per cent in the private capitation fee-based engineering colleges. Since many of these colleges are owned by the major communities they see it as an attack on their interests.

However, the Vokkaligas' grouse is that Hegde himself has been giving them short shrift. They are upset that although he had agreed to sanction a medical college for their community it has so far not materialised. Recently they lobbied for the post of vice-chancellor of the Agricultural Sciences University in Bangalore for one of them but were irked when someone belonging to a minority community was appointed. Deve Gowda's main complaint is that although he was party president for the last assembly elections Hegde has not been giving him the importance he deserves and has not been consulting him as frequently as he would have liked. Deve Gowda's detractors say that he bears a grudge because Hegde did not make him number two in the ministry.

With Hegde planning to quit before his term ends, the question is naturally important. Disclaiming this, Hegde says: "I have told my colleagues that it is not a matter as to who is closest to the leader but who is closest to the people that would finally decide my successor."

But what has a lot of senior partymen worried is the lethargy that seems to have set in after their stunning victory in the assembly elections. Said a worried Patel: "Without the threat of a common enemy like the Congress(I), I find that the team spirit that we had has decreased. We don't seem to be growing at the party level and consolidating our gains." Hegde also showed awareness of this downtrend when he said: "Once the war was won everyone seems to be complacent. But I have told my partymen recently that we should not lose the momentum we had gained in our first term." Although Hegde, on turning 58 last fortnight told his friends, only half in jest, "I have reached the age of superannuation," he has plenty of work to do before he can retire in peace.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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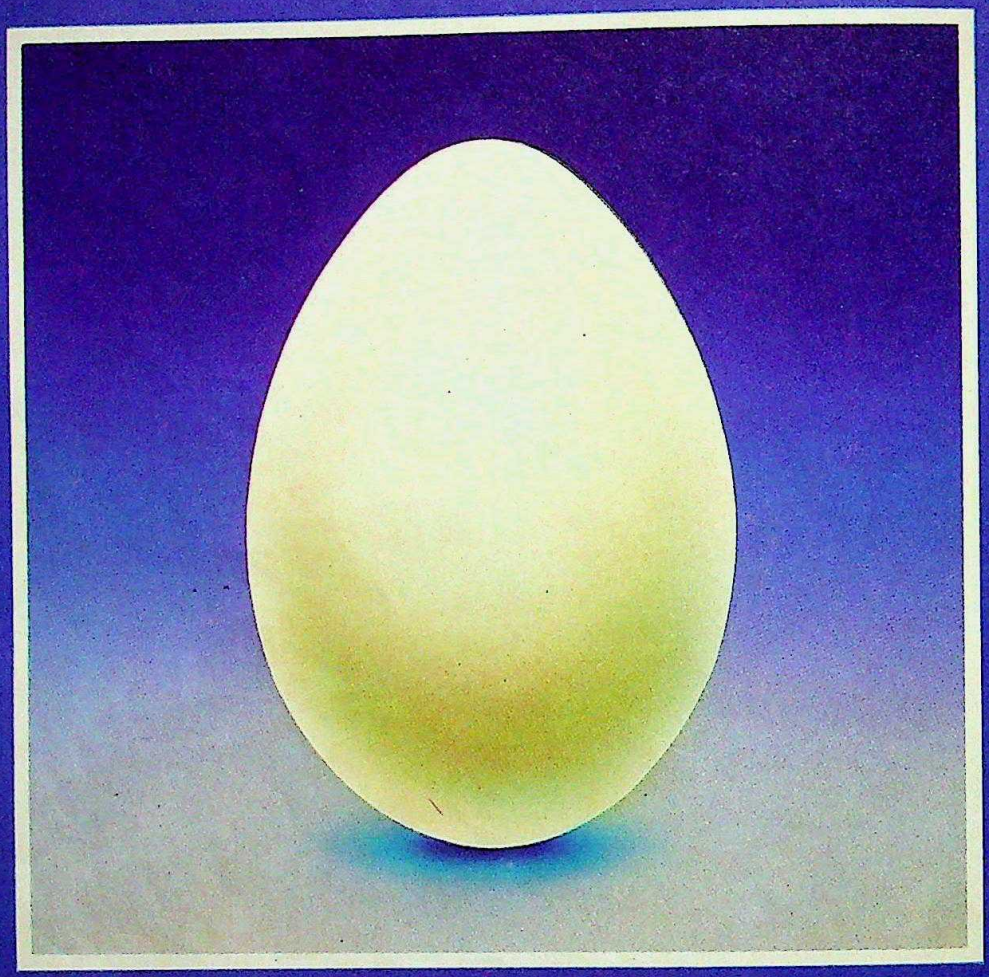

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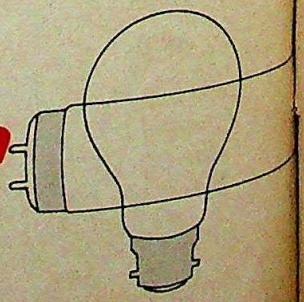

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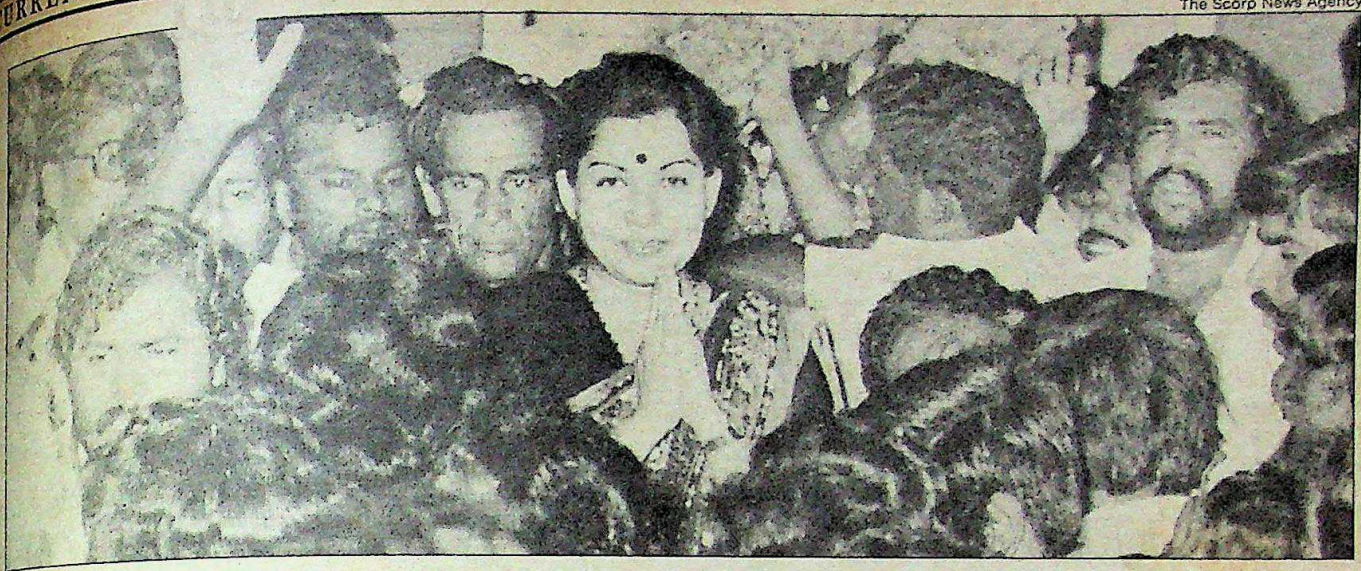

Jayalalitha with well-wishers: dramatic comeback

TAMIL NADU

Return of the Heroine

IT HAD all the glycerine-charged melodrama of a Tamil tear-jerker. When AIADMK MP Jayalalitha Jayaram finally made her comeback as the party's propaganda secretary last fortnight, it was to thundering applause and welcoming cheers. For the glamorous leader, it was sweet revenge since the loser this time was none other than former state information and religious endowments minister R. M. Veerappan, who is her implacable foe within the Opposition. And when, within five days of her reinstatement, Veerappan celebrated his *shastipurthi* (the all-important 60th birthday), Jayalalitha showed that she can be magnanimous in victory when she first chose to call on him before going to the party headquarters in Lloyd's Road where her entry had been banned for the year she has been in limbo.

The decision of AIADMK leader M.G. Ramachandran to rehabilitate his protege to the number two spot in the party showed that the chronically ill leader had lost none of his guile. Even as it became certain that Veerappan, who held the crucial portfolios of information and religious endowments, had hopes of becoming number two in the AIADMK, MGR pulled the carpet from under his feet and reinstated Jayalalitha in the post. A Veerappan-inspired campaign had forced her to shed a year ago. Veerappan and his men had to swallow the public rebuff. As party General Secretary S. Raghavanandam, a Veerappan loyalist who cut a sorry figure when he tried to garland Jayalalitha at her office, said with a poker face: "It is our revolutionary leader MGR's order and I am only too willing to implement it." It was also that Jayalalitha was not going to rub salt on open wounds. Unlike the fire she had been breathing in her days in the wilderness, on this occasion she would only say: "I am overjoyed. I owe everything to my leader, MGR."

But despite the element of drama, the reinstatement was not altogether unexpected. Jayalalitha had submitted her resignation last year in the face of mounting opposition to her from a section of the party led by former food minister S. D. Somasundaram. Somasundaram had quit the party but Jayalalitha's detractors got their pound of flesh when they forced her to quit as the propaganda secretary. She had then tried to put on a brave face. As she said: "MGR has himself asked me to resign from the post to placate some ruffled feathers in the party. He has assured me I would be restored to the post after some time." But it was a setback for the former actress who had hoped to follow her mentor into the highest corridors of power.

As it turned out, the reinstatement did not come as easily. For quite some time, she could not even get to see MGR. Reports of MGR not being able to function made matters worse for her. On the other hand, Veerappan and his men seemed to be gaining a hold on the party and the cabinet. There were even rumours that it was only a matter of time before she joined the Congress(I). Thoroughly demoralised, Jayalalitha shut herself up in her bungalow and became a virtual recluse.

But with her reinstatement last fortnight, the wheel had come full circle. And as if to vindicate her, Veerappan was stripped off his cabinet portfolios which the chief minister took over himself. He was given charge of the relatively insignificant departments of planning, archaeology and passports. Remarked a party leader close to Jayalalitha: "With this MGR has virtually anointed Miss Jayalalitha as his successor."

However, the Veerappan camp view the situation differently. While they grumbled about Jayalalitha's reinstatement, they saw the change in Veerappan's portfolios as a positive omen. The more so since simultaneously, MGR had entrusted the prestigious excise portfolio, which he held himself, to Veerappan's lieutenant, V. V. Swaminathan, the handlooms minister. Argued a top AIADMK leader of Veerappan's camp: "The planning portfolio has so far been held only by chief ministers in Tamil Nadu, like Anna (C. M. Annadurai), Karunanidhi and MGR himself. So Veerappan has now been given a traditional chief minister's portfolio."

Whether that was MGR's intention or not is still not clear. What is clear is that the party's internecine troubles are far from over: they have only begun now. As Agriculture Minister K. Kalimuthu puts it: "This is a testing time for the party. MGR, like Lord Shiva, has swallowed poison to save the party."

—S.H.VENKATRAMANI

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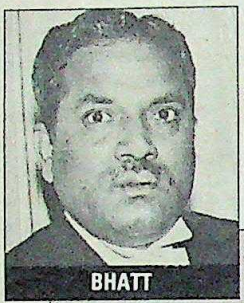
JAMMU & KASHMIR

Side Show

THE JUDICIARY and the legislature were set irrevocably on a collision course in Jammu and Kashmir last fortnight. Justices M.L.Bhat and S.M. Rizvi, comprising a division bench of the J & K High Court, took the first step to set up this confrontation on September 9 when they stayed the suspension orders on three MLA's ordered by the Assembly. The next day the Assembly resolved to ignore the court's order and passed a resolution describing it as a "grave interference with the sovereignty, supremacy and dignity of this House and its internal working."

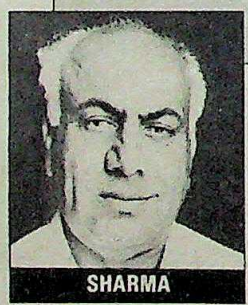
It soon became clear that the executive would be siding with the legislature. When two of the three MLA's, Piyarelal Handoo and Mohammed Shafi of Dr Farooq Abdullah's National Conference (NC-F), tried to enter the Assembly in Srinagar armed with the stay order, they were arrested by the police on charges of violating traffic. The third MLA, Bhim Singh of the Panther's Party, was held in Anantnag on charges not immediately clear. And with Handoo filing a contempt charge against Speaker Mangat Ram Sharma, Deputy Chief Minister Devi Dass Thakur and four others and state Advocate-General Muzaffar Baig moving an application challenging the stay order, it was clear that the confrontation would get more severe.

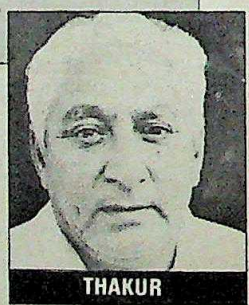
A face-off between the legislature and judiciary is not a rare event in the country—several such cases have even gone up to the Supreme Court and just two months ago the two institutions were on a collision course in Tamil Nadu (INDIA TODAY, August 15)—but this is the first such case in this sensitive state. More importantly, since all the suspended MLA's belong to the Opposition the case was seen as yet another skirmish in the continuing battle of attrition between Abdullah and Chief Minister G.M.Shah. The 19-member Shah Ministry has been hanging on to power only because it enjoys the support of the 25-strong Congress(I) group in the 78-member Assembly. But with reports from Delhi that the Centre, reportedly urged by Governor Jagmohan whose dissatisfaction with Shah is no secret, had decided to dismiss the ministry and impose President's rule, the continuation of Shah in power seemed in doubt. And with the 32-member NC(F) group giving notice of a no-confidence motion against the Shah Ministry, and Abdullah moving a no-confidence motion against the speaker, the confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary only added to the politically surcharged mood in the valley.


BHATT

RIZVI

The confrontation between the judiciary and the legislature is a side show: it will be resolved the day Delhi pronounces judgement on the wrangle between the two claimants to the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah.


SHARMA


THAKUR

The situation had long been in the making. It all started on August 17, the first day of the budget session, when, following pandemonium in the House, the Assembly passed a resolution moved by Thakur asking for the suspension of the three MLA's for the rest of the session. Thakur later explained that he named Handoo and Shafi because they had "instigated" the Opposition to create bedlam in the House but the two NC(F) leaders charged that Thakur had directed his ire on them because they had asked embarrassing queries in the question hour earlier. However, there was no denying that there were several oddities in the whole sequence of events. Contrary to normal procedure, the members were not named by the speaker before they were suspended. Again, it was not the speaker who suspended them but the House. And the resolution was moved by somebody who is not even a member of the House: Thakur is an MLC. And, finally, two of the three suspended, Handoo and Shafi, were not even present in the House, having staged a walkout earlier.

Speaking to INDIA TODAY, both Sharma and Thakur were at pains to defend their roles. Claiming to be "impartial", Sharma defended the departures from the normal procedure by saying: "The rules of procedure are framed by the House and they are relaxed so often." Pointing out that all the suspended members were his personal friends, Sharma added: "It was the House's decision to suspend them, not mine. Naming of members is just a technicality; there was no constitutional violation involved in the decision." Thakur, who was holding charge while Shah was away on Haj, argued that the Constitution gave him the "right" to participate in all the proceedings of the Assembly, including the right to move motions. Similarly refuting that there had been any irregularities, Thakur pointed out that the rule (Rule 411) governing the procedure for suspensions only conceived of a particular contingency. "It does not mean that in no other case could you suspend a member. I could gag the speaker's mouth to prevent him from naming me. Or somebody could murder him before he could name the member. Would you then argue that the member cannot be suspended merely because he was not named ?"

The three suspended MLA's moved the court asking for a stay of the suspension order. Procedural wrangles —including a minor confrontation between the judiciary and the legislature over the court's request for records of proceedings of the House and the Assembly's decision not to comply— delayed the hearing of the arguments on whether the court should admit the petition. When the arguments were finally heard, on September 2 and 3, the small courtroom in the J & K High Court complex was overflowing on both days. Advocate-General Baig, who was called by the court to assist it but in effect led the team of lawyers for respondents Sharma and Thakur, argued that the "inherent

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powers" of the House gave it the right to deviate from procedures. Besides, he added, at best the House's decision amounted to an "irregularity" and the court was not empowered to adjudicate on that matter.

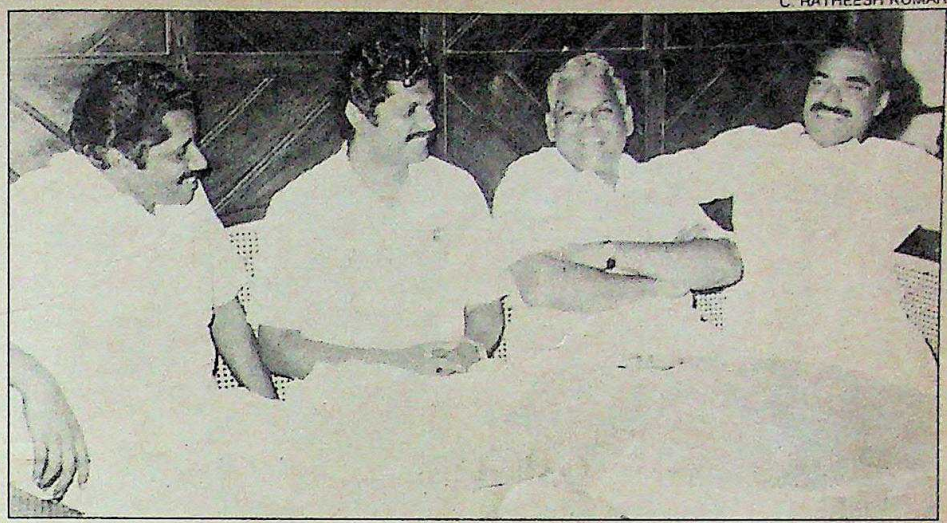
The portly Handoo, a former law minister who argued his own case, and his lawyers argued that the House's decision amounted to an "illegality" and not just an "irregularity". "If I was suspended for the rest of my legislative career, would it not come under the court's jurisdiction ?" he argued in the course of an impassioned submission. Besides, he asked, how could he be suspended when he was not even present in the House ? "Even Raj Narain has not faced this kind of suspension," Handoo pointed out to an amused court. In his final submission, Baig argued that either the court should grant the petition or reject it; there would be little point in admitting it and posting a date for the hearing as the Assembly's session is to conclude on September 24.

In the eventuality, the division bench's judgement struck a middle path: it stayed the suspension with the rider that the three MLA's would not have voting rights. Admitting the gravity of the matter, it recommended to the chief justice that he constitute a full bench to consider the petition. While the judges conceded that they were "conscious of the limitation on our powers" to adjudicate on assembly proceedings, they ruled that if any citizen, including a legislator, brought a complaint about any illegality in a proceeding which would affect his right or privilege, the complaint needed to be examined by the court. The judges pointed out that in the lack of details of the House's proceedings, the court did not know why and how the members were suspended. As they said: "Whether they were suspended for staging a walkout or for interrupting the deputy chief minister is not known."

Even as the decision of the chief justice was awaited it was evident that tempers would take time to cool down. Two days after the judgement, Abdullah and Shah exchanged angry words in the Assembly over the arrest of Bhim Singh. The confrontation between the judiciary and the legislature is only a sideshow: it will be resolved automatically the day Delhi pronounces its judgement on the long-drawn-out wrangle between the two claimants to the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah.

—AJAY KUMAR in Srinagar

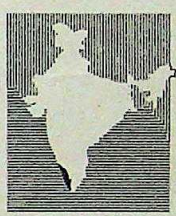
C. RATHEESH KUMAR



Moopanar(second from right) with Kerala Congress men: crisis averted

KERALA

Denouement



SOME dawns also signal the beginning of the end. For the Kerala Congress, the denouement last fortnight of its conflict with the Congress (I) over the reinstatement of former electricity minister R.Balakrishna Pillai, was more than a mere setback. The party, which had threatened to wreck the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) over its demand for Pillai's reinduction, in the end tamely agreed to leave the decision to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi without even setting a deadline for the decision; thus leaving it patently clear that the winner in the latest UDF wrangle was Chief Minister K. Karunakaran. It also denoted that the political career of Pillai was now approaching its sunset.

Never before in his 40-month tenure had Karunakaran cut to size a party in his coalition so effectively. Said Home Minister Vayalar Ravi, a known Karunakaran baiter: "Hats off to Karunakaran. But for his rigid stand on the Pillai issue we would have once again buckled under to the Kerala Congress." And admitted Baby John, leader of the Revolutionary Socialist Party: "Karunakaran has humiliated the Kerala Congress so badly but even then they are hanging on to him."

Ironically, it was Karunakaran's opponents who made matters easy for him. CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad repeatedly declared that there was no question of the opposition Left Front accommodating the Kerala Congress if it broke away from the ruling coalition. As John told INDIA TODAY: "Let alone a green signal there was not even an orange signal from the Left Front to the Kerala Congress asking it to switch sides."

Karunakaran's strategy was masterly. Even after the court ruled that it was for him to decide if Pillai had violated the oath of office by making a reportedly anti-national speech, Karunakaran kept insisting that the issues involved were legal, not political. Of course, the decision to refer it to Rajiv gave the lie to his contention but Karunakaran was unfazed. In fact, he tightened the screws on the Kerala Congress by promising a judicial inquiry into the leaks in the Edamalayar hydro-electric project which came up under Pillai's tutelage.

It was left to firebrand Marxist MLA M.V.Raghavan to give the final twist to the story. Speaking in the Assembly, Raghavan alleged that G.K.Moopanar, the AICC(I) general secretary who finally got the breakthrough, had blackmailed Kerala Congress strongman K.M.Mani and others into submission. Said Raghavan:"With Moopanar came an officer of the Central Intelligence Bureau who threatened to expose the financial deals of Mani and others, which would have finished them politically."

There was no response from the Kerala Congress to Raghavan's allegation. But the rank and file of the party are fed up with the bad publicity and it would come as no surprise if Pillai is dropped from the party. As the dust slowly settled on this skirmish, for the first time Karunakaran seemed convincing when he predicted that his ministry would survive its full term.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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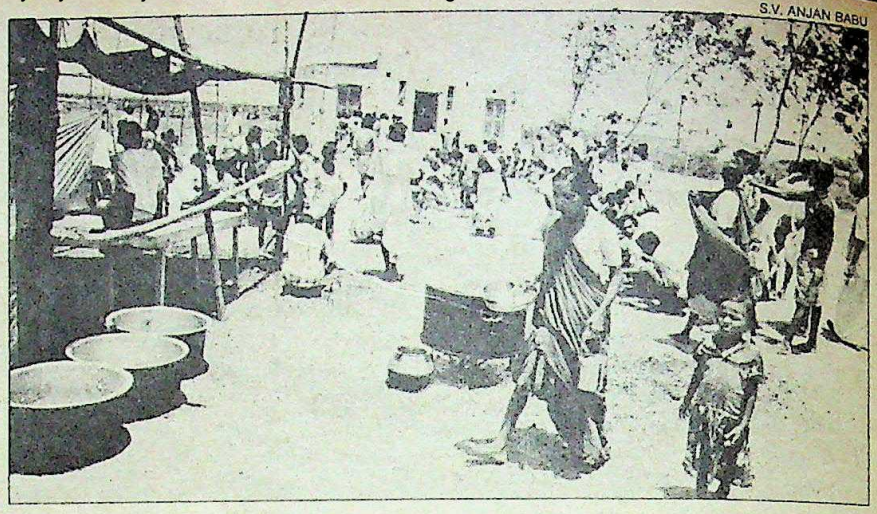
ANDHRA PRADESH

Fighting Back

THE COUNTRY's Harijans, in the recent past, have been fleeting occupiers of newspaper headlines. They flash to the very top of the front page when, as often happens, they are victims of social oppression and leaders of political parties rush to share their grief. No longer: the Harijans of Karamchedu in Andhra Pradesh, five of whom were killed by Kamma landlords two months ago, are bent on proving that hypocritical commiseration by political parties will not be their only legacy. Even the farcical fate of the state Government's attempt to set up a judicial inquiry commission—last fortnight the second of the judges named to head the commission turned down the job—has not deterred them. More than 500 Harijans of the Madiga sect had fled Karamchedu, in Prakasam district, after the atrocity. They settled down in Chirala, 8 km from Karamchedu where under the auspices of the Karamchedu Victims Relief Committee, they proceeded to buy eight acres of land from Rs 1.20 lakh received in donations and started building their new homes. And as they made it clear that they would not accept any official help they gave their new village the name, Vijayanagar.

Last fortnight, it became evident that unlike the victims of equally outrageous acts in places like Belchi, Pipra and Narainpura to name but a few, they were determined to turn their personal tragedy into a social movement for Dalits in Andhra Pradesh. Harijan representatives from all over the state gathered at Chirala on September 1 and sent out a call for a rail and *rasta roko* agitation on September 8 which, when it occurred, disrupted rail traffic as far away as Hyderabad. An all-India conference of Harijans is scheduled to be held at Chirala next month. The Karamchedu Harijans have three demands: that the real culprits be brought to book; the investigation of the incident be transferred from the state Crime Branch to detectives of a Central Government agency and, more importantly, that aid be given to permanently rehabilitate the Harijans at their present camping site in Vijayanagar. The Harijans are firm that there is no going back to Karamchedu.



S.V. ANJAN BABU

Harijans' commune at Vijaynagar (above); and Rao: a new awakening

The unity and the defiant spirit of the residents of Vijayanagar is truly amazing. They have little else to sustain them: Vijaynagar has four thatched huts currently under which the displaced rest, and an open community kitchen to serve them rice or gruel twice a day. The credit for this largely goes to Kathi Padma Rao, a 32-year-old Harijan teacher who heads the Relief Committee.

Says Rao, who was instrumental in the purchase of the Vijayanagar land: "The callousness of the Government has come in handy for us Dalits to build a strong social movement against injustice. Even the 49 Harijan MLA's in the Assembly have failed the Karamchedu victims. We have to take up the movement for justice and a new awakening ourselves." The remarkably articulate Padma Rao studied Sanskrit and now teaches at the S.B.S.College in Ponnur, 34 km from his native Chirala in order, he says, to "understand the Hindu texts for interpreting the role of the Harijans in ancient Indian society." Added Rao sarcastically:"We are thankful to the Kamma landlords of Karamchedu for making more Harijans aware by chasing them out of the village."

And it is clear that their wounds are still fresh. "We have been humiliated and cannot live with dignity among those brutes," says Duddu Sulochana, 24, who was molested and lost her husband Ramesh in the attack. She had been married for less than a year. "What is the use of going there, he lies buried here in Chirala," she sobs. The victims are also sore at what they perceive was the nonchalant way the chief minister handled the situation. Recalled an angry Duddu Veeramma, who was discharged from the Guntur hospital last fortnight: "He came to offer us fruits when our insides were burning at the outrage."

The Kammas of Karamchedu, however, accuse Padma Rao of trying to make political and possibly monetary gain from the tragedy. Their spokesman is Jagarlamundi Madan Mohan Rao, 70, chairman of the village peace committee. He described the attack on the Harijans as "unfortunate," but added: "Our youth should have been restrained, but what could they do when they were attacked? If we treat Harijans badly the Malas (another Harijan sect of the village) should have deserted the village but they are all here." But said a Mala who refused to be identified:" We are not in a position to leave and find work elsewhere. But if we are certain about refuge we will leave."

The irony of the situation is that inter-caste relations were quite good in Karamchedu before the attack. Untouchability was unknown, and the Kammas drew drinking water from the same pond as the Harijans. So, with the chances of a judicial inquiry seeming quite remote, the investigations by the state Crime Branch are being eagerly watched in the hope they will unearth what it was that actually brought on the mayhem. Sixty-six of the 75 suspects are already in police custody. But with controversy even over which agency should do the investigations, and the victims blazing a trail, Karamchedu seems destined to become an important landmark in Harijan history.

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Chirala

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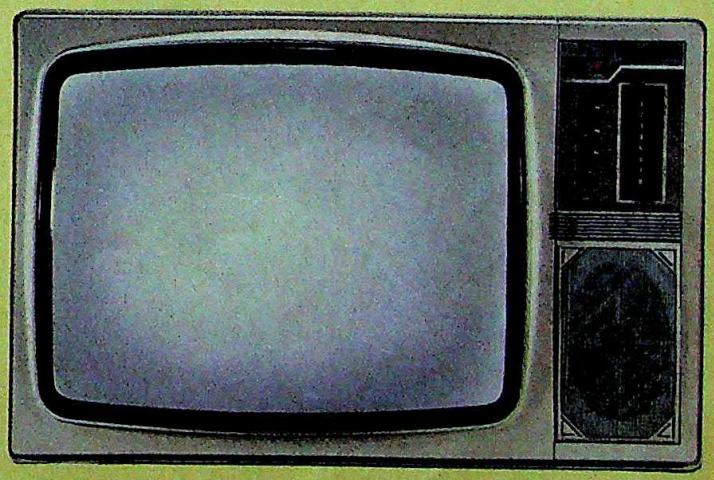

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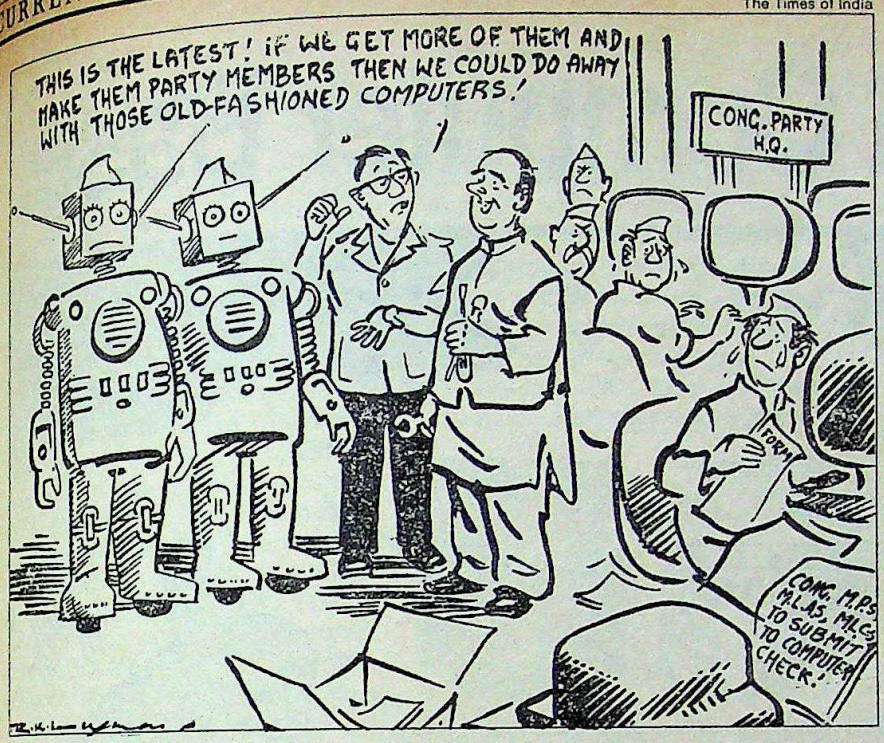
The Times of India



CONGRESS(I)

Big Brother

GIVEN the common snide asides about the prime minister's "computer boys", it was a move fated to be viewed with suspicion. When, on August 30, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party (CPP-I) that the party's 558 MP's would soon be receiving a computer form asking for information about them and their work, he took care to spend over 10 minutes on assurances that the exercise was not meant to keep a watch on them. Yet, predictably, when the *Indian Express* flashed the news, the headline was "Computer to watch Cong(I) MP's". The report went on to allege that not only would the computer give "periodic warnings about the lapses" of MP's, it would also store details of their "adverse activities". And *The Times of India* followed up with an editorial calling the move "wrong" and "dangerous"; the first because it implied that Rajiv did not know his party and the second because it would make the party even more docile.

Party leaders were quick to the defence. Refuting the contention that dossiers were being readied, AICC(I) General Secretary Srikant Verma asked: "If the idea was to keep a watch, would we ask the MP's themselves to provide the information?" CPP(I) Secretary Hari Krishna Shastri, who sent out the forms and had sat in with Rajiv and his Parliamentary Secretary, Oscar Fernandes, on meetings to work out the questionnaire, was even more defensive. "What the newspapers have said is all rubbish," he maintained. To start with, using computers was nothing new for the Congress(I): two years ago when Rajiv, as the party general secretary, had held his famous inquest at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, the voluminous mass of information supplied by partymen in response to the 20-page questionnaire had also been fed into a computer. "What is wrong with using a computer in this age ? Even private organisations have similar data banks," argued the 47-year-old son of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Nor, said Shastri, was there anything new in asking MP's to provide information about their activities. In fact, the present move is the second step in an exercise initiated over two months ago. On June 29, Shastri had sent MP's a circular asking them to report on their visits to constituencies after the budget session of Parliament and listing 13 specific queries for which answers were sought. Over 250 MP's had already responded; the rest are expected to send in their constituency reports with the new forms by the end of the month. The two reports will then be married, and the data fed into a computer.

Giving the rationale for the data bank, and refuting the suggestion that dealing through a computer would distance Rajiv from his MP's, Shastri told INDIA TODAY: "The Prime Minister knows every MP by name but he cannot remember everybody's problems. He wants them to be more effective at the grassroots level but he does not want them to come to him with the same set of complaints every second day. As he tells them, "when you write down your complaints, it will help me get a feedback and it will help the Central and state Governments to check on what happened to your complaints."

Yet, misgivings persisted about who was really behind the move and to what purpose. If this was an exercise that concerned only the CPP(I), why were the "instant needs of the Prime Minister's Secretariat" mentioned in the backgrounder with the form? Shastri's covering letter with the forms also drew adverse comments. Asked a senior party leader: "Where was the need to invoke the name of 'our leader Rajiv*ji*' and the 'high command' if this is only a routine exercise?" But much of the sniping emanated from within the party itself. A senior leader closely associated with the exercise blamed one of the CPP(I) secretaries for wrongly briefing the press. Said he: "This gentleman is one of those who do not want the prime minister to succeed. There are many such elements in the party, mostly in the upper House."

Ironically, there is little in the eight-page form that can raise anybody's hackles. As senior parliamentarian Bali Ram Bhagat said: "Most of the information sought can be got from any 'Who's Who'. With the limited space that has been given, I am afraid most of the answers are going to be too general to be of much help." It will also be odd if MP's were to conclude, on the basis of this questionnaire, that they are being closely watched. Denying that the form had caused him any worry, Bairwa Banwari Lal, MP, said: "This exercise is like a *bania's hisab* (trader's bookkeeping): to find out if there has been any money misspent. What can be wrong with that?"

Yet the impression would not go away that there is more to this exercise than meets the eye. In a way, Shastri only confirmed the suspicions when, at the end of a lengthy session, he exclaimed: " How else are you going to keep a check on your MP's and MLA's?" The truth probably is that Rajiv and his advisers want to turn the average Congressman from a parasite to a true people's representative. To that, nobody can have objections, except, of course, his partymen.

—AJAY KUMAR

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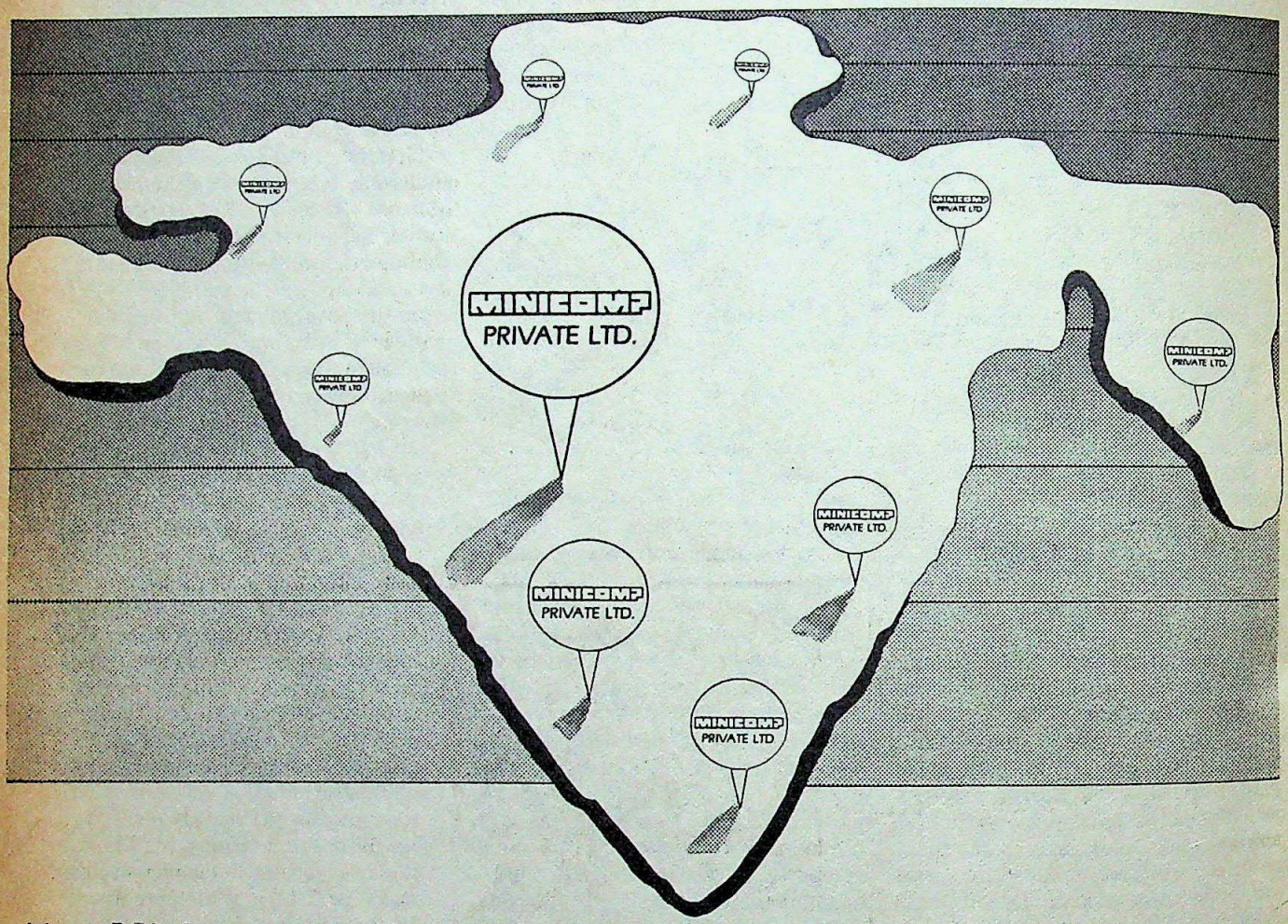
The Great Computer Base.



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WEST BENGAL

Hard Lessons

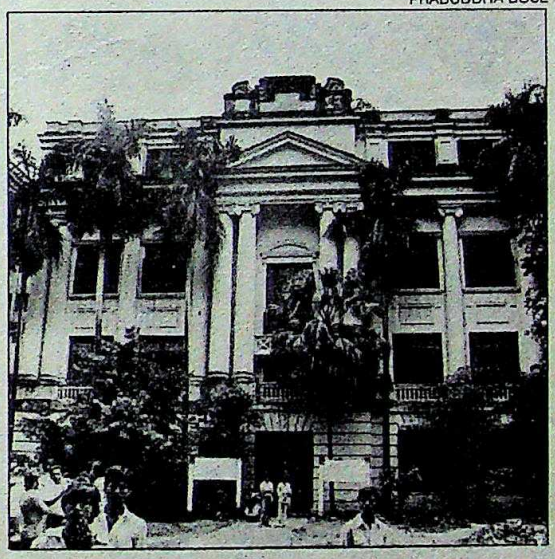
THE WROUGHT iron gates to Calcutta University's College Street campus are more often than not kept firmly closed these days. For, it's not academics that dominates the university today but politics. Specifically, a bizarre gladiatorial contest between a dour professor of economics, the present vice-chancellor, and the Marxist goliaths of West Bengal. The issue is: who will run the university, the Left Front Government or the vice-chancellor with the help of the Centre? Not surprisingly, in the past six months, the university is estimated to have functioned for only 64 days, the other days being taken up with strikes, demonstrations and gheraos. By last fortnight there was little sign of any decisive end to this frustrating impasse. State Higher Education Minister Sambhu Ghosh and Vice-Chancellor Dr Santosh Bhattacharya flew to Delhi to present their respective cases, but clearly the Centre was not keen to get enmeshed in the wrangling.

For the moment, the advantage seems to be with the vice-chancellor and his Congress(I) supporters. Under fire from the Marxists Dr Bhattacharya has for the first time succeeded in putting his opponents on the defensive. Even since Congress(I) MP's, their supporters in the university syndicate council and the vice-chancellor suggested last month that only central take-over could salvage the university, hardly has a day gone by without some Left Front leader declaring that the take-over will be resisted. And what really began as a petty power battle has now assumed more general and larger overtones.

The latest crisis surfaced when Dr Bhattacharya decided to suspend five university employees, all CPI(M) supporters, who had allegedly submitted false credentials to keep their jobs. Knowing that the pro-Left Front university syndicate would never approve such orders, the vice-chancellor invoked his emergency powers. The CPI(M)'s reaction was predictable. "The university is not the vice-chancellor's father's property," CPI(M) leader Anil Biswas thundered. "Dr Bhattacharya is misusing his powers," Sambhu Ghosh echoed. But Bhattacharya, who met Union Education Minister K.C. Pant in New Delhi last fortnight, has, however, made it clear that he has no intention of resigning. In a statement issued at the insistence of the University Senate Council, he said: "I did not accept the post of vice-chancellor on the supposition that the Centre would come to my aid in case of a crisis." This effectively scotched earlier reports suggesting that he would resign.

Although the Centre will have to pass an act of Parliament to make Calcutta University a Central university, it will have no problem in declaring it an "institution of national importance." In this event, the Calcutta University Act 1979 will remain intact and the Centre will only have to put in as much funds as required to maintain it. The Centre would nevertheless have the crucial power of ultimately deciding disputes in the university. Till now no university has been declared an institution of national importance, this status hitherto being reserved for institutes like the Asiatic Society, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

PRABUDDHA BOSE



Ghosh (left) Bhattacharya and Calcutta University: bizarre contest

The Marxists, on the other hand, have tried to scotch the prospects of a take-over by accusing the Centre of trying to usurp the powers of a state government. Other, like former MP Satyasadhan Chakraborty, have even suggested that the Central move appears to be aimed at curbing the "aspirations of Bengalis". But as K.C. Pant told Sambhu Ghosh last fortnight, the best course for the Left Front Government would be to ensure that the university crisis is defused rather than to insist that the Centre should not interfere.

"If Left Front leaders find themselves pinned down they have only themselves to blame," says former Jadavpur University vice-chancellor Arobindo Basu, pointing out that Dr Bhattacharya was never a Congress(I) supporter, having been a Marxist all his life. He had become anathema to the Marxists simply because he was chosen to be the vice-chancellor by former West Bengal governor A.P. Sharma, who wanted to snub the Left Front by not accepting their particular candidate, Ramen Poddar. And since then, adds Basu, "he has been systematically harassed, insulted, and prevented from discharging his duties."

At the very first syndicate meeting Bhattacharya attended, after his appointment in February 1984, former MP Somnath Chatterjee, humiliated him by demanding that he pass a resolution condemning the governor for the appointment. Last month when Chief Minister Jyoti Basu accused the vice-chancellor of having taken decisions that "have not contributed to the maintenance of normality," Bhattacharya countercharged by saying that the state Government was trying to stall all his moves for toning up the university administration.

But with the damoclean threat of central take-over hanging over them, the Marxists seem to have mellowed. Last fortnight, Sambhu Ghosh after returning from New Delhi, told the state Assembly, in a distinctly non-aggressive tone, that the Union Government was being given a false impression about affairs in the university. "The state Government has taken several steps to solve the university's problems," claimed Ghosh, "but the vice-chancellor's adamant attitude is preventing a solution from being reached." But no matter what stance the antagonists now take, it seemed inevitable that Calcutta University will continue to be a busy political arena for some time to come.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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PUNJAB ELECTION

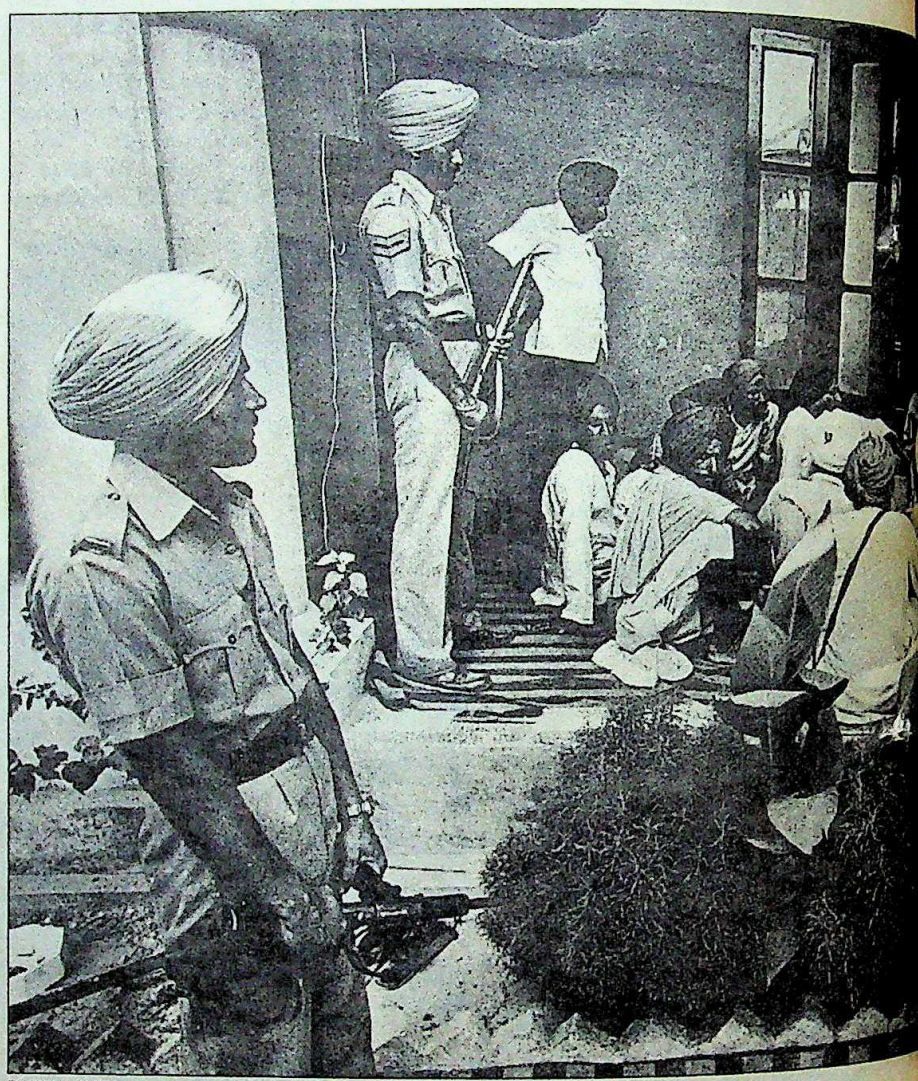
RAGHUNANDAN Lal Bhatia, the Congress(I) candidate for the Amritsar Lok Sabha seat, last fortnight nursed a bout of 'flu. It was a nasty attack but an insignificant medical problem compared with the bullet wounds left him by two terrorists last April. His house is now heavily guarded and no one can talk to him without the disconcerting shadow of an armed personal guard looming over. "Due to the shortage of time, it may not be possible for me to reach everybody," Bhatia says about his campaign. "We have a kind of division of labour among ourselves, my campaign workers will take my appeal to every home."

Across town, Sat Pal Dang, the Communist Party of India's assembly candidate for Amritsar West, is bolder in his approach. "We have our comrades who keep watch," he says "We will organise public meetings but not late at night. What we've agreed upon is no meeting after 8 p.m."

In the southern part of the state, in the Akali-dominated Malwa region, Akali leader Surjit Singh Barnala drives about with the security usually associated with the prime minister. His visitors are subjected to a metal detector search and his son functions as chief of security, looking after a score of armed men who cling to Barnala night and day. "Earlier we used to go door to door," says the Akali leader, but now he doesn't "feel so free".

In Gurdaspur town, headquarters of one of the most unsettled districts in the state, Akali election agent Harbinder Singh says his party is keeping a close watch on possible terrorists. "We are organising the least number of public meetings," he says.

Suddenly, the reality of an election in strife-torn Punjab in the wake of political assassination, terrorist killing and threat of boycott, was driven home with unpalatable force last fortnight as some 863 assembly and 74 Lok Sabha candidates, vying for 117 assembly and 13 Lok Sabha seats, for the first time came face to face with the task of conducting their campaigns. There were some, like Akali candidate Amarinder Singh who got going quickly in Talwandi Sabo in Bhatinda district. There were others, like the Congress(I)'s Patiala aspirant Brahm Mohendra and Ludhiana Lok Sabha contestant Joginder Paul Pandey, who declared themselves men of the masses, unwilling to surround themselves with security details.



BHAWAN SINGH

But for most others, the images of the election were starkly different. To be sure, there is the redoubtable 'hand' of the Congress(I), the 'scales' of the Akali Dal and innumerable other temporary electoral identities dealt out by the Election Commission. In some places a few flags flutter alone atop cycle rickshaws or the occasional shop. All this will undoubtedly change closer to polling day, September 25, but last fortnight, with a mere 12 to 15 days to go, these candidates and their campaigns remained largely closeted behind the doors of their homes, in makeshift campaign headquarters or in cruising cars packed with supporters brandishing weapons.

Instead of the routine paraphernalia of electioneering, the carnival-like atmosphere, the noise and dust of campaign caravans gridding the area day and night blaring music and unending harangues from candidates, the reality of the election was being symbolised by images of another sort. Paramilitary forces showing the flag in Amritsar, for instance. Convoys of the Provincial Armed Constabulary from Uttar Pradesh making their way up the Grand Trunk Road. Armed pickets at crossroads, dotting the towns in sensitive spots. Streets by and large deserted after 8 or 9 p.m. And the ubiquitous Sten gun, the carbine, the pistol, the rifle, slung across shoulders, held loosely in the hands, or

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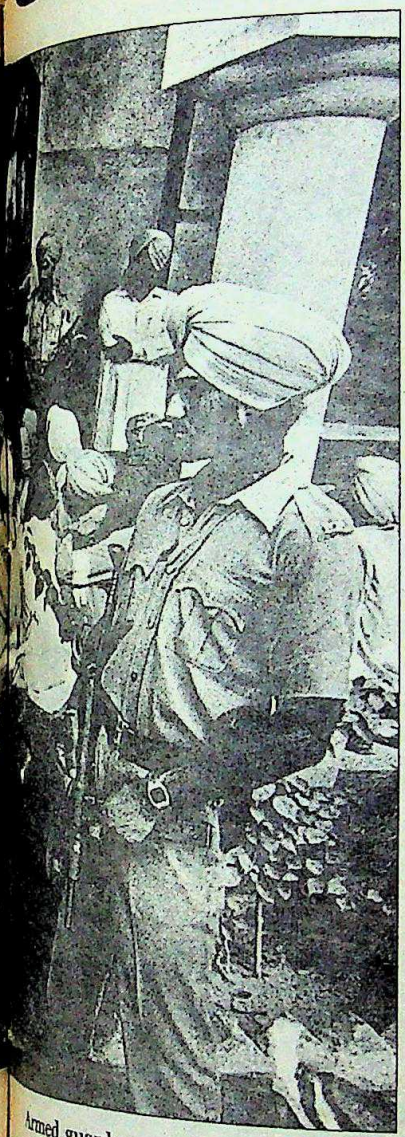
UNDER THE GUN

The images of the election are starkly different: the ubiquitous Sten gun, the carbine, the pistol: images symbolising the one occurrence that a democracy can well do without.



Armed guards surround an Akali delegates' meet; and (right) S.S. Barnala preceded by his son, Gaganjeet, holding a gun

BHAWAN SINGH

tucked into waistbands. Images that make up a mosaic that signals confrontation and the danger of violence just as much as the Government's determination to combat it and protect both candidates and the public. Images, above all, symbolising the one occurrence that a democracy can well do without: an election under the shadow of the gun.

"I would not be surprised if there is selective killing," said a senior police official in Chandigarh. "The idea would be to disrupt the elections and to prevent people from coming out to vote." The blood-letting has never really stopped in

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Punjab. If there was a pause in the months leading up to the July 24 accord, it was only because everything about the state was uncertain. Then the drum began to roll: Lalit Maken, Longowal, B.K. Khullar, Arjun Dass were killed in quick succession. An attempt was made on the life of former Ludhiana senior superintendent of police (SSP) A.P. Pandey. No less than nine incidents took four lives on September 3. Another man was killed in a terrorist act a week later. And suspected terrorists, who were picked up in Delhi, revealed alleged plans to blow up the Shan-e-Punjab, a fast train between Delhi and Amritsar.

Intelligence sources in the state fear that violence will build up as the campaign intensifies, that the last one week before campaigning closes on September 23 could be one of the bloodiest. Attempts may be made on the lives of candidates to force the elections to be countermanded. Voters may be forcibly prevented from going to poll. Bombs may be thrown in public or at polling stations to create a psychosis of terror. Some of the action, they fear, will be from isolated gangs who are operating from hide-outs in relatively inaccessible riverine areas along the Beas,

CAMPAIGNS

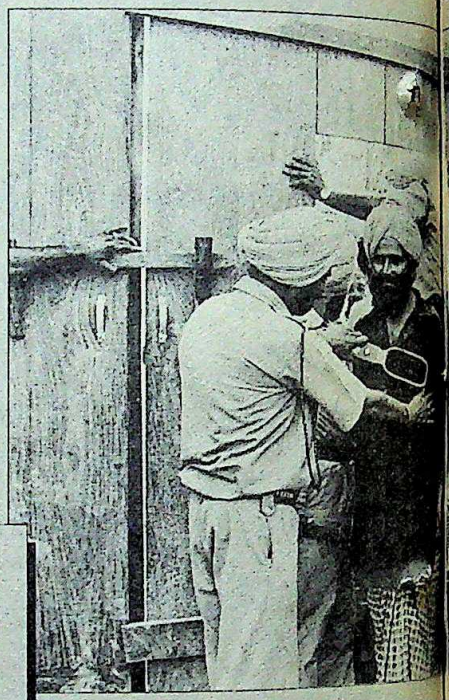
Hamstrung

THE SIGHT is awesome; a fast-moving phalanx of six cars that comes barrelling down the road, imperiously muscling every passing vehicle off the side and then sweeps past leaving people wondering about the identity of the VIP hidden behind the tinted glass windows of the central car. People living around Barnala town in Punjab's Sangrur district have a fair idea who the VIP is because the high-security convoy invariably starts from a newly-built house on Bajakhana Road on the town's outskirts owned by Surjit Singh Barnala, acting president of the Akali Dal and inheritor of the slain Sant Harchand Singh Longowal's bloody mantle.

The house is literally a fortress; the high front wall has crenellated battlements and a front gate of solid wood with a smaller door set into it. Both are kept bolted from the inside. The place is crawling with commandos and one of them attaches himself to any visitor the moment he crosses the road towards the gate. On knocking, the small door is opened from inside by a Sten gun-toting commando. Wary eyes watch every movement as the visitor steps through the door into the courtyard. In a guard room, police inspectors are at hand to conduct a metal detector check, and cleared through this outer ring, the visitor is escorted towards the house porch where Barnala's son Gaganjeet waits suspiciously, right hand hovering near the butt of a .28 calibre revolver sticking out of the front pocket of his blue jeans. Gaganjeet has taken charge of the security cordon around Barnala; he is helped by a young Chandigarh law graduate who paces up and down the front verandah carrying a short barelled 15-shot Winchester carbine. Shades of the wild west! The whole place is bristling with firearms—revolvers, carbines, ancient .303 rifles and Sten guns by the dozen. Gaganjeet proudly proclaims that the security provided to his father is as tight as the President and prime minister's security. To that he has added his own services and those of his friend. There are a couple of hot lines linking Barnala's house to Chandigarh and Sangrur and a huge standby generator in the corner of the compound in case of a power failure.

All this is not surprising because Barnala today is Punjab's most protected politician. A bullet-proof vest of the kind that could have saved the life of his predecessor Longowal, adds some bulk to Barnala's narrow-shouldered frame. Longowal had put his faith in God but neither Barnala nor the authorities responsible for his security are prepared to tempt fate this time. This is why few people are allowed near him; all visitors must wait in the verandah in plain sight of the securitymen. Punjab police commandos become instantly alert the moment Barnala emerges to greet visitors; two of them start whispering into walkie talkie sets. There is a flurry of action because Barnala has to drive to nearby Kaimbowal to meet the party nominee for the Dhanaula constituency. The head of the security team, a deputy superintendent of police, instantly gathers the commandos around him and drawing diagrams on the ground with a stick, explains the positions they are to take. Even though Gaganjeet has agreed, the security men are not too happy about our car following the convoy. Two new white ambassador cars are parked near the porch, both with blank number plates and shaded windows. Barnala gets into one and the convoy is on its way piloted by a red-flag jeep which signals all approaching traffic to pull over to the side. After the jeep comes a green ambassador carrying commandos followed by Barnala's unnumbered car and another green commando car with gun barrels sticking out like so many antennae. The destination is kept deliberately secret and only the driver of the lead car knows where they are headed. While Barnala's white ambassador drives on the left side of the road, the two green escort cars hug the right verge forming a barrier between the VIP car and oncoming vehicles on the other side of the road. The whole convoy moves at around 90 Km an hour often

Barnala's house is literally a fortress; wary eyes watch every movement through the door into the courtyard where police are at hand to conduct a metal detector check.



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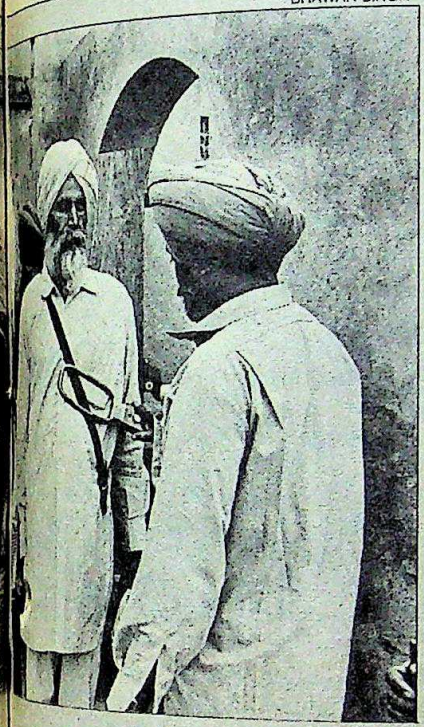
for instance. Such groups, they believe, were responsible for some of the stray incidents last fortnight, particularly one in which the terrorists warned the fear-stricken people of a Hoshiarpur village not to allow the Government to set up polling stations in the vicinity.

But a surprisingly large number of politicians—and common people—now seem to be convinced that a greater threat comes from terrorists who have slipped across the border from Pakistan. "We have definite information now that some 40 motivators have crossed over in the last few weeks," the official says. For evidence, officials refer to interrogation reports, such as that of Sarabjit Singh (INDIA TODAY, September 15), some of which provide remarkably vivid details of the experience of those who appear to have crossed into Pakistan. "There is a distinct pattern in the killings," alleges a senior official in Chandigarh who believes that some of the young men who fled into Pakistan after Operation Bluestar in June 1984 have been trained as motivators to recruit young hot-heads with no previous activity or complaints against them to carry out acts of terrorism. The pattern, he says, has been noted in incidents since

BHAWAN SINGH



Frisking audience at a poll meeting

leaving us way behind

When the convoy arrives at the destination, Kaimbowal gurudwara, the commandos ring Barnala facing outward and Sten guns ready. The same thing happens on the way back when the convoy makes an unscheduled stop at a railway crossing. This time, however, Barnala is in one of the green cars which is effectively cordoned off on both sides and other vehicles are made to stop some distance away. At Kaimbowal everyone entering the Akali chief's room was searched and two armed Akali jathedars were made to hand over their revolvers to the security inspector.

All this is bound to prevent effective public contact with the Akali chief. Says Barnala: "It is not easy to approach the public as we used to do but we will hold public meetings." He plans to travel around and address one meeting in each of the 100-odd constituencies his party is contesting. "We are cautious and the public too is cautious." Will the tension and fear of violence affect voter turn-out? "Not at all," says Barnala. On the contrary, he argues that it will be higher than before. "After a period of turmoil the people want we should succeed."

The fear of low voter turn-out is very real. As one voter told B.S. Ramoowalia, Akali(L) general secretary and candidate for the Sangrur parliamentary seat: "You wear a bullet-proof vest, but what about the voters, they remain vulnerable." Ramoowalia, who is high on the hit list, wears a bulky white vest, a part of which shows under his open collar. But unlike him, not all candidates wear the vests supplied to them, partly because of pride and partly to appear macho and unafraid. This category includes Amrinder Singh of Patiala, one of the newest stars of the Akali Dal(L). He goes around the Talwandi Sabo constituency dressed in a thin white kurta saying he has nothing to fear from the youth as he has been helping to fight their cases in the special courts. Inspite of this, two armed ex-servicemen stand guard by his side, one of them holding a mean-looking Mauser pistol of the type made famous by James Bond. The presence of his personal guards and a Matador van with policemen which follows him everywhere suggests there is danger. Why then does he not wear the vest? "The Punjab authorities should make it compulsory for all candidates and political leaders campaigning in Punjab to wear bullet-proof vests," suggested a retired army officer who saw Amrinder Singh campaigning in Talwandi Sabo. This view is echoed all over the state by people who would like to see this election pass with the minimum of bloodshed. Leaders like Amrinder Singh who represent recognised parties are all the more vulnerable to terrorist attack and it is their job as much as that of the police to make the terrorists' task more difficult. But villagers are allowed to approach Amrinder, jostle him and one *baazigar* acrobat even performed somersaults inches away from the royal nose. He addresses little corner meetings of 100 to 200 people in the villages and reminds them that this is Punjab's most crucial election. How they vote will determine the state's future and also the future of the 32 lakh Sikhs in other states.

In any case Talwandi Sabo is in peaceful Bhatinda district which has seen little terrorism so far. In northern Amritsar, which has seen some of the worst, candidates like the Congress(I) Lok Sabha aspirant Raghunandan Lal Bhatia are taking no risks. A sandbag emplacement shelters armed policemen outside his Mall Road house. Bhatia, an AICC(I) general secretary, was lucky to survive one attempt on his life and now an armed personal bodyguard dogs his every footstep. Whether it is in the airy verandah or in the drawing room, the bodyguard stands within arms reach of Bhatia and looks over the shoulder of any visitor who comes to meet him. Sten gun snouts protrude from the windows of Bhatia's car wherever he travels.

Other Congress(I) candidates are not so particular, even those who have the resources to arrange an elaborate security cover. Young Bubbly Brar, Congress (I) Lok Sabha candidate from Faridkot, the home town of President Zail Singh, drives around in the back seat of her Fiat car accompanied by a single armed guard in the front seat. This kind of guard has only a limited use. He can keep an eye only on the front while Brar is vulnerable to an attack through the rear windscreen. At the very least there ought to be a security car following behind to prevent someone taking a pot shot at the candidate from the back.

Lapses, loopholes and oversights such as these render the coming poll in Punjab vulnerable to disruption by terrorists. And as long as they continue, the lives of the candidates contesting the poll will remain in jeopardy as also the prospects of Punjab returning to peace and normalcy.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The Punjab-Pakistan border overgrown with tall elephant grass

January, and it is worrying the authorities. The killers of Longowal and those who made an attempt on Pandey's life were young men on whom the police had no information.

The Government's well-advertised move to seal the border is aimed at preventing any more such traffic, but local police affirm that they aren't very sanguine about it. Villagers in Gurdaspur district affirm this impression. Says D.N. Sharma, sarpanch of Chhonhar village close to Dehra Baba Nanak: "People go across the border like they're going to the market!" In fact, the authorities have placed a ban on movement within 500 metres of the border between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m., and only villagers who own fields in this zone are allowed to enter it during the day—and that too with written permission. The border has been handed over to the army for the duration of the election, and government sources affirm that large numbers of smugglers and other criminal elements have been apprehended in the past few days. Even so, as a senior intelligence official said: "It is just not possible to seal the border effectively. From crossing over into Punjab, the terrorists are now coming in through Kathua (near Jammu) and Ganganagar (in Rajasthan)."

Consequently, far greater attention is being paid to what can be done to contain the violence that is widely expected. "At the moment, our entire effort is to safeguard the candidates to ensure that nothing goes wrong," says Punjab Home Secretary N.N. Vohra. Each candidate is being given two official gunmen who have been put through a crash course in weapons training. In addition, each candidate has been asked to name up to five licensed weapon owners who can be vetted and permitted to carry weapons in public for his protection. A car and an additional five-member police guard which stays with the candidate night and day completes the complement. To make campaigns somewhat safer, candidates are being asked to tell the district authorities of any big meetings they plan at least two days in advance. They're being asked not to use religious places like gurudwaras for their meetings, nor campaign after dark, nor use communal language or appeals. Even so, as a senior police official warns: "There is no foolproof method of securing everyone."

The border has been handed over to the army and a large number of smugglers and criminal elements have been apprehended in the past few days, but intelligence officers admit that it is not possible to seal the border totally.

Still, as the election draws near, the show of force is likely to be impressive. Amritsar district, which is among the more difficult, has some 40 companies of paramilitary forces, each with 60 to 80 men, already in position. Another 30 companies are being inducted and will be deployed on mobile patrol, particularly just before and on election day escorting ballot papers, protecting the 1,629 election booths that are to be set up and then seeing the ballot papers safely into the counting houses. Deputy Commissioner Ramesh Inder Singh says that there are some 20,000 retired servicemen in the district and that some of them will be asked to volunteer for patrolling and security duties if they are required—after their credentials have been checked out. "Such precautions have never been taken before," he says, "but we are taking them to our satisfaction."

In neighbouring Gurdaspur, widely believed to be the most disturbed district in the state, some 3,500 policemen will be on duty in election week, and the authorities have classified some 120 villages of the district's 1,500 as particularly sensitive. The district has 68 assembly and five Lok Sabha contestants but, as SSP J.P. Birdhi says: "Unless and until the villagers cooperate with the administration and unite to fight it, I don't think terrorism can be stopped."

It isn't only the terrorists who seem determined to sabotage the elections. The United Akali Dal (UAD) of Bhindranwale's father, Baba Joginder Singh, last fortnight assembled some 8,000 or more slogan-shouting young men in the Golden Temple and showed it meant business in calling for a boycott of the election. The UAD's fighting arm, the All-India Sikh Student's Federation (AISSF), which describes the accord as a "sell-out", says that it has already begun to mobilise volunteers in the villages to "persuade" people not to go out and vote. Says AISSF Convenor Harminder Singh Kahlon: "We are setting up five-member committees in each village to propagate our view that the accord is a total sell-out of the Sikhs and we should not participate in the election." He denies that AISSF will forcibly stop voters from participating. "We don't believe in that. If we educate people, it will be enough," he says. Like the militant students, the Baba himself is convinced that many Sikhs will not vote, "not those who are real Sikhs," he told INDIA TODAY.

At the same time, the UAD and the AISSF don't seem to be averse to the idea of talks with the Government. Dr Bhagwan Singh, acting president of the AISSF says: "Just as the Assam students were taken into confidence, the prime minister should take the AISSF people into confidence, reopen the accord and

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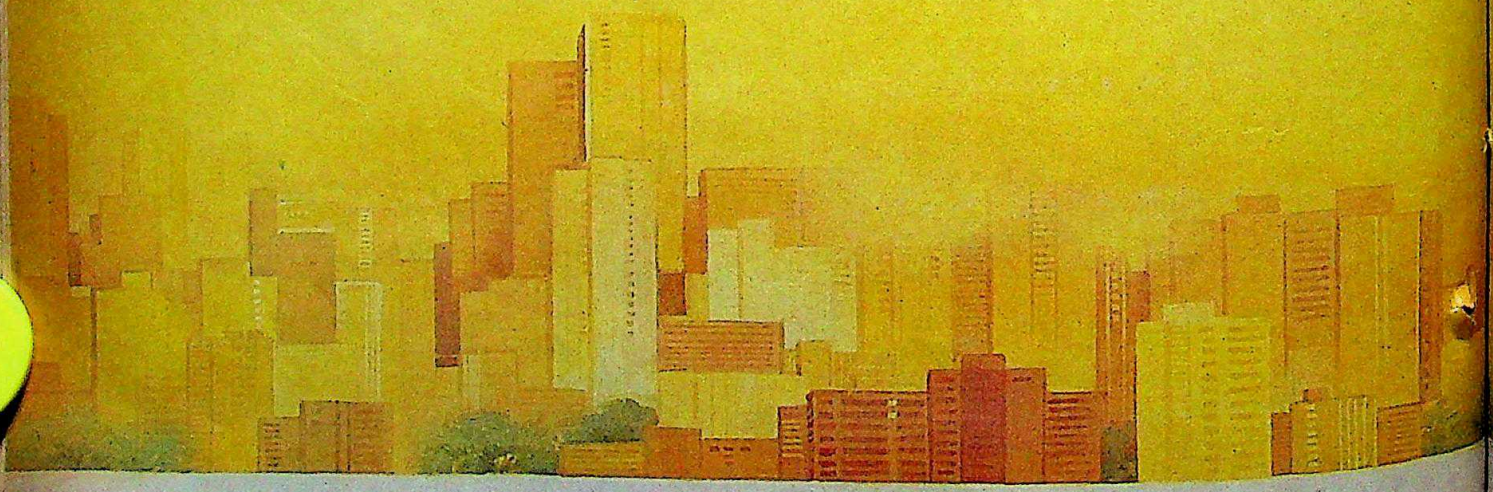

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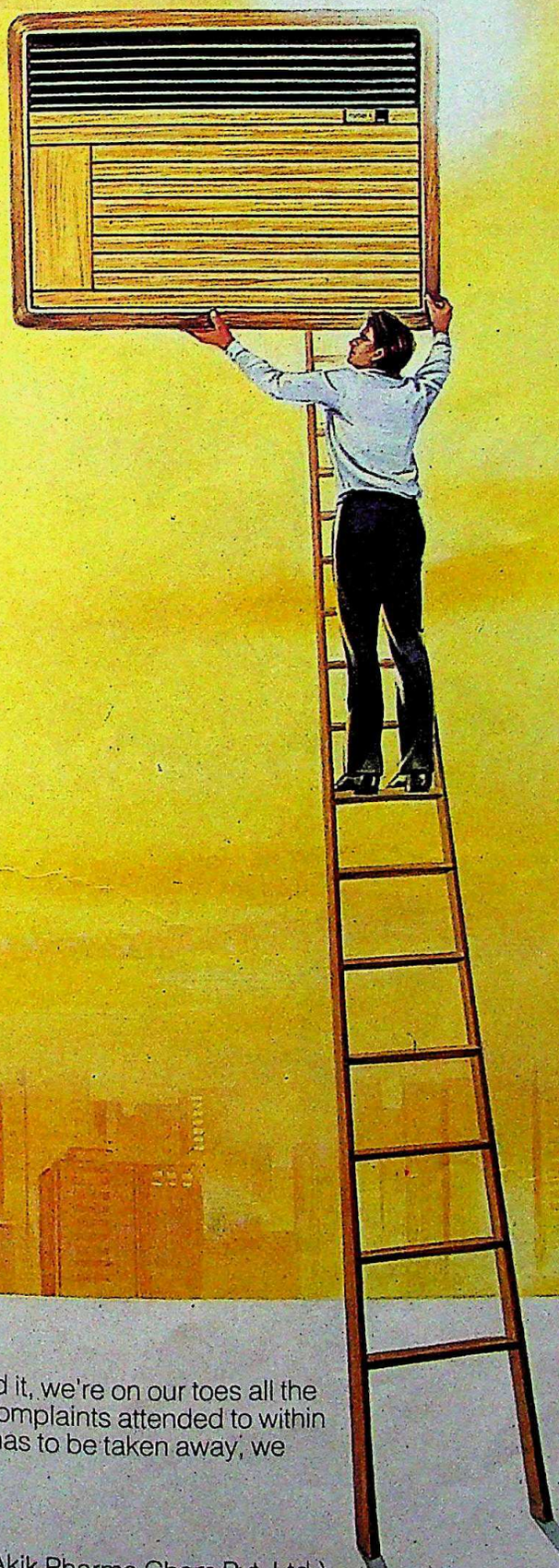

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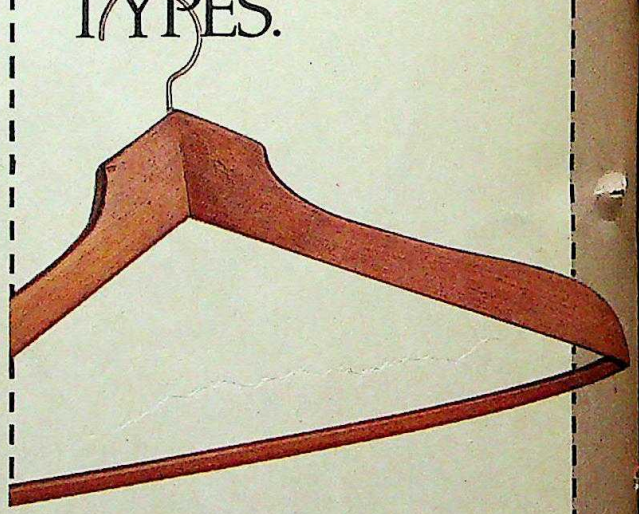
EVER SINCE I DISCOVERED RAYMOND'S READYMADES, IT'S GOODBYE TO STEREO-TYPES.



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discuss things." The Baba declines to discuss outstanding issues with journalists saying that he's prepared to talk only with someone who can do something about them, though he does indicate that they have to do with the treatment of army deserters, the political activists still imprisoned and alleged police repression. AISSF spokesmen also include the Anandpur Sahib resolution and the canal waters dispute among the issues that still need to be thrashed out.

Such talks aren't likely in a hurry and the authorities and political parties are convinced that the boycott threat will be contained. Congress(I) candidate for the Gurdaspur Lok Sabha seat Sukhbans Kaur echoes a widely held view when she says: "There's going to be no boycott. I think the Government will ensure that the people can vote." But it isn't a threat that is being taken lightly.

The surprise of the election was, of course, the extraordinary numbers of would-be candidates who presented themselves to both the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal(Longowal) for tickets—and the unprecedented flood of independents standing—raising the number of contestants to 863 for the assembly compared with the previous maximum of 722 in 1980. Obviously, fear of the terrorist, of violence and personal harm, hadn't kept aspiring politicians at bay.

For both the leading parties, making final selections wasn't easy. They've either been caught up in unabashed factionalism or tainted with allegations of terrorist or criminal connections and corruption. The Akalis, for instance, had just about put their house in order when Longowal was assassinated. And even as his funeral pyre smoldered, his soothing, restraining hand snatched away from the party, the bickering broke out once again. It took a marathon 60-hour screening session in Ludhiana to produce a list of 93 assembly and 11 Lok Sabha candidates. Sighed an exhausted Barnala: "We have spent so many hours discussing the merit of each candidate. We have the right candidate at the right place."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the tremors of protest began. And a day before the last date for withdrawals — September 5—almost the entire Akali flock was back in the Canal Rest House in Ludhiana ostensibly to collect their official nomination letters to deliver to the election officers—but also on hand to prevent any last minute reshuffle of candidates. They needn't have bothered: only former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal, now somewhat isolated from the main Akali leadership, was inside the rest house. The list was being given its final scrutiny by Barnala, former finance minister Balwant Singh and the party's young rising star Sant Ajit Singh, head of the party's parliamentary board at another rest house some 30 km away.

Militants raising pro-Bhindranwale slogans at the Golden Temple

The AISSF, which terms the accord a sell-out, is setting up member committees in villages to 'persuade' voters to boycott the election.

The final list of 102 candidates shows that the Akalis have given its various factions due representation, but that some have got more than others. Barnala, Balwant Singh and former education minister Sukhjinder Singh, leaders who owed their primary allegiance to Longowal, cornered about 65 seats. Badal's nominees number about 15, former speaker Ravi Inder Singh's around seven and newcomer Amarinder Singh's nominees five. Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) President Gurcharan Singh Tohra who along with Badal reached an understanding on the accord on the morning of Longowal's assassination, has some dozen nominees.

The party has some problems with rebel candidates but in acknowledgement of Longowal's highly effective wooing of the Hindus of Punjab is now seeking to project a secular image, to show that it is not a Sikh party but one that can represent all Punjabis. Says Surendra Pal Singh, candidate from Nur Mahal in Jalandhar district: "We are a secular party because Guru Gobind Singh was secular." Apart from leaving 10 seats to the Janata Party, it has put up five Hindu and one Muslim and one Christian candidate. It has also put up non-Jat Sikh candidates from the *tarkhan* or carpenter community, a move aimed at weaning away sections of the Sikhs that have voted Congress(I) in the belief that the Akali Dal is a Jat-dominated party.

If the Akali lists proved problematic, the Congress(I) list has proved traumatic for the party in the state. The procedure was a long, well thought out one—but the end result has left the party stalwarts in the state isolated and brimming with resentment. To begin with, the Congress(I) sent large numbers of 'coordinators' to the state for six to eight weeks to investigate conditions on the ground and assess the state of the party after three years and more of violence. Then, shortly before the elections were announced, some 40 MP's did the rounds, each assigned two or three constituencies, to report on candidates' reputations and winning chances. The intelligence agencies are reported to have pitched in but none of these reports was shown to the nine-member state election committee which screened some 1,037 applications along with three parliamentary board members, Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran, Minister of State for Social Welfare Mrs

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M. Chandrashekher and former Union railway minister A.B.A.Ghani Khan Chaudhury who sat up with the committee two days and nights.

In the end, however, it was the prime minister and his advisors who determined the candidates, bringing in 80 new faces among the 117 assembly candidates, slashing 27 sitting MLA's and at least seven ministers in the Darbara Singh government—including the former chief minister himself. The reason, as a senior Congressman explained, was simple: the high command had decided to eliminate the party's rampant factionalism and rid it of elements suspected to have connections with terrorists or criminal elements.

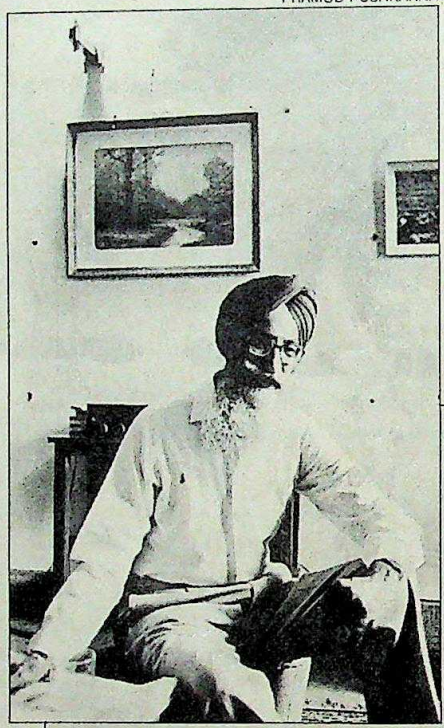
Not unexpectedly, the list of newcomers and political novices has given rise to a widespread impression that the Congress(I) has put up weak candidates in order to let the Akali's win and form the Government. The party suspects that the campaign is being fanned by disgruntled former strongmen who have been cast aside. But there's no doubt that a growing number of voters and opinion makers in the state are convinced that there is some sort of secret understanding between the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal.

The refrain is common. A Dehra Baba Nanak farmer, Bawa Singh, says bluntly: "The Congress party has decided to hand over the Government to the Akalis." A Gurdaspur Congress(I) lawyer says:"I've been arguing that we should put up strong candidates, mobilise Sikh opinion, otherwise we will lose whatever gains we've made among the Sikhs." In Faridkot town, a watchmaker opined that there was no longer any difference between the Congress and Akali candidates, and a senior Akali leader who has his own reasons to be dissatisfied declared in Ludhiana:"This isn't an election, it's a friendly contest."

If much of this is orchestrated, there's also a feeling that the Congress(I) is handing membership of the assembly on a platter to the Akali stalwarts—men like Barnala, Balwant Singh, Sukhjinder Singh, Ravi Inder Singh, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and some others. But as Bhatia, the Congress(I)'s Amritsar candidate says:"Frankly speaking, we've always had difficulty in the Malwa belt (south of the Sutlej), I don't subscribe to the view that we have weak candidates. At no stage were there any instructions to this effect."

Sparrow retorts that the allegation is "utterly wrong" and says that he is "absolutely happy" with the list even though some two-thirds of the recommendations he and his fellow selectors sent up were not accepted. Former foreign minister Swaran Singh says there is no harm in giving new candidates experience when they are faced with stalwarts. Says he:"There is no understanding between the Akalis and the Congress. Whether a candidate is strong or weak isn't the issue, people will vote for the party, for Rajiv Gandhi." But he does concede that if the feeling gains wider currency, it will damage the Congress(I)'s poll prospects, keeping back some wavering supporters who may feel they'd rather not vote if the party isn't serious about forming a government.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



There is a widespread impression that the Congress(I) has put up weak candidates in order to let the Akalis led by Barnala form the Government...

As it is, the election seems to have brought about a complete polarisation of the vote. Had Longowal been alive, some Hindus might well have voted for his party. But last fortnight, with the election tempo still to pick up, people across the state seemed to feel that Hindus would vote for the Congress(I) and the Sikhs largely for the Akali Dal. The two communist parties have decided to fight the election together for the first time and this, says Dang, will help them consolidate the 8 to 10 per cent of the vote that traditionally belongs to them. But he concedes that "when communal polarisation takes place, the Left is bound to suffer." With the emergence of such groups as the Shiv Sena in Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts, the Bharatiya Janata Party may pick up some strength, but there's a widespread feeling that the election might see an out and out communal polarisation on election day.

INTERESTINGLY enough, this polarisation is now tending to be a political phenomenon. The long night of personal Hindu-Sikh animosity seems finally to be coming to an end, and social barriers between the two communities are finally eroding. "The wedge is still there—but it is a bit blunted after Longowal's death," says a retired major general in Chandigarh. Adds state CPI Secretary Avtar Malhotra: "Longowal's death has helped weaken the divide between Hindus and Sikhs. It has created a better environment, when the tallest leader of the Sikhs sacrificed his life for national integration." The feeling is confirmed by S.S.Bal, vice-chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University: "The Hindu-Sikh divide is much narrower. I know because they've now begun to talk politics together." The presence of large numbers of Hindus at Longowal's *bhog* is indicative of the change of heart in that community. Similarly, among the Sikhs the accord seems to have finally displaced the feeling that the Government was dragging its feet in order to humiliate the community.

All of which makes for an atmosphere that is, but for the threat of violence, finally conducive for elections. Says Governor Arjun Singh: "I think people were fed up and wanted a change for the better. By and large, people would like the election to go on and finish successfully." After three years and more in suspended animation, Punjab is finally stirring with a sense of hope. That springs not only from what politicians and administrators now say, it is confirmed in virtually every chance conversation with people across the state. Many feel that the election should have been delayed till after the accord could be consolidated. Indeed, some Akalis privately still grumble about the timing, arguing that even Longowal

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had argued for a delayed election but more and more people seem to concur with Dr Attar Singh of Punjab University, Chandigarh, an Akali supporter who says: "In the first instance I wouldn't have gone in for it, but once announced, there's no escape from it." Balwant Singh, one of the chief architects of the accord, believes "the feeling is going around that violence is no solution, that we must find a solution in constitutional terms, that elections do provide a certain solution."

Reservations are prevalent in areas where terrorist tensions run high—as in Gurdaspur. A Kalanaur shopkeeper says that there is a real fear that elections will invite terrorist action which in turn will bring down the firm hand of the police and reprisals which will alienate more young boys thus completing the vicious circle. Some 142 youths are missing from the district and the villagers argue they ran away—not all to Pakistan, many to other parts of the country—because they feared maltreatment at the hands of the police. But near Kalanaur, sarpanch Sohan Singh of Shahpur Goraya, a village just 8 km from the border, feels convinced that the elections should—and will—go through as announced. "Some say they won't let the elections take place, others that they will. The Government is holding them so they will happen," he asserts.

...State Congress chief Sparrow staunchly denies this but other partymen concede that if the feeling gains wider currency, it will damage their poll prospects.

But qualms of this kind aren't predominant in most other districts where people talk about only a "handful" of people opposing the accord or the elections. "Students don't believe in violence, they have to pass exams, and they're not for agitation," says Nirmal Singh, a Phagwara travel agent. In nearby Ramgariah College, the state president Makhan Singh Sadhu of the CPI(M)-affiliated Students Federation of India, which claims 50,000 members in the state, said: "We support the accord. It was a source of great relief among students." Concurs Jalandhar farmer K.S.Mann: "People were fed up with the tension. The farmer's position is now the same as that of the trader in the town: he has to get three crops and cannot waste time agitating."

More promising signs of normalcy come from other quarters. Longowal's *bhog* attracted some two lakh people; the pro-boycott meeting in Amritsar only a fraction of that. There is some evidence that people at large are now willing to stick their necks out and cooperate with the police in apprehending terrorists. In one incident in Haryana village in Hoshiarpur district, a suspected terrorist

was overpowered when he attempted to snatch a scooter. "Only a handful of people talk about Bhindranwale any more," says Jathedar Mukhtar Singh from a village near Amritsar, "but they know they can't find a man like Longowal." Displaying a commendable knowledge of history, he likens the Punjab accord to the agreement signed between Ranjit Singh and William Bentinck in 1831. The spirit of Longowal is clearly on the ascendant, which leads an official to ask metaphorically: "Whom will Punjab canonise, Longowal or Bhindranwale?"

Not surprisingly, then, both the Akali Dal and the Congress(I) have made the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal accord the centre-piece of their election platform. All Akali candidates are sworn to support it, but the Akalis are aware that the accord didn't tackle each and every one of the issues that they originally brought up, such as the persons still in jail after Operation Bluestar and the treatment of army deserters. These are still live issues with the UAD, and the Akali Dal manifesto promises a general amnesty if the party is brought to power and an inquiry into all the violence in Punjab these past years.

Both the Akali Dal and the Congress(I) say they will also appeal for Hindu-Sikh amity and pledge themselves to the economic development of the state—all additional reasons for the widespread feeling in the state that the two parties do indeed have an understanding or that with the vote communally divided, they will eventually end up forming a coalition government. Indeed, there is a current feeling that the interests of the state might be best served by this but, as Swaran Singh says: "It is too early to talk about coalition. In any case, it is very difficult to forge a coalition between two parties who think of themselves as alternatives."

Some people are beginning to wonder what will happen if the Akalis, who have never before won more than 58 seats and that too with the support of the then Janata Party in 1977, aren't able to make a government. Balwant Singh says flatly that this will be taken to be a rejection of the accord by the Sikhs, an interpretation which would give muscle to the UAD which has called for a boycott, but Congress(I) spokesmen deride this claim, saying that the accord is the centre-piece of their party's campaign and whichever party loses, the accord triumphs.

That triumph will be meaningful if the terrorists and the boycotters are kept at bay, if the election goes through reasonably smoothly, if there isn't too much blood letting, if Punjab is prevented from becoming another Assam with a farcical election and a ministry without popular sanction. The fear of violence may well ensure a low turnout in the elections, but this only serves to emphasise the gamble that Rajiv Gandhi has taken in his attempt to put Punjab back on the rails. After all, it is the accord which is the issue of the election and and if the election isn't credible the accord could suffer.

No matter who wins, the future is daunting. There are still militants to pacify, terrorists to combat and issues to tackle. But, as Vice-Chancellor of Ludhiana Agricultural University, Sukhdev Singh says: "There can be no two opinions that the ultimate stability will be with a popular government." Whether that stability will be achieved, the next two weeks will show. But after years of despair and turmoil, it is at last possible to travel through Punjab and return with the stirrings of optimism.

—SUMAN DUBEY with GOBIND THUKRAL

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PUNJAB ELECTIONS

Growing Polarisation

IN MOST elections, the ultimate question is: who will win? That may be true of the Punjab election as well, but it is an election with a difference. After three years of turmoil, the more pertinent questions are: will the elections produce a credible government? Will the Government restore stability and the normal democratic processes?

Punjab has other unique facets. Each vote cast, irrespective of the party it goes to, will be a vote for the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal accord. A vote deliberately held back will be a plus for the poll boycotters led by Baba Joginder Singh's United Akali Dal. In Punjab, the percentage of electors who exercise their franchise—the turn-out rate—has traditionally been high. In the last two Lok Sabha elections in 1977 and 1980, the turn-out rates were 15 per cent and 6 per cent higher than the corresponding all-India averages of 55 per cent and 56 per cent. The state's relatively higher per capita income and the strong links between the two dominant political parties, and religion, caste, language and occupation may have something to do with it. But it is clear that if there is no widespread violence, a turn-out as high as 63 per cent—the state's average in the 1980 general elections—would indicate the people's emphatic support to the Rajiv-Longowal accord.

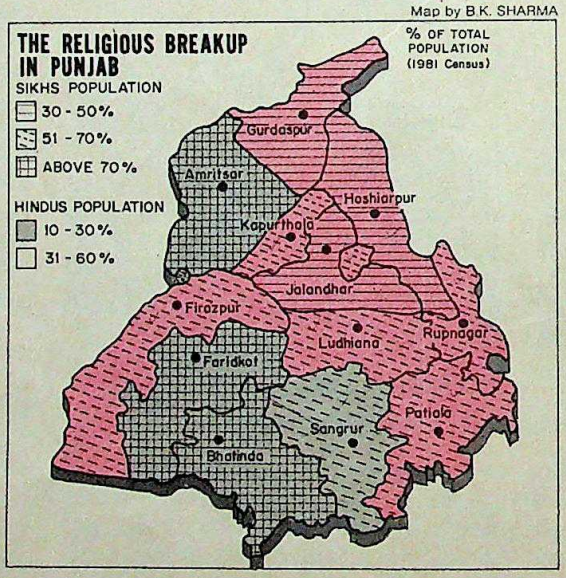
In the first instance it would seem that the Assam elections of 1983 hold some clues to the outcome of the coming polls in Punjab. Assam too was rocked by violence—if anything, with wider participation—and the elections were held in the third week of February 1983 in the face of a strong call for boycott of the polls. The outcome of those elections was far from gratifying: polling had to be adjourned in 16 constituencies, was countermanded in one and the turn-out was an abysmal 33 per cent compared to a normal level of above 60 per cent in the state. The Assam elections produced anything but a credible popular government.

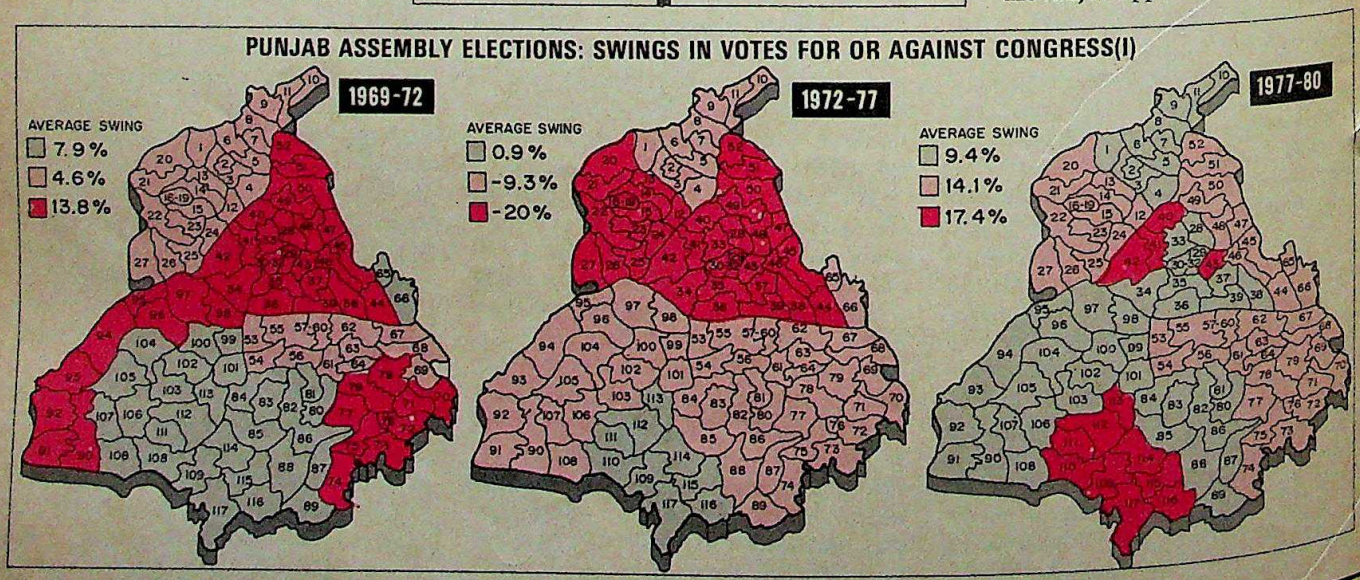
However, on closer scrutiny the similarities between the Assam of 1983 and the Punjab of 1985 seem to be superficial. In the first place, the Punjab elections are preceded by an important accord between the two principal actors, there was no similar pre-election accord in Assam in 1983. Secondly, going by the number of nominations filed, the Punjabis have taken to the election with much more enthusiasm than the Assamese did in 1983. More pointedly, in Assam there were four constituencies where no more than one candidate filed his nomination and the elections were uncontested; no such thing has happened in any constituency in Punjab.

Perhaps there may be a closer parallel between the Punjab of 1985 and the West Bengal of 1972. The Bengal elections of 1972 followed Naxalite trouble in some districts in the state. In two of the districts affected by terrorism—Jalpaiguri and Midnapore—the turn-out fell from 62 per cent and 72 per cent in 1969 to 55 per cent and 58 per cent in 1972. Even if Punjab goes the way of West Bengal, the credibility of its government will not be seriously impaired.

With every election there is growing evidence of increasing polarisation in Punjab politics. The proportion of total votes shared by the Congress(I) and Akalis between themselves in the vidhan sabha elections has progressively risen from roughly 57 per cent in 1967 to 72 per cent in 1980—1977 being an aberration due to the Janata-Akali electoral adjustments. The Lok Sabha results tell a similar story. This tendency towards polarisation is corroborated by the high and increasing value of the index of opposition unity—the proportion of total non-Congress(I) votes going to the major Opposition in a constitu-

Map by B.K. SHARMA





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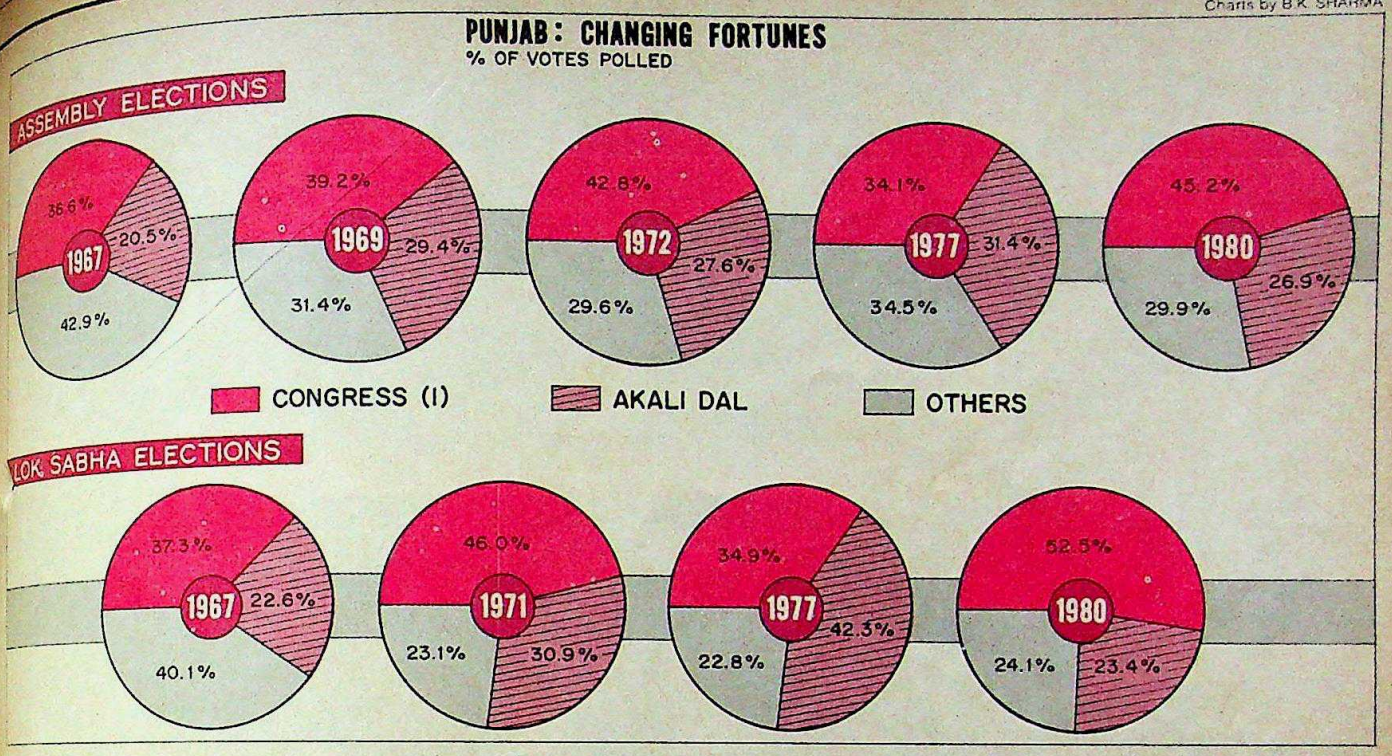
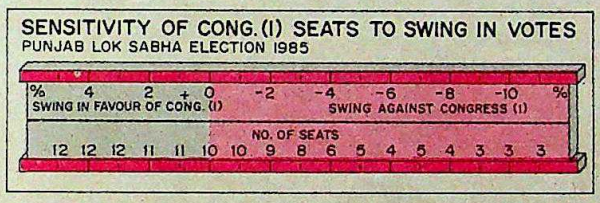
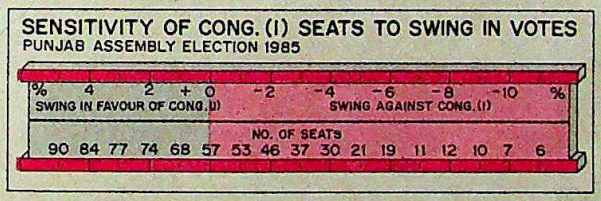


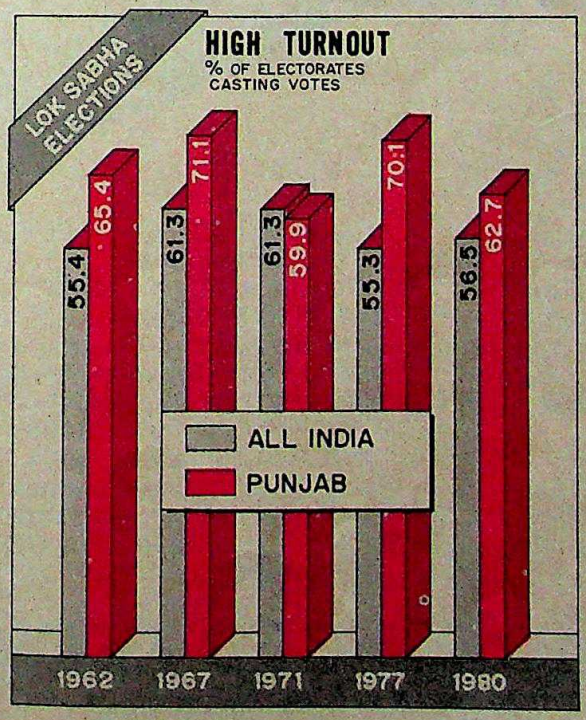
ency—in Punjab of late.

Past voting behaviour does not reveal whether the communal divide will be accentuated in the coming election. There does not seem to be any simple correlation between the religious composition of the population in any individual district and the percentage of votes polled by either of the two parties. For example, according to the 1981 census, Hindus constitute as little as 22.5 per cent and 20.6 per cent of the total population in the two districts of Amritsar and Faridkot respectively. Yet in the vidhan sabha elections of 1980, the Congress(I) got as much as 45 per cent and 44 per cent of the popular vote. Contrary to political folklore, the districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur to the north of the Sutlej and Ludhiana adjoining it—with a total number of 64 assembly constituencies—which contain a predominantly Sikh population, constitute the traditional strong support base of the Congress(I) Party in Punjab.

But it is possible to be more definite about the index of opposition unity. In 1977, the Akali alliance with the Janata Party contributed partly to Congress(I) support dropping from 46 per cent in 1971 to 35 per cent. The Congress(I) mustered 49 per cent of the all-India vote in the parliamentary elections of December 1984 and this time there







is a Janata-Akali accord on the distribution of parliamentary seats. If the percentage of votes for the Congress(I) were to come down from its 1980 pinnacle of 53 per cent by as much as 3 per cent, keeping in view the Janata-Akali electoral understanding, in normal circumstances we would not expect the Congress(I) to get more than eight seats compared to the dozen that it held in the last Lok Sabha.

Swings or changes in the percentage of votes in favour of the Congress(I) or against it, follow a distinct geographical pattern in Punjab. Past voting behaviour shows three zones of homogeneous swings: one of moderate swing and the other two of extremes. The electoral outcome in Punjab crucially hinges on the kind of swings that these three zones—shown in the map—are going to experience.

No two successive elections in Punjab have seen the same party come to power. Going by this historical regularity the odds are with the Akali Dal. However, a scrutiny of the 1980 result shows that the Congress(I)'s victory in 1980 was slender enough in spite of the pro-Congress(I) wave of the time. A sensitivity analysis shows that at a slightly higher level of opposition unity than in 1980, a one per cent swing away from the Congress(I) can upset the Congress(I) applecart in the vidhan sabha.

—ASHOK LAHIRI

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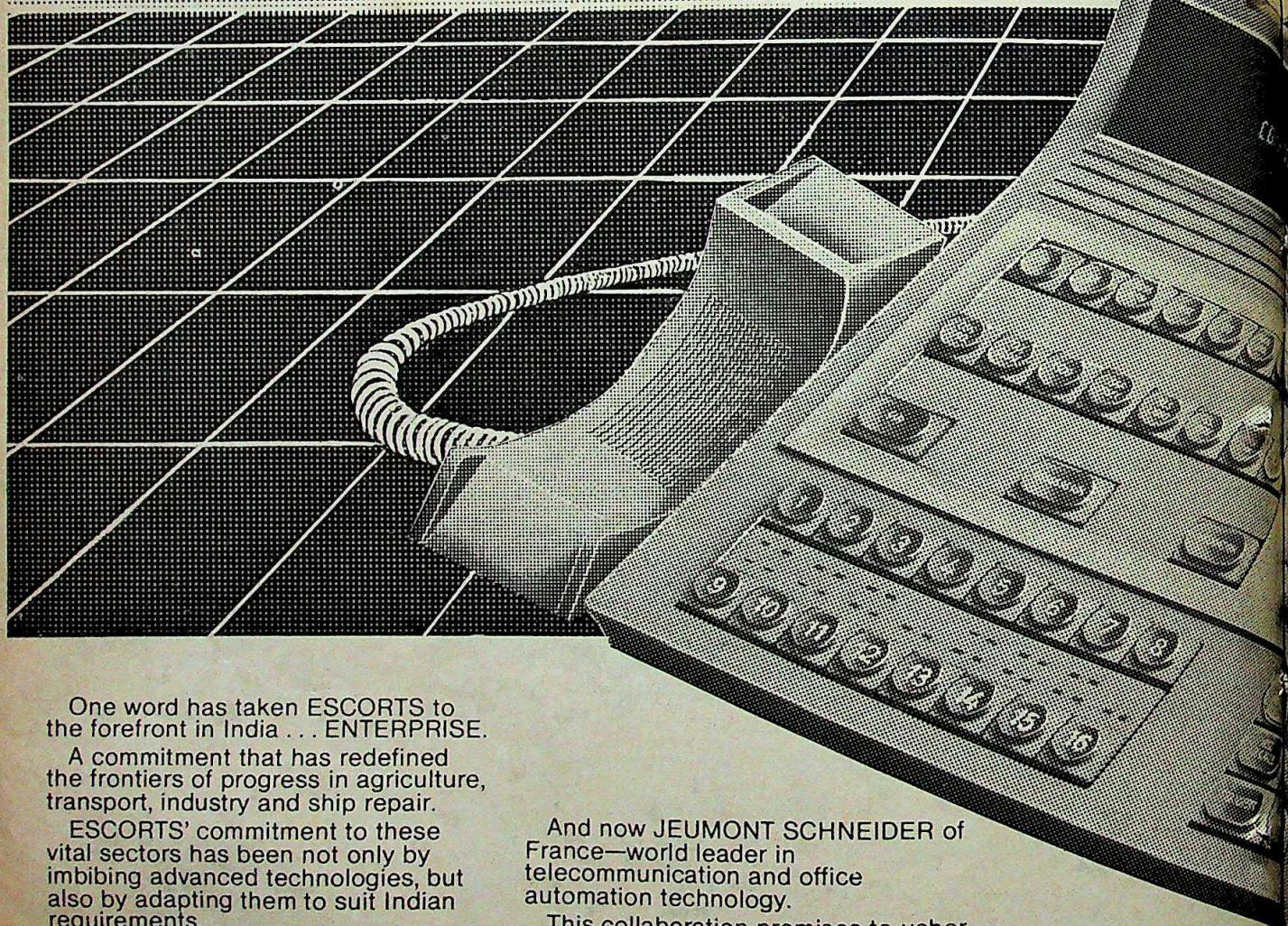

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The Name Game

IF BATAVIA can be renamed Jakarta, Peking can become Beijing and Lyallpur become Faisalabad, why can't Patna get back its old name of Pataliputra? And before you can ask that trite question—"what's in a name?"—Lt-Gen (retd) S. K.Sinha will point out the rechristening of Benares as Varanasi, Baroda as Vadodara, Poona as Pune and Vizagapatnam as Vishakhapatnam. He has a point and last fortnight he tried to drive it home when he led a two-lakh signature campaign to Mayor K. N. Sahay in support of his suggestion.

S.K. Sinha

For quite some time, the self-professed "son of Bihar" has been leading a one-man crusade for reaffirming pride in the state's lost heritage. Sinha had launched his campaign early last year, saying that the name would be a constant reminder that this city was once the capital of the illustrious Magadha empire. The response, Sinha claims, has been massive.

House-Warming

MUSH doesn't belong to just Mills and Boon and politicians too are made of flesh and blood. So if a leader gets emotionally attached to his government bungalow, you can't really blame him. S. Bangarappa will tell you that. The ubiquitous Karnataka Opposition leader made it known last fortnight in the Vidhana Soudha that he has a yen for a government dwelling and not just any dwelling would do.

Bangarappa complained that it was now six months since he was elected leader of the Opposition and the Government was yet to allot him an official residence. And he would have no other house, he said, except the one he occupied as revenue minister under Gundu Rao four years ago. After all, he had lived there so long he had naturally grown attached to it.

D. BADURAJ

Veeranna with family: dishoused

But the house that Bangarappa wanted was already occupied by K. Veeranna, the state's minister for small savings and prisons. Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde politely requested Veeranna to vacate the bungalow and move into the state guest-house till he could find him another place.

But while Bangarappa's problem is solved, Veeranna's troubles have only begun. So small are their two rooms in the guest-house that Veeranna and family find themselves bumping into the furniture and one another. And food is so expensive at Rs 75 per meal that the minister's wife has been forced to get two kerosene stoves and start cooking in the bedroom. There is one consolation though: Veeranna is saving the Government some Rs 4,000 per month by way of rent. After all, he's not the small savings minister for nothing. But some would call that carrying devotion a bit too far.

Travails of the Tuskers

AMBER was red last fortnight thanks to a jumbo-sized problem. When Moti the elephant died and raised a stink at Amber in Rajasthan, for days, citizens of this ancient Rajput capital moved about with hankies on their noses and no one was willing to give the jumbo a funeral. While the huge carcass lay rotting, the elephant's owner and civic authorities haggled over whose responsibility it was to cart it away. Finally, the tusker's owner managed it with the help of a contractor who charged a whopping Rs 1,000 for the formidable task.

SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Jaipur's Jumbos

The incident may or may not have grabbed provincial headlines but it certainly focussed attention on the plight of Jaipur's 39 or so elephants, who now live in the more squalid part of the walled city called Mohalla Mahawatan. Though it still remains the elephant stable of the country, the city has become increasingly inhospitable to its gargantuan residents.

If tuskers can still be seen in the city, it is only because of the tourists. Enterprising mahouts have for long cashed in on the foreign tourist's penchant for Raj remnants and made a living by hiring out elephants for joy rides. But the going is not easy.

For each trip, a mahout has to pay five rupees to the state Archaeology Department, another five to the local authorities and a massive Rs 15 to the middlemen travel agents. And not to mention the cost of maintaining the beasts, which leaves the poor mahouts with practically nothing. Their feed alone eats up whatever little is left of the day's earnings. "At this rate," Abdul Rashid warns, "the elephants will start vanishing from the city." Hopefully not in the manner that Moti did.

Hustling the Hustlers

IN CALCUTTA, as in every other metropolis, the world's oldest profession has spilled out on to the streets. Though streetwalkers are nothing new to the city, of late their breed has burgeoned. Overcrowding and high maintenance costs have forced them to move from their traditional *kothas* and backlanes to the busier thoroughfares. So the flesh trade has now shifted from the notorious Sonagachhee to the bustling sidewalks of Chowringhee. And none's the happier for it. Least of all the custodians of law and order.

The incensed policemen are determined to give the prostitutes a run for their money. So it was all hellfire and brimstone when the khaki crusaders swooped down on these "corrupting influences" recently. The city police's detective department announced that it had taken a "serious view" of the alarming rise in indecent public behaviour with prostitutes openly soliciting customers at streetcorners and crossroads.

The police rounded up as many as 75 streetwalkers in one fortnight alone. But the defenders of the law are often defeated by the law itself which believes in taking a not-too-harsh view of these "fallen women". So it was not long before love's labour was lost and the hustlers were back hawking their wares.

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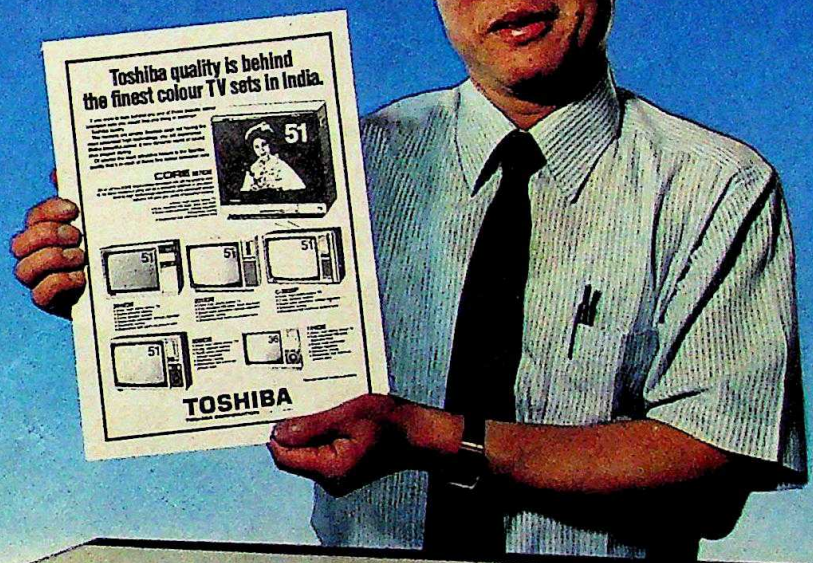

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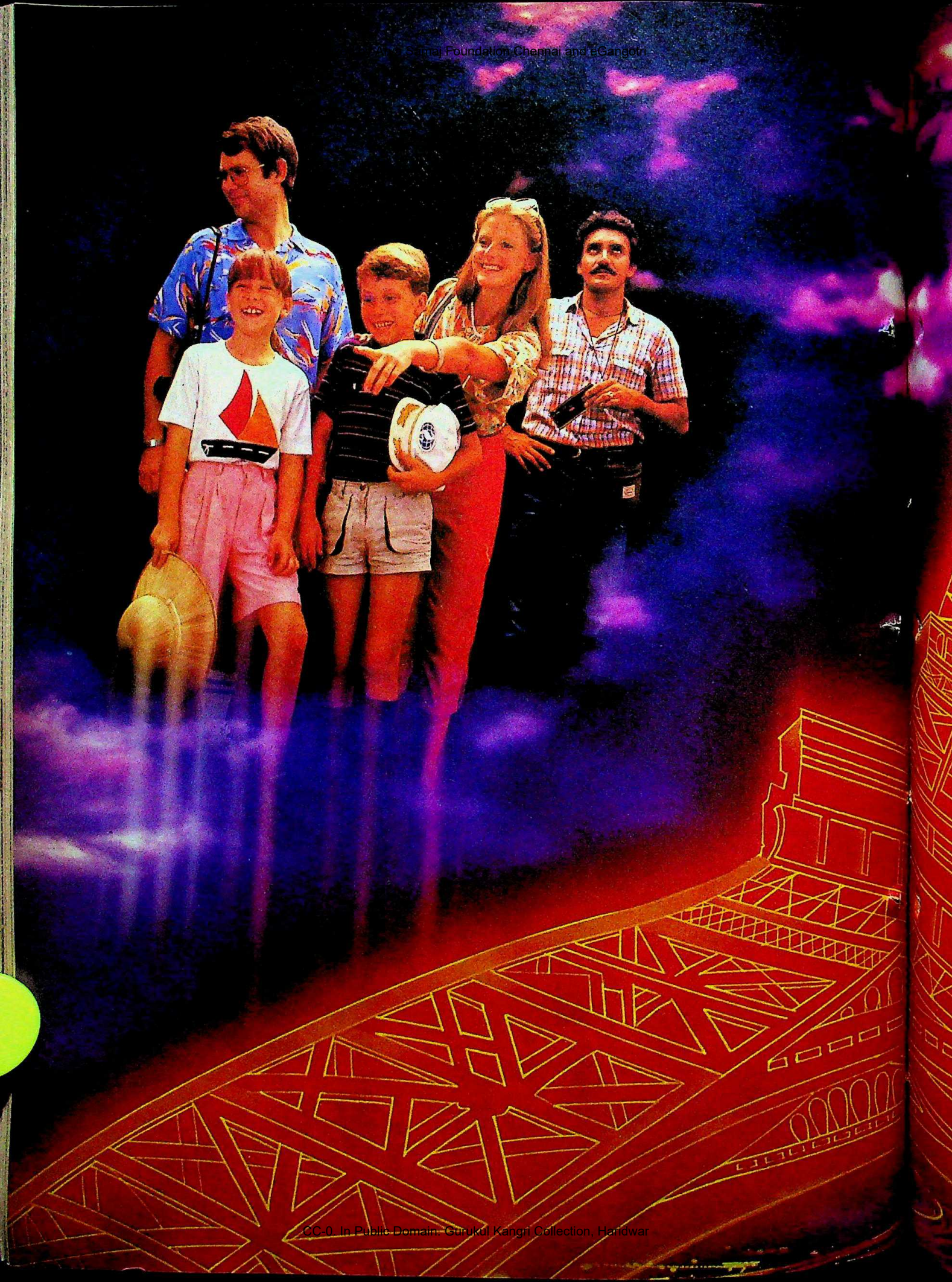

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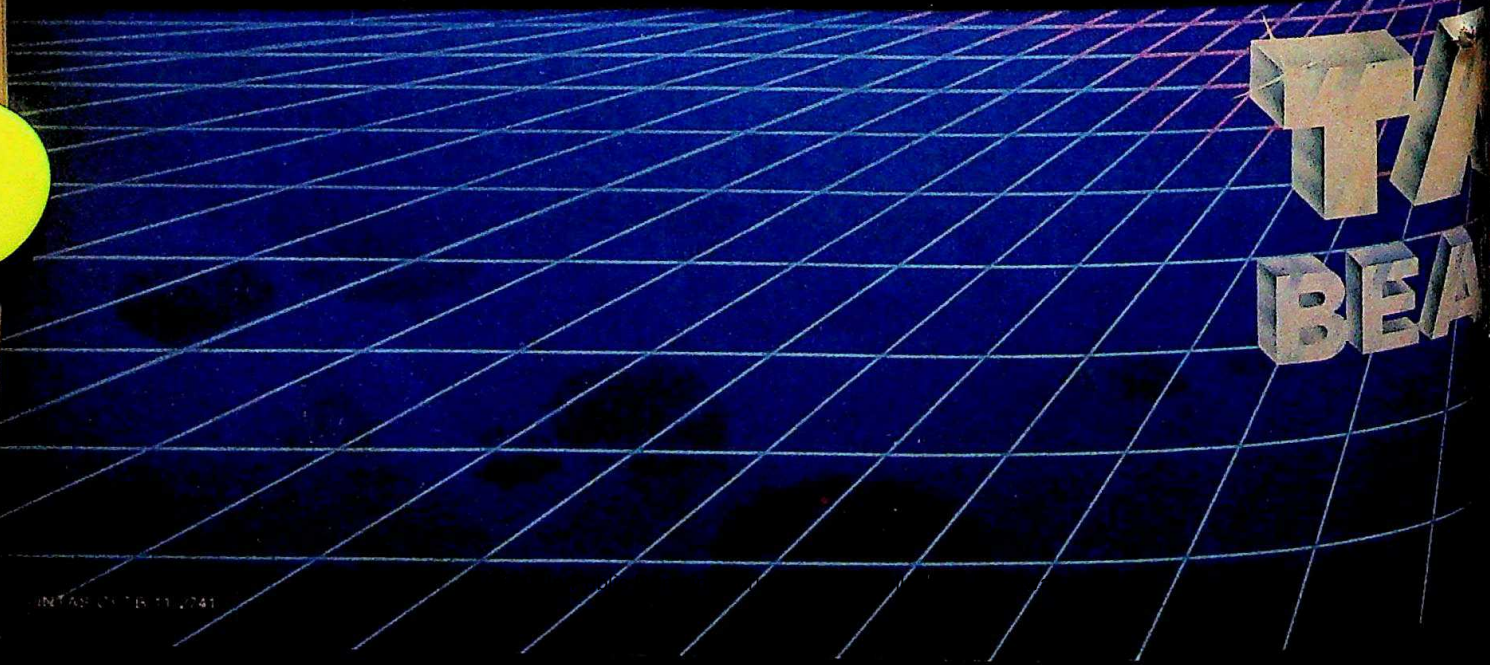

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NAMAS BHOJANI

ZEENAT AMAN

When the Bouquets Run Out

IN 1972 she was the doped-out flower child in Dev Anand's *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* who made *chillums* respectable. In 1978 she turned stark ethnic for Raj Kapoor's *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* by donning a scrap of a sari that revealed more than the movie itself. Two years later she was the swinging crooner in Feroz Khan's *Qurbani* and had the whole nation hooked on disco fever while she flung her sarong to the winds. But where is Zeenat Aman in 1985 ? What is the face, the life, the lot of a sex symbol like five years later?

The face has now frozen into a Lakme mask of beauty, but it could be Lux. The famous bosom juts out modestly from a Pattaya Beach T-shirt her current boyfriend bought her on holiday last month. And the waist, belted into rippingly tight jeans, is still breathtaking, for no other reason than it belies rumours of a three-month pregnancy. Recently when Bombay's film press ran stories that she was going to have a baby, the irony was that the news no longer made magazine covers. Sandwiched in black-and-white obscurity between full-colour exploits of the younger breed in *Stardust* — is that how an erstwhile national bird of India begins to shed plumage ?

Not quite. Now 33, Zeenie Baby continues to live in the tiny, two-bedroomed flat she has shared with her mother since she was eight. Its two remarkable features are the absence of any visible sign of a career in the movies: no bouncer at the door, no tacky trophies, photographs or mementos of the Big Time on the shelves or walls. And its air of unflashy discretion is accentuated by its sparkling cleanliness (boxes of tissues and serviettes conveniently placed, and Miss Aman on all fours trying to asphyxiate a single fly with a spray gun).

Over tea, she coolly reflects on the aftermath of stardom. "What's changed is not having your name on the marquee, not having a million people following you around and not having 500 bouquets arrive on your birthday. But I'm the sort of person who when I got 500 bouquets used to remind myself of the day when I'd get 50. Now if I get 50 I laugh and say, 'Watch out, you'd be lucky if you get five next year'. I've always been quite practical about my life, level-headed, down-to-earth. I'm the never-look-back type.

"And yet the things that really matter haven't changed. I've never had sycophants or *chamchas* hanging around, so my friends remain the same. I've never flaunted money, so I continue to live exactly the same way. As for work, I don't really want it, I don't need it. I've done it all, seen it all. I worked like a horse with blinkers on for 15 years, waking up each morning, putting on makeup, rushing to the studio, learning the lines, taking off the makeup and sitting with an Urdu tutor in the evenings to improve my diction. I had no time to think. The magazines used to call me 'Miss Professional' but I worked so hard to be successful that it was like going back to school. I missed all the things that young girls enjoy most. I missed all the years of being a teenager."

She laughs, speaking softly, in faintly American-accented English, looking you directly in the eye and inwardly scrutinising each question for a thorough but thoughtful answer. It's the demeanour that once created the popular impression of a ruthless, calculating, high-spirited adventuress who swung from one movie moghul to another with the dexterity of Tarzan in the jungle, who went through one male star after another like a dose of salts but always remembered to collect her dues from producers in time. But she was the one who got away: never had nervous breakdowns, never whined when the lovers went back home, did not seek refuge in drugs or religion, and now, has the good grace to coolly dissect it over an exquisitely-poured cup of tea.

She realises that she's one of the few successful female stars of her generation who has neither cracked up nor is on her way to becoming an exotic basket case. "You know why stardom screws up people ? Because it gives you too many choices. As a 20-year-old I was making as much money as, well, as much money as it was possible for a 20-year-old to make in India. That sort of thing could drive people nuts. But I put my money in the bank. I came from a matriarchal family, and was always treated as an individual. I never kept a secretary. My Mum and I handled every producer ourselves, right in this sitting room. So when people ask me today, 'What are you worth ?', my answer is, 'Money in the bank'."

But the Zeenat Aman the public knew, and hungrily devoured, was made up of more than sugar, spice and hard cash.

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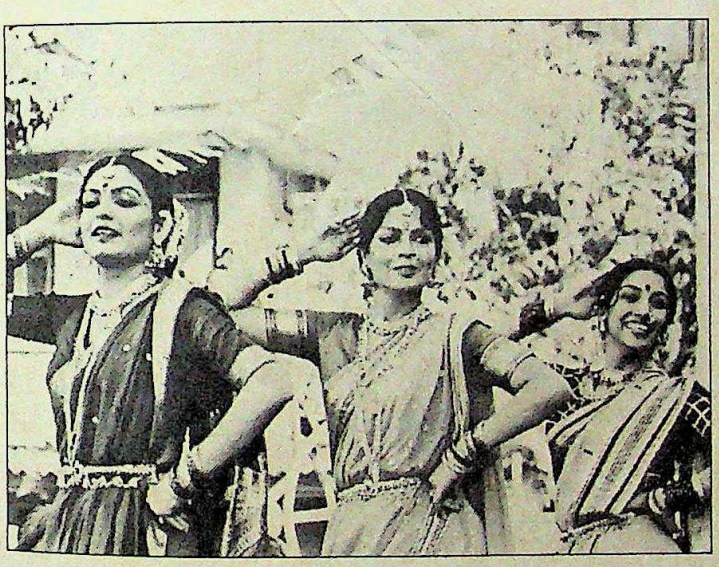

With Raj Kapoor (top); Praveen Babi and Shabana Azmi in *Ashanti* and Amitabh in *Lawaris*

kittens. "There may not be another generation of stars like us. Amitabh and Rekha, Hema Malini and I, only because the face of the film industry is changing with video and TV. But that doesn't mean the film industry will die. It doesns't mean there won't be more stars. In India there will always be hero worship."

Almost disinterestedly she concedes that her arrival on the film scene may have helped change conventional stereotypes of the woman's image: "Before us there were either the saintly heroines or the nasty vamps. Parveen Babi and I brought in shades of grey." But while Babi ended up a victim of the system, Zeenat Aman insists she'll be around. "I'll always find work because it's the only business I know. I'm not looking for work today but if I need it tomorrow I'll go out and get it. Obviously I can't be a 24-year-old's leading lady nor can I play his mother. It's a bit unfortunate that just when one has the histrionic experience and enough glamour, there aren't any of the older-women parts so common in western cinema. But age or ageing doesn't bother me. And if I can't find parts I'll go into film production, TV, advertising, anything."

What obsesses her these days is the thought of being a wife and mother, her doubts typical of any 30-year-old professional making the transition. "I want to be married. I want to give it my best shot. It's something I want badly but am terribly afraid of — the thought of being accountable and answerable to one person for the rest of my life." Six months ago she broke away from a two-year-old relationship with a Canadian that was most likely to end in marriage because it meant going to live in Canada. It was not only that a relationship with an Indian intervened but that she couldn't give up Bombay, "all the humidity and hell of it, the little street urchins who follow me squealing *Dekho, dekho Zeenat Aman jaata hai.*" She doesn't know where the new relationship will take her.

But she does know that "for the first time in my adult life I have the time and chance to live an average, normal life. For me it's the biggest change. Sometimes I just want to lie in bed all day, and do absolutely nothing: no shooting, no make-up, no producer hanging outside. Sometimes I don't want to leave the house for days. Maybe, I will go off and get married. Maybe I'll go ahead and have a baby. Who knows? I'm a woman of substance now."

—SUNIL SETHI in Bombay

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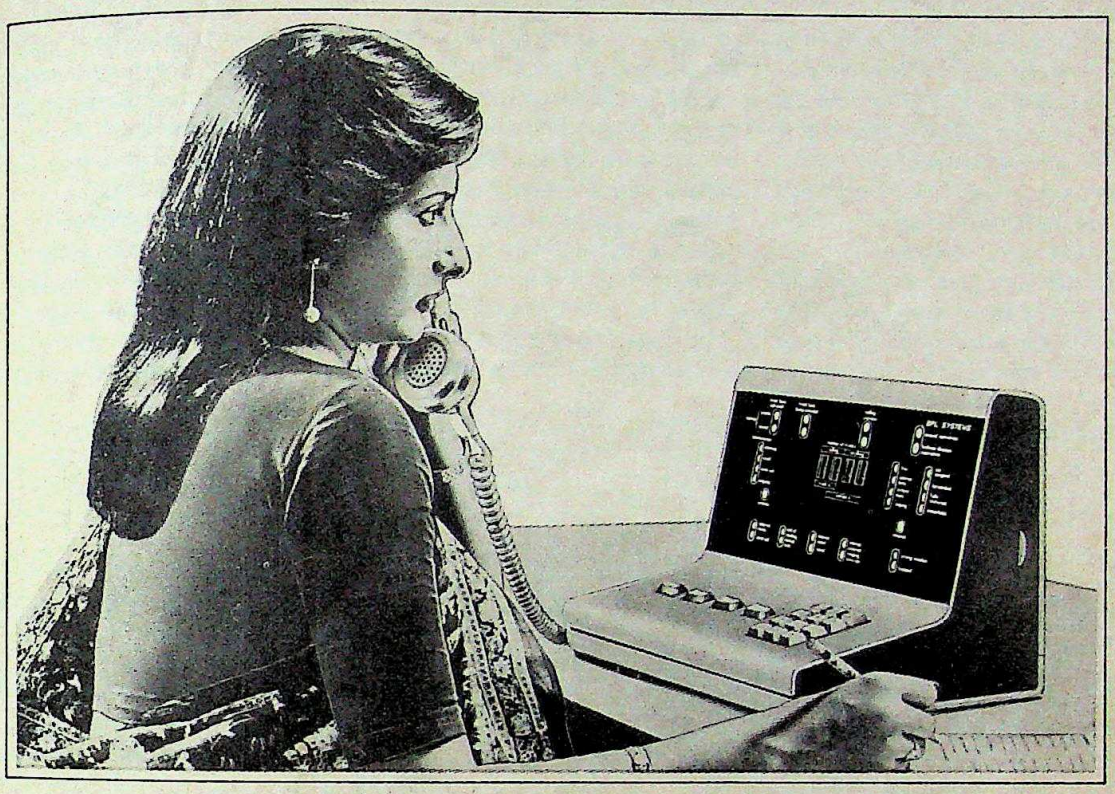

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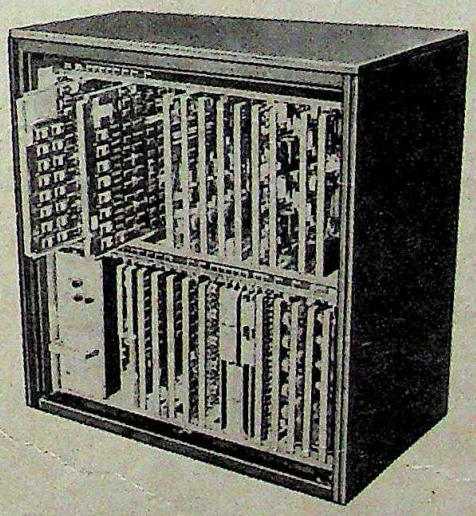

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BHAJAN LAL

A Timely Acquittal

AN EXONERATION, taking place in undue haste and in questionable circumstances, creates more doubts than clearing them. This is precisely what happened last fortnight when Jaswant Singh, the special judge to whom the Union Government had referred the opposition allegations of corruption and nepotism against Bhajan Lal, the Haryana chief minister, gave him a clean chit holding that there was no prima facie case against him. In reality, the inquiry followed no procedure, left gaping holes in evidence-collection and left a murky trail of controversy. Principal Correspondent SUMIT MITRA *and Assistant Editor* PRABHU CHAWLA *investigated the manner of the inquiry and its real worth in the context of the political battle in Haryana. Their report:*

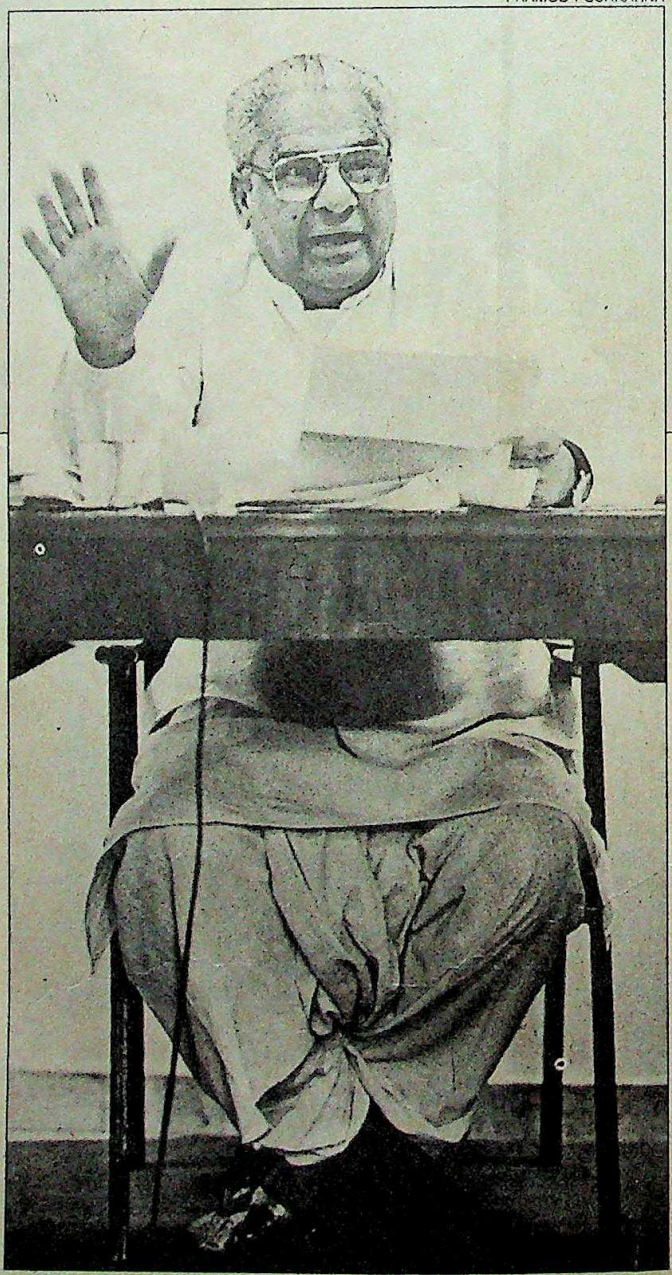
BHAJAN Lal has done it again. The wily Haryana chief minister, who had once been an amateur wrestler, trapped his adversaries in an immobilising grip last fortnight as Jaswant Singh, the special judge appointed by the Central Government to look into the Opposition charges of graft and nepotism against him, submitted that there was no *prima facie* case in the complaint.

"I am vindicated. I hope all rumour-mongering about me in the media and elsewhere will now stop once for all. I hope there will be no more of character assassination." These were Bhajan Lal's words at an exultantly summoned press conference at Delhi's Haryana Bhavan where he raved and ranted against Lok Dal leaders, and regaled the audience by digging up faded records from the past that suggested, among other things, that Devi Lal had once betrayed the freedom movement to the British, and that Charan Singh had connived in his wife's wrong-doings. When someone asked if he had anything particular against Charan Singh, a former prime minister, he testily replied: "I am talking about Charan Singh's wife, not his concubine."

He could be forgiven his excessive outbursts since his exoneration could not have been timelier. The Rajiv-Longowal accord on Punjab, concluded in July without regard to his repeated strong views on the subject, had put him in a tight spot. And just while his stock appeared to be tumbling, came the 53-page charge-sheet to the prime minister, signed by 22 opposition MLA's of Haryana and 25 opposition MP's including Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram and Madhu Dandavate. The sheer fact that Rajiv took notice of the charges and ordered an inquiry gave Bhajan Lal a few anxious moments, at least sealing his lips in the sensitive weeks following the Punjab accord. And then, just as everyone began to doubt whether the chief minister may not after all manage to stand up again in the arena, he stormed back into the battle with all of his guns blazing.

His reprieve also provided a shot in the arm for his party in Hindu-dominated Haryana where it has faced much flak as a result of the accord, which is generally viewed as a sop to the Sikhs. And it was just as well that Jaswant Singh held him not guilty because otherwise the winning chances of the Congress(I) could have been undermined by just that much of extra baggage.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"I am vindicated. I hope all the rumour-mongering about me... will now stop once for all. I hope there will be no more of character assassination."

BHAJAN LAL
chief minister, Haryana

The main plank of the charges against Bhajan Lal was that he had allowed Anoop Bishnoi, married to his daughter Roshni Devi in 1981, to acquire an industrial empire in the few years since the marriage. The next part of the allegation referred to reported instances of individual corruption, of grabbing land in the names of relatives, illegally acquiring municipal plots, allotting coal rakes to non-existent firms, rack-renting nationalised banks to fill private coffers, and misusing power in general.

The inquiry was politically effective but the manner of its conducting raised more questions than it answered. In fact, it was not even a

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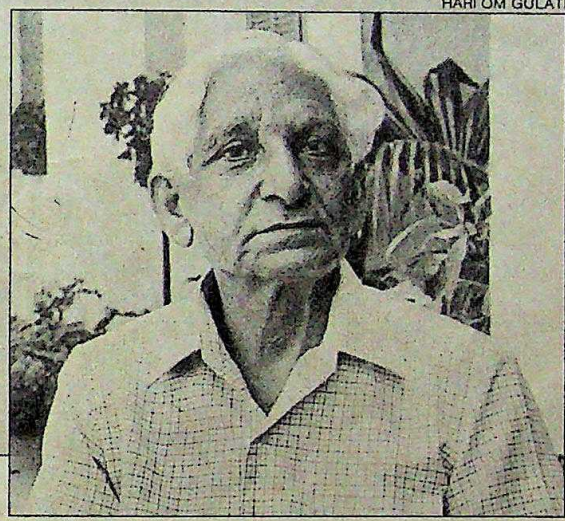
proper inquiry done by a commission constituted under the Commission of Enquiry Act, 1952. Thus, no procedural obligation, such as hearing both the parties in detail, summoning witnesses on both sides, and even-handed weighing of the conflicting arguments, was adhered to. The slapdash manner of the inquiry is evident from the lightning, if not unseemly, speed with which it was conducted. The memorandum was presented to the prime minister on July 4; acting on it, K.P.Singh Deo, Union minister of state for personnel and administrative reforms, wrote to Jaswant Singh on July 27 asking him to conduct a "preliminary inquiry", adding that his name had been suggested to the Government by the Chief Justice of India, P.N.Bhagwati; the Government notification was gazetted on July 31, with Jaswant Singh taking charge the following day. And, in 29 days flat, he had typed out, with the help of four stenographers, the 150-page report, divided into two parts and bound in blue covers. Said Charan Singh: "This is justice in the computer age. Even an inquiry against a village chowkidar takes a longer time."

THE STYLE of the inquiry could not but be unique because it was, technically, not at all an inquiry but only a reference. Without concealing his embarrassment, Jaswant Singh himself admitted to INDIA TODAY: "I tried but could not find any parallel to it. The S. R. Das Commission against Pratap Singh Kairon; the Vaidyalingam Commission against Morarji Desai and Charan Singh... nothing provided an exact model. So I had to evolve my own procedure." And the procedure he evolved was as follows:

- a notice was first served on each individual memorialist, asking him to file a supplementary statement if he so wished;
- Bhajan Lal was given a copy of the memorandum, and he filed his reply. Anoop Bishnoi also followed suit; (altogether 23 memorialists appeared before Jaswant Singh on August 12, and, as the judge says with a hint of disdain, "submitted something in writing");
- when the memorialists demanded a copy of Bhajan Lal's reply, the judge refused saying it was "confidential", and narrated to them only the substance of the reply, or what he deemed to be its substance;
- then he summoned "original documents", or, in other words, documents that appeared to him to be original and not what the complainants wanted to be produced before him;
- he invited 18 people, including Bhajan Lal, Bishnoi, and a host of officials all of whom had been indicted in the complaint for being the accomplices of the twosome, to depose before him.

At the end of this rather bizarre exercise, Jaswant Singh remarked with discernible self-approval: "I got down to the task of dictating my report." The Opposition rightly felt cheated. S.C.Mohunta, deputy leader of the Lok Dal in the Rajya Sabha, said: "It is a fraud on the people. Besides, it violates the principle of natural justice, not to speak of its turning the Evidence Act upside down. How can an accused person be let off only on the strength of his own evidence, without giving the prosecution a chance ?"

HARI OM GULATI



The S.R.Das Commission... the Vaidyalingam Commission... nothing provided an exact model. So I evolved my own procedure."

JASWANT SINGH
special judge

Mohunta cited the example of the Antulay trial in which a private complaint activated the court to order a *suo moto* inquiry, and observed that "it leaves us with no option other than securing legal redress".

It baffled even the Law Ministry why Rajiv, in post haste, short-circuited judicial procedures and chose instead to merely refer it to a retired judge. Jaswant Singh, who is 71 now, was of course suggested by Chief Justice Bhagwati but apparently no notice was taken of his advancing years, of his rather undistinguished stint on the bench of the Supreme Court between 1976 and 1979, and the fact of possible aberrations arising out of his accepting, almost without a break, assignments proffered by the state. From 1980 till last April, Jaswant Singh headed a committee for reorganisation of the high court benches, entitling him all these years to the salary and perquisites paid to a sitting judge of the Supreme Court. Besides, his son, Anil Dev Singh, a senior advocate at the Supreme Court, was a panel lawyer for the Haryana Government: he relinquished his charge only on July 31, the day of his father's appointment. Said legal wizard and BJP Vice-President Ram Jethmalani: "It would have been only proper if a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, or even a retired judge with indisputable pre-eminence, had been chosen for the work."

Jaswant Singh's report, however, was a closely-guarded secret. Only five copies were made. The judge retained one copy, the rest being submitted to the Department of Personnel and the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Within an hour of its submission, however, the government-controlled radio and television were reporting only its convenient conclusion—that the inquiry found no *prima facie* case against Bhajan Lal. It was a calculated leak, aimed at drawing propaganda mileage and concealing the distressing fact that the report, as the Opposition claims, might have been just a politically expedient cover-up shrouded in impeccable legal phraseology.

The key sentence that recurs time and again in the 19 chapters of the report is that it is based on, in Jaswant Singh's words, "material made available to me". This statement alone is an admission of the passive nature of the inquiry, an owning up of the fact that it accepted what Bhajan Lal deposed, barring the memorandum that obviously started it all. Despite this inherent shortcoming that stymies the inquiry, there were some obvious contradictions. For example:

- the memorandum charged that Bhajan Lal had acquired, through a fraudulent sale deed and by a *benami* purchase in the name of two allegedly non-existent people, Hardwari and Het Ram, a large tract of prime commercial land at Fatehabad from the Haryana

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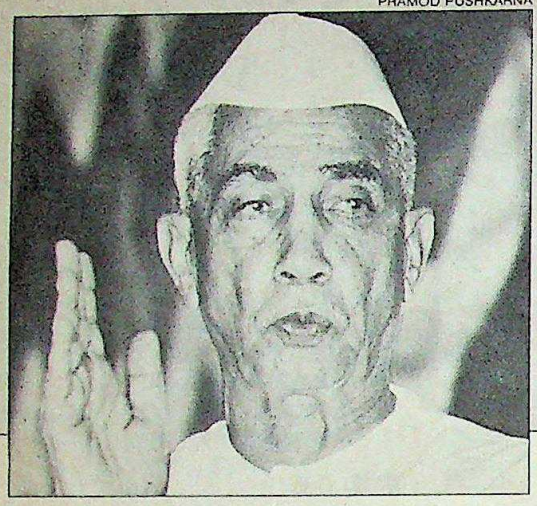
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"This is justice in the computer age. Even an inquiry against a chowkidar takes a longer time."

CHARAN SINGH
president, Lok Dal

Urban Development Authority, a state government undertaking. But, while investigating into the charge, Jaswant Singh was merely content with seeing the signatures of these reportedly non-existent people on the sale documents and never cared to summon the duo as witnesses, thus taking the chief minister at his word;

► regarding the charge that Bhajan Lal had improperly allowed a valuable piece of land at the Hissar bus-stand to be allotted, at nominal rates, to a charitable trust favoured by him, Jaswant Singh called only the transport secretary to the Haryana Government, a creature of the Bhajan Lal administration, and never summoned others bidding for the same piece of land, who would have been the natural prosecution witnesses. This is despite the clear imputation in the complaint that the charitable trust had no past record of philanthropic work and had in fact planned to utilise a large chunk of the allotted land to build shops and flats;

► there were points that proved substantially true even on the cursory inquiry conducted by Jaswant Singh. The chief minister had given many of his private residences on rent to banks, in many cases to banks under the direct control of the state Government. But Jaswant Singh quibbled over the actual rent (that is, rent on paper) charged by Bhajan Lal, as opposed to the rent alleged by the memorialists, and skipped over the inherent impropriety involved in a chief minister using his own government as a virtual trading partner. Said Chandrawati, Lok Dal MLA : "This is as vulgar as for Rajiv Gandhi to offer his private farm at Mehrauli on rent to Government."

However, the Opposition too cannot escape a share of the blame for having committed gaffes in drafting sections of the memorandum which, in its turn, undermined the credibility of the charge-sheet as a whole. The most serious of them related to its assumption that Anoop Bishnoi was a man of no consequence until he was married to Bhajan Lal's daughter. The memorandum also listed as many as 25 companies purported to have sprung up under Bishnoi's direct or indirect

"This (Bhajan Lal's renting out his houses to banks) is as vulgar as for Rajiv Gandhi to offer his private farm at Mehrauli on rent to government"

CHANDRAWATI
MLA, Lok Dal

ANOOP BISHNOI

High Pedigree

HE IS bright. He is young. He is rich. And if all these qualifications are stacked on his side, he cannot be blamed merely for being Bhajan Lal's son-in-law. Yet the media and the Opposition indeed treated Anoop Bishnoi, the 25-year-old go-getter husband of Roshni, the Haryana chief minister's pretty daughter, with unnatural hostility and suspicion for months together. But the inquiry led by Jaswant Singh found him not guilty last fortnight.

"I am not upset because they say I've taken undue favours from my father-in-law. But what hurts me is the propaganda that I've no brains and that my family had no money till I got married to the chief minister's daughter," says the soft-spoken Bishnoi—taciturn, suave, safari-clad, and looking every inch like the fast-climbing entrepreneur that he is. His miniscule industrial empire at Hissar in Haryana, founded only four years ago, already has a turnover of Rs 24 crore to which another Rs 26 crore is expected to be added by next year. But Bishnoi indeed has a lot more to say about himself besides his company's balance-sheets. He passed out from the prestigious Doon School with a first division after which he obtained a first class in economics from Delhi's St Stephen's College; and, even while he was putting his first company on the drawing board, at age 20, he got a first class MBA degree from the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, the Mecca of professional management.

In addition, he has an impeccable lineage. His family always enjoyed a *pater familias* status within the farming community of Bishnois whose one million members are spread out all over north India. In the colonial days, the family held 10,000 acres of land in the two highly fertile tehsils of Fazilka and Abohar in Punjab bordering Haryana. Even now the family controls, between its members, a total holding of 900 acres. Anoop's father, Bhupendra Kumar Bishnoi, is a gentleman farmer in the mould of the American mid-west. He did his masters in economics and, besides managing the family's huge tract of land, pioneered aerial spraying in India and founded one of the country's earliest flying training schools, of which Nehru

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was a patron. In 1981-82, the time of Anoop's wedding, the net wealth of the family was assessed at Rs 31.25 lakh. Said Bhajan Lal: "It was a relationship for which my family could be envied, not Anoop's."

The opposition leaders, whose memorandum to the prime minister in July formed the basis of the inquiry against Bhajan Lal, evidently committed a *faux pas* in misreading the status, financial as well as social, of the Bishnois over a period of time. The memorandum reads: "At the time of the engagement of Roshni Devi with Anoop Kumar Bishnoi, the financial and monetary position of Anoop Kumar Bishnoi was in doldrums...this family did not have any land or property in Haryana before the engagement." Elsewhere it says: "From an ordinary student without any men-

BHAWAN SINGH

"These memorialists must have...got hold of all my loan applications and thought they'd hit the jackpot."

ANOOP KUMAR BISHNOI
Bhajan Lal's son-in-law

tionable assets Anoop Kumar Bishnoi became a flourishing industrial magnate in a short span..." The Opposition obviously did not do its homework well.

What seemed impressive to others, and suspicious to Bhajan Lal's critics, was Bishnoi's abrupt take-off close on the heels of his marriage. The first to come up was Bhanu Steel Private Limited (*see chart*), the mini steel plant with a paid-up capital of Rs 75 lakh and a present annual turnover of Rs 12 crore. Next to follow was Bhanu Industries, the cold rolling plant, and Associated Distilleries, which is graduating from making country liquor into manufacturing India-made Foreign Liquor from this year. Bishnoi astutely began adding on to these new units with a view to forward integration of his existing product mix. Thus, the units under implementation now include: Bhanu Foils, a hot strip rolling plant; Haryana Strips, a plant for hot rolling of semis and bars; and Haryana Foils, which is basically an extension of the existing cold rolling mill.

"I did things fast and I did them generally well," says Bishnoi with a trace of justified pride. The setting up of the hot rolling units is about to put him on the threshold of a newer, and a superior, market—particularly the automobile industry—from that of the small-time utensil makers. "I love steel but I'm not hooked on to it," says he, adding that "once my steel set-up gets going I'm going to diversify into totally new areas." Electronics, computers, name it, and Bishnoi has a project stacked in his Samsonite brief case. "Believe me," he says, "I've no hobby other than doing and dreaming business." The inquiry showed that Bishnoi had registered 15 companies with the state industries department, all in a period of less than four years.

The opposition memorialists however alleged that Bishnoi had not 15 but 25 units under his belt, fallaciously counting all the letterhead names that he might have entered in the loan applications that eventually got rejected, with the names finding their way into the waste-bin. Says Bishnoi sarcastically: "These guys (the memorialists) must have wormed their way into some government office, got hold of all my loan applications and thought they'd hit the jackpot."

Bishnoi's explanation of the spectacular strides made by his ventures since 1981 is that it was the result of his personal decision to "branch out into industry". His father, who had a brief affair with industry, went under following a protracted illness and doctors advised him to stay put in farming, avoiding the risk and anxiety of industry. "He was waiting for me to come of age. As soon as I became eligible, the industrial units came into being. My marriage is absolutely irrelevant to it," he says.

His marriage may have no connection with his rising fortunes, but the breathtaking pace at which the scale of his business spiralled over the years is significant. "The Haryana Government treated me as any other entrepreneur: there was nothing out of the ordinary at any stage," he says with disarming smoothness. But it seems that the Haryana State Financial Corporation and the Haryana State Industrial Corporation, under the tutelage of the Bhajan Lal administration, bent over backwards to sanction him loans at lightning speed, disbursing Rs 2.58 crore to his various units with another Rs 3 crore in the pipeline. This alone makes him one of the single largest beneficiaries of the state loan scheme, which launched him into the big league in the shortest possible time. Besides, the expeditious clearance of his loan applications entitled him to other benefits, such as the Central subsidy applicable to backward areas, tax exemption on 20 per cent of profits for 10 years, refund of octroi and low-interest loan for first eight years of operation, duty-free electricity and 5 per cent rebate on excise duty. The state loans are indeed like the master key that have gained him access to room after room in the palace of fortune.

As many as three nationalised banks—New Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and Punjab and Sind Bank—vied with one another to keep his units flush with generous limits of overdraft, with the result that he can now function with an extremely comfortable debt-equity ratio of 0.8:1 against the going level of 2:1 in comparable industries. The facilities enabled him to cut back drastically on the usually high gestation period in the steel industry, allowing him to expand when other entrepreneurs in similar situations would have been struggling just to stay aloft. "It's all good management, you see," Bishnoi smiles persuasively. All this may have nothing to do with his marriage to Roshni, the name that literally means a ray of light.

—PRABHU CHAWLA and SUMIT MITRA

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LOK DAL

Damp Squib

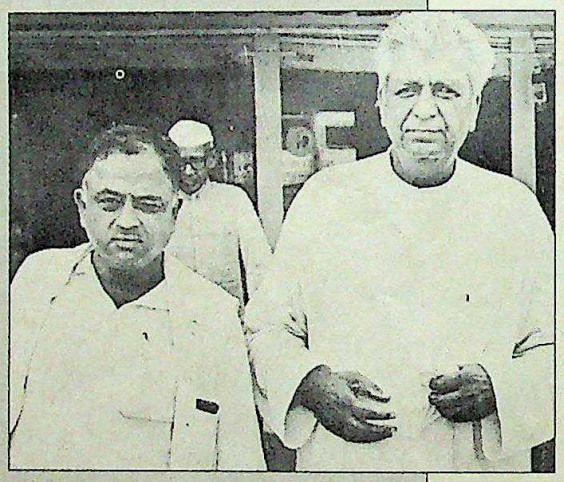
IT BEGAN with a bang, but ended with a whimper. The Opposition in Haryana may have thought the time was right to whip up popular sentiment against the Centre-Akali Dal accord by alleging that it was a sell-out of Haryana's interests, hoping thereby to recharge its drained batteries. But, far from uniting the people in a common cause, it could not even unite itself. At the end of the day it was Bhajan Lal, the unflappable chief minister of Haryana, who had the last laugh.

Devi Lal, the Haryana Lok Dal chief and Bhajan Lal's arch enemy, had been lashing out at the accord. As a gesture of protest he advocated the resignation *en masse* of all the 28 opposition MLA's in the 90-member Haryana Assembly. Of the 28 MLA's, the Lok Dal has the lion's share of 21, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) five, and the Congress(J) two. But in typical opposition style, only Devi Lal and Mangal Sein, leader of the BJP in the Assembly, resigned on August 14. It took the intervention of Lok Dal president Charan Singh before the remaining 20 Lok Dal MLA's tendered their resignations on August 30.

The remaining four BJP MLA's as well as the two Congress(J) members of the House stayed put, in effect refusing to go along with Devi Lal in his course of confrontation with the Congress(I). This suited Chief Minister Bhajan Lal just fine. While he defended the Punjab accord in public, Tara Singh Virk, the obliging speaker of the Assembly who had earlier accepted the resignations of Devi Lal and Sein, reserved his decision for the 20 other MLA's on the ground that he needed to satisfy the constitutional obligation that the resignations were voluntary.

Bhajan Lal's motive was transparent. Said S.P.Malviya, general secretary of the Lok Dal: "The chief minister of Haryana will not let there be a referendum on the Punjab accord." The confrontationists therefore had to content themselves with two by-elections on September 25, the day Punjab goes to the polls. Devi Lal seeks re-election from the Mehem assembly constituency, where he had defeated his Congress(I) rival in the 1982 elections by a margin of 17,000 votes. But in the Rohtak assembly constituency Sein is pitted against the Congress(I)'s formidable Siri Kissan Das. Sein won the last election by only 380 votes and has lost once before in 1972 to Dass.

An upset defeat could knock the wind out of the Opposition's sails. The Lok Dal is in fact trying to increase its lead at Mehem. Thundered Malviya: "The people of Mehem will give a fitting reply to the great betrayal of Haryana by the Centre."



Devi Lal (right) with Mangal Sein: anti-climax

But Malviya was merely whistling in the dark. The BJP had realised early on the inherent danger of pressing on with the resignations. It came up instead with the suggestion that only one member each of the three parties should resign. But Devi Lal demanded that the entire opposition should resign. The Congress(J) was opposed to the move and when Devi Lal and Sein finally called on the speaker with their resignation letters, Congress(J) MLA Rao Nihal Singh did not turn up. His absence gave the speaker a convenient excuse to refuse to accept his resignation.

The chaos and confusion in the opposition ranks only highlights the despair that has set in following its rout in the Lok Sabha elections. It also gives the lie to Devi Lal's belief that the popular ferment in the state over the Punjab accord has set the Ravi on fire.

ownership since then, failing to take into account the fact that only six of them were either operational or under implementation, the rest being mere letterhead firms that did not exist. The memorandum also went wrong in assessing the status, financial or otherwise, of the Bishnoi family (*see box*) and assumed, on insufficient evidence, the folklore about the unseen hand of Bhajan Lal guiding them at every stage. Even the charge that Bishnoi had been favoured by financial institutions was not buttressed with adequate evidence, and thus drew well-deserved flak from Jaswant Singh, and, later on, from Bhajan Lal himself.

However, when the Opposition approached the prime minister with the charges against Bhajan Lal, it was gambling on the odd chance that Rajiv, following his unending protestations of cleanliness in public life, might after all take a moral—and not merely political—view of the conduct of the controversial chief minister. To the Opposition, the time seemed ripe not only because Bhajan Lal could not but be opposed to the Punjab accord but because he had come to acquire an unsavoury political reputation with his penchant for horse-trading and defections. "If the prime minister is serious about his intention to initiate a new political order," said Janata Party leader Madhu Dandavate, "he must prove that he is opposed to the cussedness of a Bhajan Lal here, an Antulay or a Jagannath Mishra there."

Obviously the Opposition went wrong in mistaking the intention for the action. For Rajiv, Bhajan Lal is still a potent force useful to subdue the militant feelings in a state which is closest to Punjab, where all his peace initiatives are geared to show results through the elections. Bhajan Lal is also the lynchpin for him to finalise the Punjab accord because a lot depends on the spirit of accommodation of the people and the Government of Haryana. Bhajan Lal, a past master at sailing with prevailing winds, now says: "Punjab is the *bada bhai* (elder brother) of Haryana, and we shall honour the accord in the true fraternal spirit." In the bargain, who indeed suffered was the goddess of justice, who can tolerate being blindfolded but not deliberate blinding.

—SUMIT MITRA and PRABHU CHAWLA

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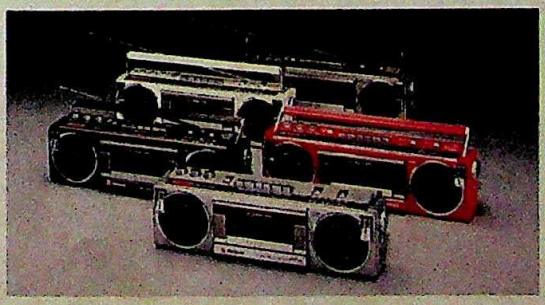

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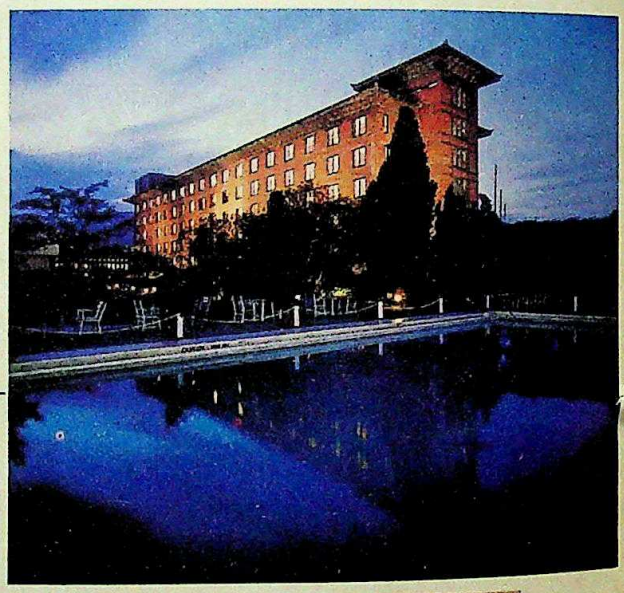

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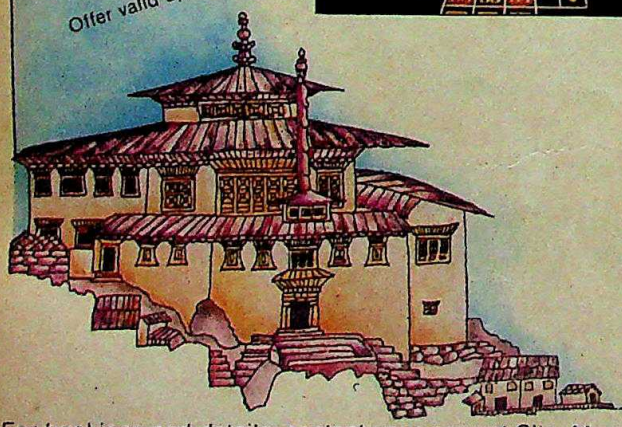

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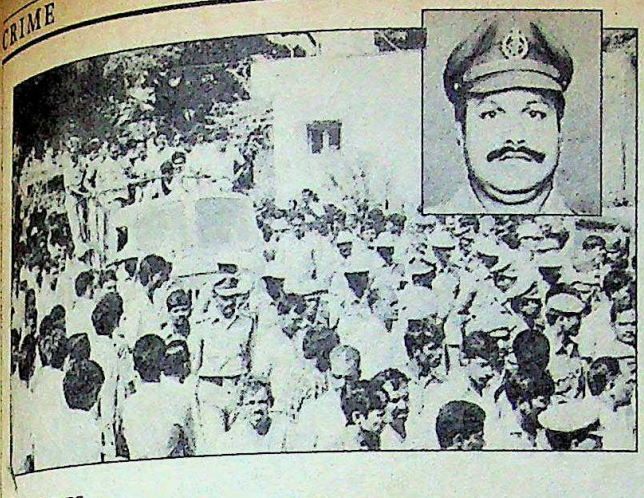

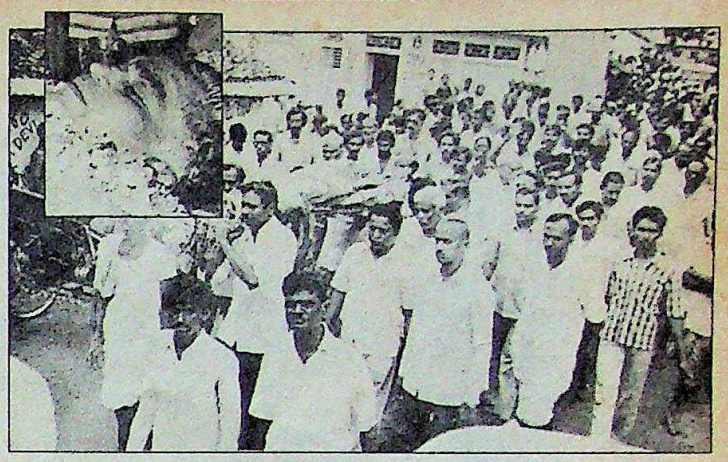

Sub-inspector Reddy's funeral (left); and Ramanadham's body being taken for cremation

NAXALITES

The New Offensive

7.10 p.m., September 2: *As the Hyderabad-Madras Express arrives at Kazipet, Sub-Inspector, N. Yadagiri Reddy, and his wife move towards the coach Mrs Reddy is to board. Her coach is under an overbridge and as they move towards it, some slogan-shouting Naxalites hurl country bombs on them. As the sound and spray of shrapnel creates panic, three armed men close in on Reddy and pump bullets into him. Reddy drops dead.*

1 p.m., September 3: *The funeral procession of Reddy, which includes many policemen both in and out of uniform, is passing in front of the clinic of Auduluthla Ramanadham, doctor and vice-president of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, when some men brandishing arms storm into Dr Ramanadham's clinic. Dr Ramanadham tries to flee through a back alley but they chase him. He runs into an optician's shop where he is cornered and fired upon by one man. The deed done, the assassin steps out of the shop, rejoins the procession and disappears into the crowd.*

EIGHTEEN summers after the 1967 "spring thunder" over Naxalbari heralded the bloody advent of left extremism in the country, Naxalite terror and official attempts to counter it are again making news in Andhra Pradesh. Reddy and Ramanadham were not the only ones killed in this ongoing war. Ramaswamy, a Naxalite, was killed in an encounter with the police in Karimnagar district on September 1. On September 4, five Naxalites were shot by the police in the Chintapalli area of Vishakhapatnam. With that, the toll of Naxalites killed by the police this year shot up to 25—six more than the total killed between 1980 to 1984.

But police violence has scarcely been able to curb the spread of Naxalites. Today, some 7,000 hardcore activists backed by over 80,000 sympathisers drawn mainly from among students, farm workers, unemployed youth and workers in the organised sector, are spreading the gospel of a violent revolution. And their influence is growing: already their sway extends to 25 lakh people in over 2,000 villages across eight districts. And they are striking back at the police just as hard: over the last five weeks, they killed four policemen, including Reddy.

The Naxalites are not the most popular of men in these areas: the mindless maiming and murder of fellow villagers, which is the hallmark of the leading Naxalite group, Kondapalli Seetharamiah's People's War Group (PWG), has earned them more revulsion than sympathy. The emergence of the PWG as the leading Naxalite group in the state is largely responsible for the increased violence in a conflict which has now been raging for a decade and a half. The PWG, which believes in enrolling toughs, training them and encouraging individual terrorist acts as the first step towards revolution', has been held responsible for 21 of the 26 murders committed by Naxalites this year.

N.T.Rama Rao's Telugu Desam Government has given the police a free hand in curbing the threat, but traditional methods having met with limited success, the police have had to devise newer and more effective methods to combat the Naxalites. The latest of these is Operation Redstar, a mix of strong-arm policing and counter-propaganda, complete with leaflets and street plays to expose the violent elements in the Naxalite and civil rights movements. But the police's credibility continues to be strained: episodes like the murder of the popular Dr Ramanadham, with which it is difficult to dissociate the police, only serve to blacken its image. According to shopkeepers of the area, Ramanadham was a humane and gentle man, a poor man's physician who couldn't possibly have had any connection with either Naxalite violence or sub-inspector Reddy's murder.

Not surprisingly, the police has been under attack by civil libertarians. Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) president and well-known criminal lawyer, K. G. Kannabiran, accused the police of resorting to "personal vendetta" instead of bringing to book the sub-inspector's killers. Charged Kannabiran: "The killing of Dr Ramanadham was a calculated attempt on the part of the police to blur the distinction between civil liberties work and extremist political activity." Kannabiran's views were shared

Map by B.K. SHARMA

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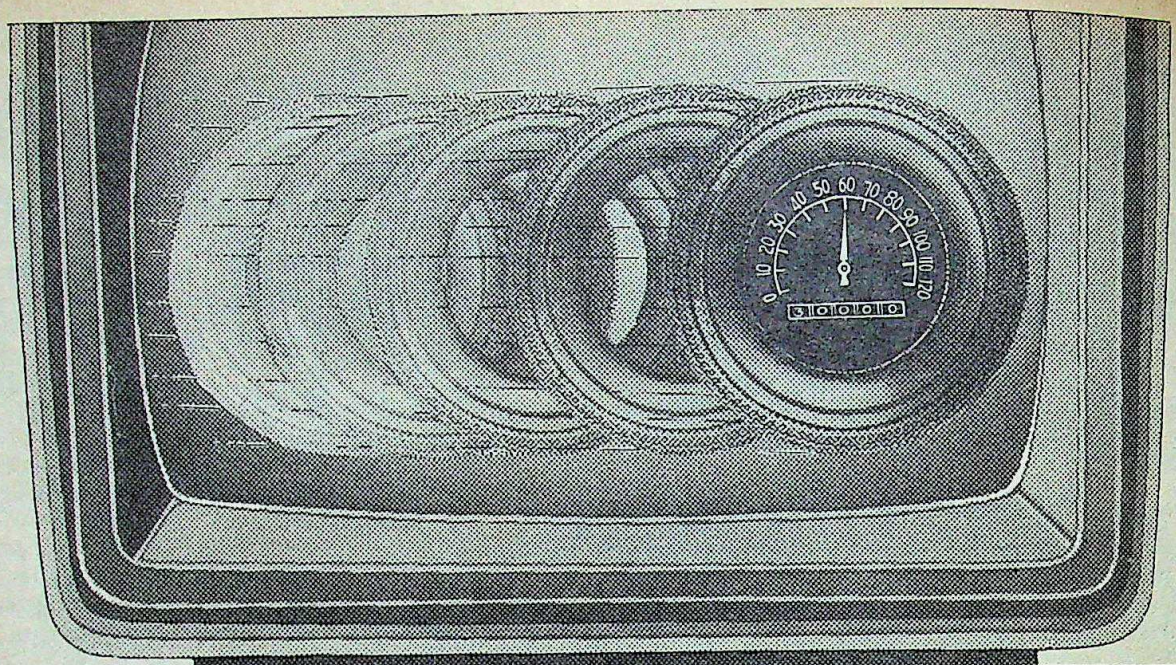

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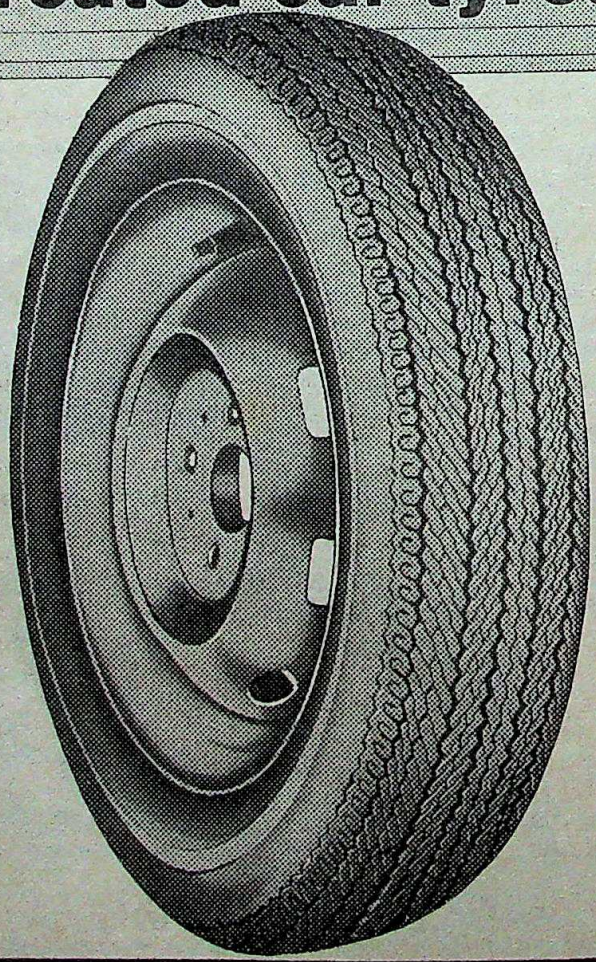

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by many MLA's who raised a hue and cry over the alleged police involvement in the Assembly. Home Minister Vasantha Nageswara Rao was forced to transfer the probe to the state crime branch.

The authorities have also been compelled to adopt a more open policy with regard to Naxalites in other ways too. In order to counter the flak about killing Naxalites in fake encounters, the police have started arranging for an inquest and post-mortem on the spot.

CURRENTLY, police hopes on winning the hearts of people hinge largely on Operation Redstar which is the brain-child of the DIG of Police (Intelligence) H.J.Dora, an Andhra Pradesh cadre officer of the IPS who comes from Srikakulam and saw the Naxalites from close quarters when he was the DIG Range (Warangal). Part of this operation is the staging of two plays, *Bharathi* and *Praja Devatha*. Peppered with local idiom and slang, the plays attempt to expose the hollowness of the Naxalite movement in the state.

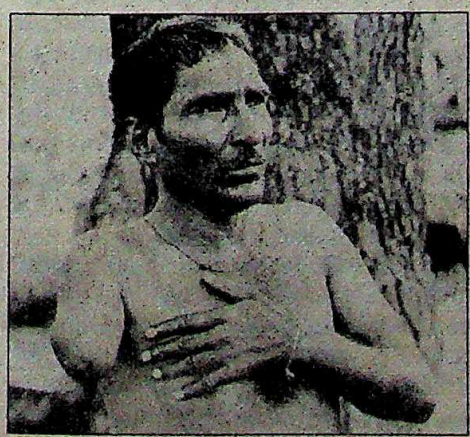
However, the plays, which the police has been staging for the last few months, have had a limited impact. For one, the substantial overt presence of the police detracts from the intended impartial appeal of the plays. So, the police troupe's depiction of the more theatrical activities of the radicals like holding people's courts draws the loudest cheers from the audience. But the police are not about to give up. Argued one police inspector: "We do not expect any immediate results but these plays will take us closer to the people in the long run."

The police are also being helped in their task by the change, for the worse, in the quality of the ranks of Naxalites. Says Naxalophile Shanta Sinha of the department of political science, University of Hyderabad: "The Naxalites of today are politically disoriented and ideologically stronger as intransigent as they used to be." The educated hardcore activists of the 1960s and early 1970s have been replaced by neo-literate youths from among the Harijans and backward castes whose anger at social inequities dovetails neatly into the militancy of the PWG, which now has many as 50 roving *dalams* (squads)—each *dalam* comprises between five to eight people—in operation. Intelligence sources say that the PWG has been able to acquire sophisticated weapons, as evident from the ongoing investigations into the murder of Yadagiri Reddy.

The PWG thrives on terrorism, chopping off limbs of villagers to instil fear and deter people from passing on information to the police. The most recent case of brutality is of Vittal Reddy, a farmer of Bhimadevarapalli, Nizamabad district, whose legs were chopped off by PWG activists because they suspected that he was a police agent. Vittal Reddy bled to death on his way to hospital. Instances also abound of innocent people suffering in the no holds-barred fight between the police and the Naxalites. Gudepu Malliah of Fazilnagar in Karimnagar district is a living example of this. The police first picked him up to elicit information about a PWG *dalam* which had passed through his village. The police beat him up but when they could not get anything out of him they let him go. When the Naxalites learnt that Malliah had been with the police, they caught him on his return and axed his right arm after accusing him of turning into a police agent informing on their movements and activities.

Kondapalli Seetharamaiah's PWG believes in enrolling toughs, training them and encouraging individual terrorist acts as the first step towards "revolution".

Malliah of Fazilnagar: innocent victim



The PWG's credibility as an activist group has fallen so low that the other Naxalite groups refuse to have anything to do with it. Says Pyla Vasudeva Rao, the ageing leader of the Pyla Vasudeva Group (PVG), the state's second largest Naxalite group (20 *dalams*) after the PWG: "They are left adventurists. This is one of the reasons for the growing repression of Naxalite groups Their acts have given the Government several examples to rouse the people's wrath against the revolutionaries."

However, the state's 12 other Naxalite groups have more in common with the hardline PWG. Outside the tribal belt in Khammam and the contiguous areas of East Godavari district, they depend almost entirely on terrorism to spread and sustain their influence. The unemployed rural youth of the area and disgruntled farm workers, with their bitterness and dissatisfaction are ready raw material.

Alarmed by this disturbing trend, the Government intends to arm itself with more stringent laws to deal with the Naxalites. This, while increasing the powers of the police, would also clip the wings of civil rights organisations. But the problem, and its solution, is not all that simple. Attempts to crush the Srikakulam-based Naxalite movement in the 1960s and the crack-down on Naxalites during the Emergency have shown that their influence is more widespread than the Government likes to believe. And elimination of Naxalites in police encounters is hardly the answer. If anything, it only serves to fuel the Naxalites' militancy and turns public opinion against the Government. And with the Government proposing to bring in battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force after the Punjab elections to deal with the Naxalite menace, the situation promises to take an uglier turn. Says APCLC Chief Kannibiran: "N.T.Rama Rao is running democracy at gunpoint and the police are borrowing his film stunts to emerge as gun-toting heroes."

For all practical purposes, the Naxalite movement in the state seems to have lost its sense of purpose and has got mired in the maze of mindless violence. In this game of striving and fighting for people's rights, it is ironically the people themselves who have turned out to be the ultimate losers. The police deserve credit for thinking of imaginative ways to tackle their influence but they are, perhaps, the first to admit that left wing extremism of this kind can never be wiped out as long as steps are not taken to ameliorate the economic condition of the people.

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Warangal

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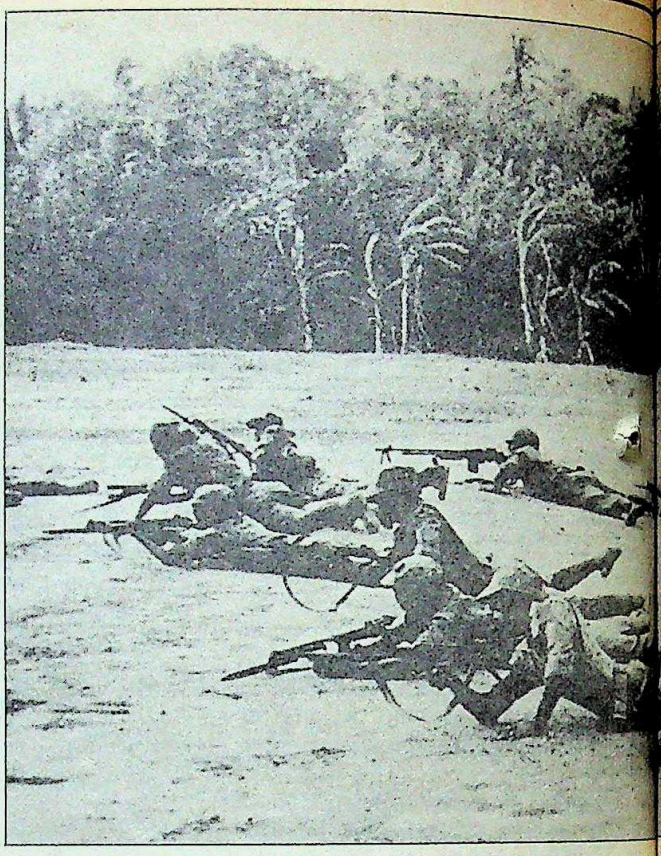
BHAWAN SINGH



SRI LANKA

Back to the Battlefield

SRI LANKAN President Junius Jayewardene has a yen for historical hyperbole. But even by his standards, his advice during his address to the ruling United National Party's trade union federation, the Jatika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS), to "forget about Dutugemunu" raised eyebrows all over the island. It was the most unexpected remark in the unlikeliest of places. Dutugemunu is the second century B.C. Sinhala warrior prince who slew the Tamil king Elara in single combat at Anuradhapura to register a decisive Sinhala domination over the island and is the romantic hero of all Sinhala Buddhists. The JSS, whose acronym and reputation invites obvious parallels with the fascist storm-troopers, is the *bete noire* of the Tamils. In July 1983, led by then cabinet minister Cyril Mathews, the UNP's most virulent champion of Sinhala chauvinism, it was the JSS that brutalised Tamils and devastated their properties in the holocaust that still haunts them.

With anti-Tamil racism forming the core of Sinhala politics, Jayewardene may well have been tempted to become a 20th century Dutugemunu. But the canny Sri Lankan leader is a realist who understands that the Battle of Anuradhapura would possibly have a different outcome today in the context of the current Tamil-Sinhala ethnic divide. King Elara, he cautioned the audience last fortnight, "was an alien aggressor" and the Tamils of Sri Lanka were not aliens but members of a multi-ethnic society in which all communities were equal.

If that was Jayewardene's new *avatar*—and nobody can say for sure how durable it will be—it did reaffirm opinions in Colombo that he is unlikely to succumb to hawkish postures so easily in the currently charged atmosphere. Much of his new-found confidence emanates from 'Big Brother' in the north. For the last two months, he has been in telephonic contact with Rajiv Gandhi at least once a week and is convinced that his Indian counterpart is bending over backwards in his relentless pursuit to bind the two warring sides to a lasting agreement. He is also equally convinced that it is impractical to

Rajiv Gandhi (left); Tamil guerrillas training in Jaffna jungles; and Jayewardene: changing posture

conceive of a military solution to the problem any longer and that his best chance of securing peace is through India.

That realism explains his new moderate posture and his desire to please India which was evidenced in his immediate order to reimpose curfew in violence-hit Trincomalee after Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari telephoned him in response to distress calls from Tamil leaders. National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali summed up the new mood saying: "As far as India is concerned, there is a lot of faith and trust now. It is not like the old days when you never knew whether another googly would be bowled. Now the Indo-Sri Lankan problem has been solved."

But on the ground, that awareness only constitutes a small part of the solution the Indian Government is seeking. Last fortnight, as ethnic violence continued in Trincomalee, there was an uneasy feeling among Indian policy-makers that

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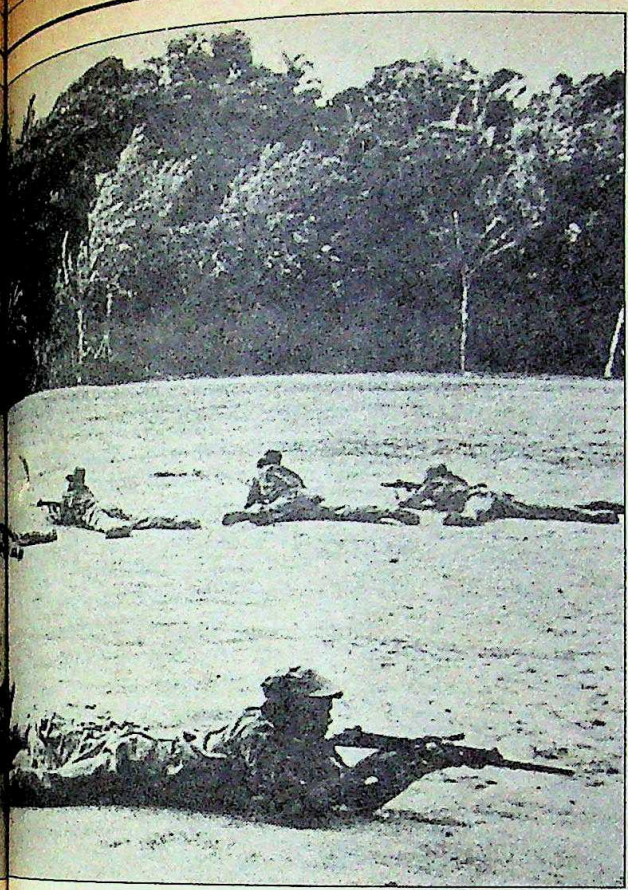
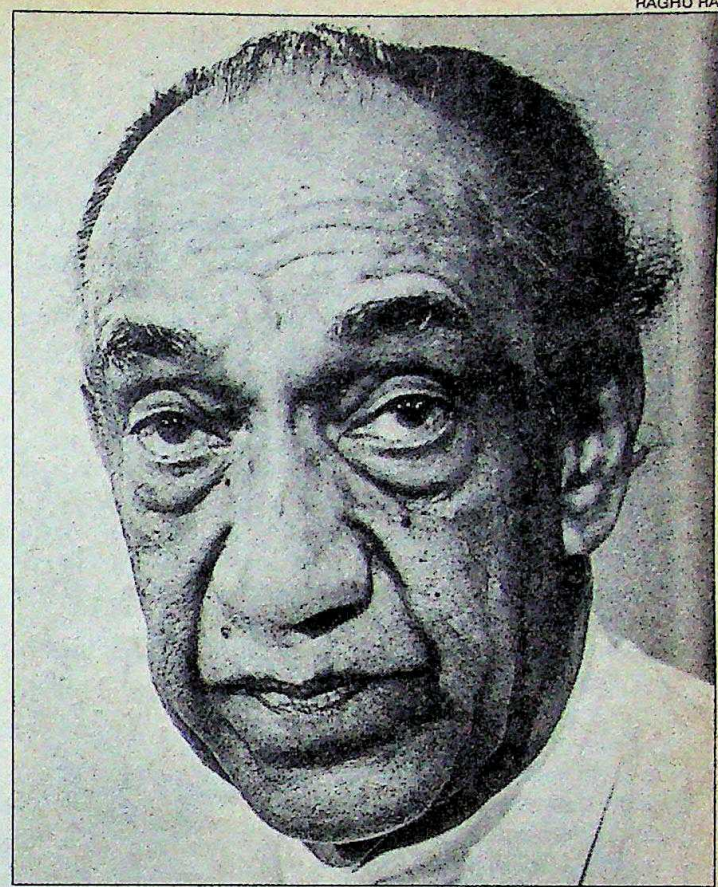


RAGHU RAI



The current apprehensions on the part of all three sides involved, the Sri Lankan Government, the rebels and the Indian Government, is palpable.

their new approach to the Sri Lankan question was becoming a victim of the law of diminishing returns. That, of course, explains the urgency which the Indian Government displayed in its preparation of the new working paper on the Tamil problem and its efforts to persuade the two sides to resume negotiations.

Not that the working paper contains any sensational new proposals. It does talk of provincial councils and regional autonomy and offers fairly strong powers to the regional chief executives, but is rather ambiguous on the two key issues of the control of police forces (the Tamils want their own police force) and land settlement. "On these two questions, there have not been enough assurances from Colombo," admits an Indian Foreign Ministry source. Neither is there any concession on the Tamil demand for a linkage between the Tamil-dominated north and eastern Sri Lanka. "As far as we are concerned, that point is absolutely not negotiable," says Athulathmudali. Tamil leaders, however, say that without a linkage agreement it will be impossible for them to carry the Tamil populace with them on the final accord. As far as the Indian Government is concerned, they support the Sri Lankan view that linkage is something that no government in Colombo can grant and survive for long. "It is a major sticking point," says the source, "and we have to convince the Tamil militants to alter their stance."

But despite Colombo and New Delhi's good intentions, the militants have been stubbornly resisting all efforts to bring them back to the peace path. The renewed outbreak of hostilities between the Sri Lankan security forces and the Tamil militants in the eastern areas has once again resurrected tales of brutal atrocities by the island's rag-tag armed forces and refurbished Tamil fears that the Sri Lankan Government is determined to wipe them off the face of the island. For the second time in the past six months, swarms of Tamil refugees have started fleeing for their lives across the Palk Straits *(see box)*, thereby hardening the resolve of the Tamil militant groups to fight fire with fire.

Through all this, the Indian Government has acted with remarkable—and sometimes hamhanded—restraint. When the second round of negotiations in Thimpu collapsed after the Tamil delegates walked out in protest of atrocities by the Sri Lankan armed forces, Rajiv telephoned Jayewardene and persuaded him to allow Sri Lankan chief negotiator at Thimpu, Hector Jayewardene, the president's brother, to stay back in Delhi to redraft his side's peace proposals in a desperate bid to break the deadlock. Romesh Bhandari even cancelled a scheduled visit to Luanda. But Rajiv's next move—the deportation of three Tamil militant leaders—was clearly a clumsy and ill-advised measure, as even senior officials in South Block now admit. The deportation not only angered the militants and their supporters in Tamil Nadu, but eliminated totally from the scene the only people capable of talking in non-military terms.

In belated realisation of the fact, Rajiv revoked the deportation order served on S.C.Chandrahasan, one of the three, but the damage had been done. "The renewal of violence and the deportation has certainly fouled the whole atmosphere that

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TAMIL REFUGEES

New Influx

THE IRONY was inescapable. Even as the Indian Government immersed itself in frenetic diplomatic activity to break the continuing stalemate between the Sri Lankan leadership and Tamil militants, the narrow neck of the Palk Straits was once again alive with swarms of Tamil refugees seeking safer sanctuary on Indian shores. For the second time in six months, the coast of Rameswaram on the south-eastern tip of Tamil Nadu witnessed the tragically familiar sight of hundreds of families abandoning their homes in eastern and north-western Sri Lanka and braving the crossing in an assortment of boats to escape renewed atrocities by Sri Lankan security forces.

Most of the new refugees are from Mannar district on the north-western coast of Sri Lanka, particularly the fishing village of Vangali. Says Rajiv Walia, collector of Ramanathapuram district: "The refugees have been arriving at the rate of nearly 200 on practically every alternate day." This marks the second major influx of Tamil refugees, the first being in February-March this year when tens of thousands of them crossed over. Currently, over 20,000 Sri Lankan refugees are subsisting on the Indian Government's fortnight cash doles, while the rest are managing with the help of their friends.

The Mandappam camp for Sri Lankan Tamils is now a full-fledged refugee camp with the capacity to house 5,500 people and 2,500 more will be accommodated when semi-permanent shelters now under construction are completed. But the spill over is causing major problems for the state Government with many of them being housed in schools and colleges or in cyclone shelters and other public buildings. With the new additions still arriving, the problem is certain to snowball even further. Nor is there any certainty about how long the refugees will stay. Says Justin, a refugee from Mannar who has been at Mandappam for the last six months: "We are not prepared to return to our homes till we are convinced that our lives will be absolutely safe."

That, despite India's best efforts, may be a long time in the making. The latest influx, already threatening to assume massive proportions, is made up of people who saw it as a choice between survival in a refugee camp in an alien country or certain death at the hands of Sri Lankan security forces. Sobbed Gloria, an old widow who crossed over last fortnight in a motorised fishing boat: "My two sons and myself were somehow making ends meet. Then, on August 6, the Sri Lankan army, without any provocation whatsoever, mercilessly shot dead my youngest son. My elder son crossed over to Tamil Nadu earlier because we had both decided to leave in fear of our lives. I don't know where he is now and I also don't know what is in store for all of us now."

Other refugees relate similar tales of Sri Lankan soldiers prowling around their villages and shooting Tamils indiscriminately. "It became impossible to move out of our houses. We were not safe even in our own homes. The Sri Lankan soldiers could come any time, loot our property, rape our women and kill our menfolk. How long could we live in such a situation?", queries Sivamala, 24, the wife of a Vangali fisherman who crossed over last fortnight. Adds L.C.Lambert, an assistant government agent at Chettikulam: "The Sri Lankan Government has hatched a plan to drive all Tamils out of the island. I don't know if we will ever be able to go back."

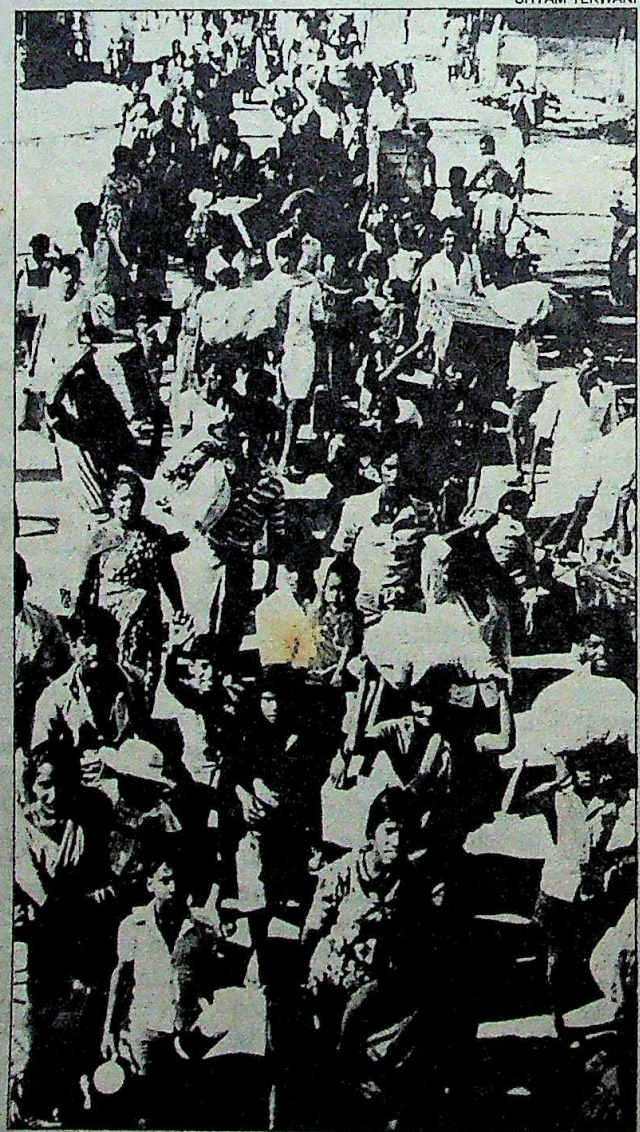
The exodus was, however, triggered off by a bizarre incident in which a helicopter of the Sri Lankan army suddenly appeared over Vangali and after circling the town, two soldiers leant down and started firing indiscriminately. Though nobody was killed, the resultant panic spread like wildfire. The exodus was also aided by the gruesome horror stories related by detenus in military camps released after the first round of talks in Thimpu. Most of them have also crossed over, shaken and terrified after their ordeals.

The Indian Government, however, is taking no chances of the refugee influx affecting their mediation efforts. The refugees have been quarantined and visitors are restricted to those with special passes. But obviously, the credibility of the Sri Lankan security forces is going to be a crucial element in the negotiations for an acceptable settlement, as those miserably huddled together at Rameswaram will willingly testify.

—S.H.VENKATRAMANI in Rameswaram

Refugees arrive at Mandappam camp: homeless tribe

SHYAM TEKWANI



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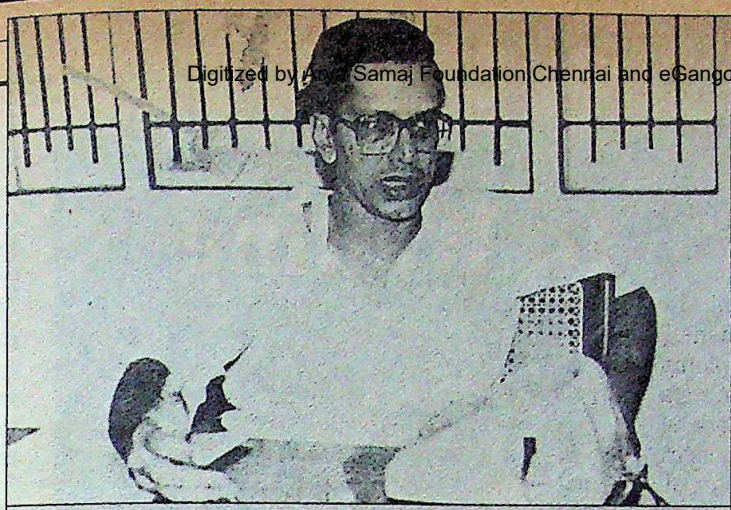
had been built up," admitted a top-level source in the Indian foreign office. The deportation move also resulted in the top Eelam leaders disappearing underground. In fact, one of the key militant leaders, V.Pirabhakaran, head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was reported to have crossed over to Jaffna the day before some prominent members of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) were brutally killed. In Tamil militant circles, the TULF is being indirectly held responsible for the deportation orders and the killings were seen as an act of revenge for the deportation of S.Balasingham, the official spokesman and ideological strategist of the LTTE.

But in Madras at least, the Tamils are in a state of total confusion. The army atrocities in Trincomalee have heightened their deep-rooted mistrust of the Sri Lankan Government's intentions while the deportation issue has made them equally suspicious of New Delhi. Apart from that, the moderate TULF and the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOT), considered less hardline than the LTTE, have been sidelined in the negotiation process, now dominated by the more militant groups like the LTTE. In fact, it is obvious that the killings of TULF leaders in Jaffna could not have taken place unless the orders came from the highest rungs of militant leadership.

On another level, the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) constituting four Tamil groups, seems to have caved in with each of the groups accusing the other of selling out on the proposals, leading to a split in the ENLF's ranks. The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), the two ideologically-oriented groups, see the wisdom of backing Rajiv Gandhi in his peace efforts, while the militarily-powerful EPRLF and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) want to henceforth speak only with their guns and strongly mistrust the Indian Government. Former TULF MP and opinion leader in Colombo, Dr Neelam Tiruchelvan sums up the complicated nature of the current impasse: "People often do not realise the extent of militarisation of our society. There is a certain respect among the Tamil people for the rebels because they seem to be the only ones offering resistance to official repression."



SUBHA NEWS

The deportation of three militant leaders, including S. Chandrahasan, not only angered the militants but eliminated from the scene the only people capable of talking in non-military terms

That also puts Jayewardene in an awkward negotiating position. As it is, it has been difficult enough for him to defend the Thimpu negotiations and even his Cabinet members are afraid that any major concessions to the Tamils will give arch-opposition rival Sirimavo Bandaranaike an ideal springboard to launch an attack straight at the UNP's jugular. Says Athulathmudali: "The problem is convincing a Sinhalese population which increasingly believes that the people in Jaffna are able to get too much because of terrorism."

Against that backdrop, India's frenzied effort towards a renewed dialogue is understandable since a major breakdown in negotiations could result in the "Final Assault", a phrase much in use in Colombo these days. But the hurdles that stand in the way of the dialogue will not be easy to cross. Tamil leaders have so far snubbed the Indian Government's invitation to come to Delhi for talks and instead have been making frantic calls to Indian officials and Tamil Nadu Power Minister P. Ramachandran to clarify doubts on the working paper. Jayewardene has not helped by demanding numerous amendments in the working paper. Sources in Colombo say that none of the amendments will alter the essence of the draft, but the distrust among Tamils is inevitable.

Consequently, the apprehensions on the part of all three sides involved, the Sri Lankan Government, the rebels and the Indian Government, are palpable. "If we fail to bring about an understanding, the result will be a bloodbath," grimly predicts a senior official in the Indian foreign office. The Tamils are convinced that the Sri Lankan Government is merely buying time to get new weaponry and to reorganise its bedraggled army before launching a winner-takes-all assault. The Sri Lankans harbour similar suspicions about the rebels. Says a senior army officer in Colombo: "The talks are nothing but a diversionary tactic. I cannot speak for the rest, but I have no doubts about Pirabhakaran's Tigers. They want Eelam and they are aware they will never get it across the table whether in Thimpu or Timbuktu. So they are buying time to consolidate ranks and launch the final offensive within a month.

In reality however, neither side is capable of launching a do-or die offensive. But in the present fast and confusing pace of events, all it will require will be one wrong step or miscalculation by any of the side to trigger off large-scale slaughter in both camps. And that will be too heavy a price to pay for a battle that is avoidable and can bring no permanent solution to the ethnic, political and military dimensions of the problem.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA and MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo and S.H.VENKATRAMANI in Madras

Hector Jayewardene (left); and Bhandari: walking a razor's edge

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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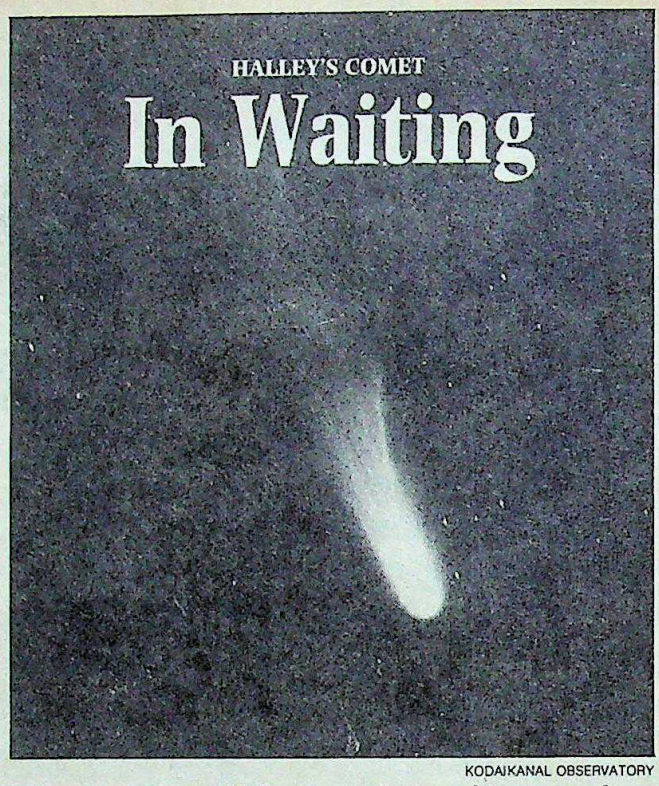
HALLEY'S COMET

In Waiting



KODAIKANAL OBSERVATORY

Comet Halley: nature's spaceship

IT WAS midnight on August 29 and the sky was an inky black. Not a star was visible. A strong wind brought a drizzle knocking gently on the metallic dome. Inside the thimble-shaped Indian Institute of Astrophysics' observatory at Kavalur, Tamil Nadu, a bleary-eyed K.K. Scaria, research fellow, and M.D. Rozario, his assistant, sighed resignedly.

For more than a fortnight the institute's team of astronomers had sat through the night in turns so that their group could be the first in India to spot Halley's comet make its thirtieth appearance. But the thick cloud cover was refusing to lift and their patience had reached its edge. Nearby, the observatory's giant telescope, the shape of a large concrete pipe, pointed impotently at the shuttered dome.

But around 2 a.m., while they were gently nodding off to sleep, the sky cleared dramatically and a near full moon cast a silvery glow over the surrounding sandalwood forests. Scaria frowned at the moon; its brightness would affect viewing. But at least the sky was clear at last.

With dawn hardly three hours away there was need for speed. Scaria, like other professional astronomers, does not trust his eyes while gazing at stars through a telescope. Instead, he relies on the computer that controls the telescope not only to track the comet but also record its image on a photographic plate.

Rozario lightly touched a yellow button on the computer console and the dome shutters slid noisily open, exposing the starry sky. But before commanding the telescope to track the comet, he took several shots of the night sky so that Scaria could decide the best focus for the telescope to photograph the comet. That took almost an hour. Now time was really running out.

But Scaria did not have to waste precious hours searching for the comet. The comet's orbital path had already been computed precisely by observatories elsewhere in the world. All Rozario had to do was to open the handbook and in a minute he knew that the comet should be at six hours nine minutes and 30 seconds (the astronomers' equivalent for latitude and longitude of stellar objects) in the southern hemisphere somewhere west of the Pleiades, a cluster of bright stars. He then fed the coordinates into the computer and within seconds the telescope moved and locked on to the comet's path.

Now came the difficult bit. Despite the precise orbit calculations, Scaria was really "shooting in the dark". He had no way of telling whether he was actually photographing the comet because it was so faint that the plate had to be exposed for an hour before its image could be recorded. So the two waited tensely, scanning the skies to see if clouds were moving in, because any disturbance would affect the picture.

At 5 a.m. they shut the telescope and excitedly took the plate to the dark room for developing. Half an hour later and Scaria could hardly believe his eyes. Among the blur of lines that indicated stars, a tiny black speck was barely visible. Under a microscope it had a fuzzy round shape with a hint of a tail. Scaria knew he had spotted the comet but they had to take another exposure to be sure. After rain spoilt the next two nights Rozario finally got the confirmation they needed on another plate. The Indian team had at last spotted Halley's comet.

"It's like a tiny tadpole in the sky," said an excited K.R. Sivaraman, chairman of the Indian Halley Observation Programme, when they finally announced their achievment a week later. The comet is right now at about two and a half times the distance of the earth from the sun and has crossed Jupiter's orbit. Looking like a "dirty snowball" the comet is moving closer to the sun and as it does so the heat of the sun would melt its icy nucleus, setting free a stream of gas and dust that would form a huge tail. The tail would look like what Sivaraman, with a twinkle in his eye, calls "tresses of a woman's hair."

With the Russians, Japanese and the European Space Agency sending up a total of five spacecraft to rendezvous with Halley's comet, it is probably going to be the most studied stellar object of the century. Halley's comet has generated such a lot of interest mainly because it is believed that like most comets it is formed from the primordial gas and dust which surround the sun, and a study of its constituents could solve some of the mysteries of the origin and formation of the solar system.

In India five groups of astronomers and physicists will be using a battery of 10 telescopes in Kavalur, Nainital and Rangapur to study the comet which would be visible for the better part of the next eight months. The Indian astronomers are trying to find out what kinds of molecules make up comets and would also be doing a detailed study on the composition of the comet's tail. As Sivaraman puts it: "The comet is like a spaceship built by nature and we are likely to collect an enormous amount of data from it."

But if astronomers are rubbing their hands in anticipation the public are in for a disappointment. Only in early January would the comet be visible to the naked eye and then only for a couple of hours. It would go out of sight in the last week of January and will reappear only towards the end of February. It will be seen then only in the early hours of the morning and although it would brighten progressively it is still expected to look like a tiny fuzzy ball with a small tail. Astronomers calculate that the comet has lost 90 per cent of its original luminosity. Says G.S.D. Babu, a research fellow of the institute: "For the public, Halley's comet might be a damp squib."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Kavalur

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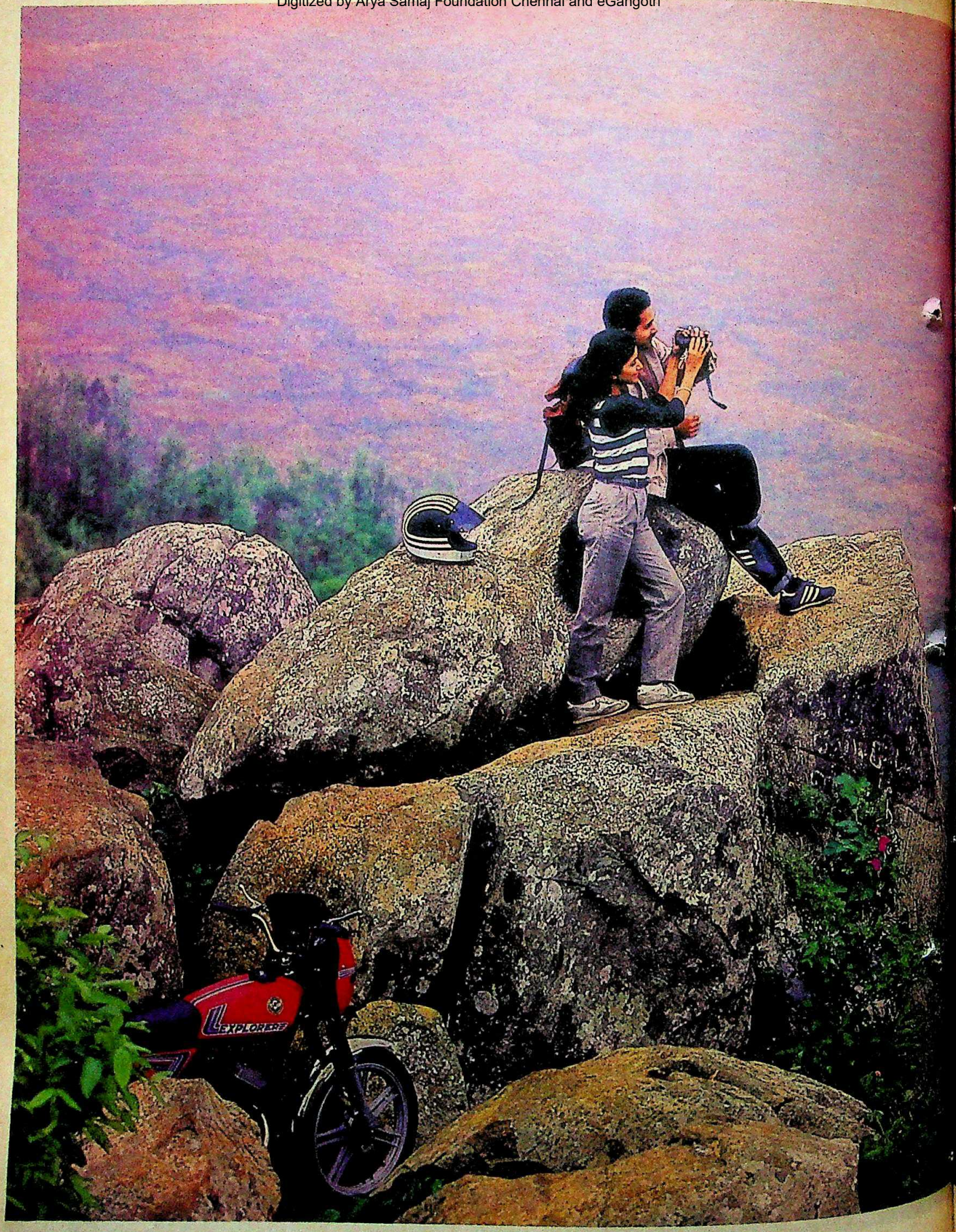

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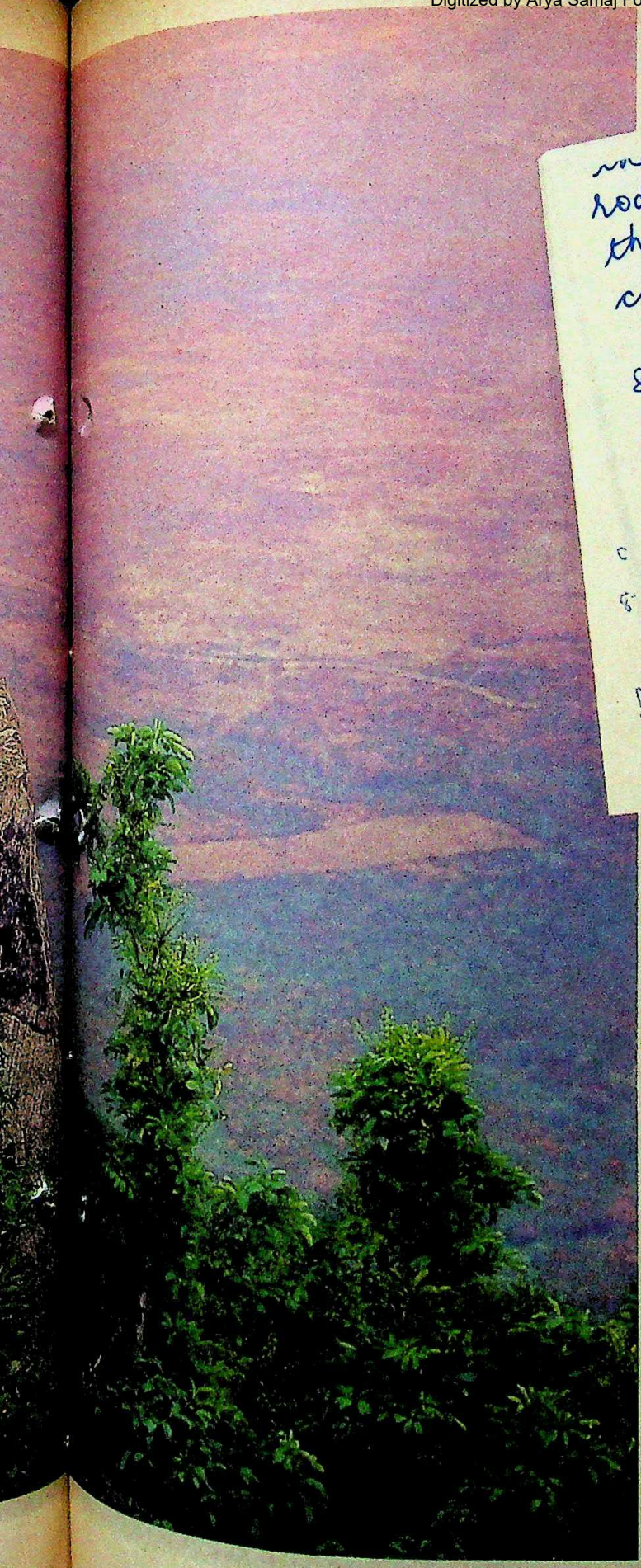
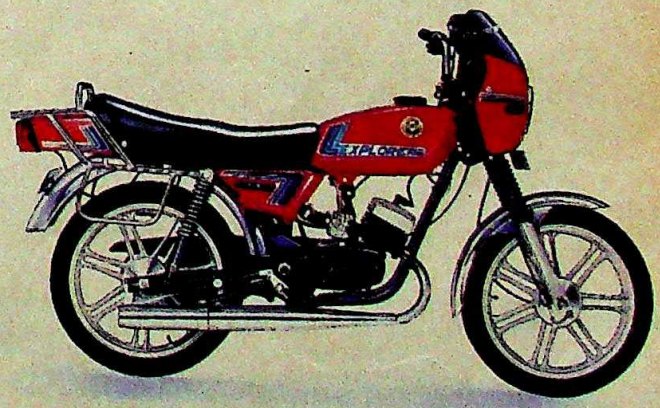


rode up, almost to
the very top of the
cliff (4600 ft)
One look at the
sheer drop made my
head swim (Vivek's too,
I suspect, though d'you
think he'd admit it?!)
But what a view!
'Wish you were here'
Really! Maya

Dt



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The Toothpaste and Mouthwash in One

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TRIMMING TO SIZE

SOMETHING like three-quarters of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FICCI) members will be asked to resign soon, following an agreement reached by FICCI's leading lights on a way to end the fracas over bogus members. FICCI has over 1,700 members, but a four-man committee headed by Pravinchandra Gandhi has decided that virtually all of the new members who were enrolled after 1980, as well as a few enrolled after 1970, will have to go, making for a total of 1,300 exits. Both the warring factions in FICCI have agreed to this drastic lancing operation, which will leave FICCI with barely 400 members. The leading lights who had walked out of FICCI earlier this year, complaining about the bogus members, will come back into the fold once the resignations are submitted, and accepted by FICCI's committee, and subsequently the federation will also push through new membership rules designed to prevent the problem from cropping up again.

RETAIL OUTLETS

CITIBANK, the world's largest commercial bank, is planning a major push into retail banking in India, apparently as a part of the bank's global strategy for emphasising retail banking. Proposals on the cards for India include the setting up of automatic computer-controlled teller counters, the granting of loans on security provided by company shares, and measures designed to reduce the time taken for servicing savings bank customers. However, one unexpected hitch has come from the Reserve Bank, which has questioned the proposal for introducing automatic tellers on the ground that this might be tantamount to starting a new branch. A final decision is still awaited.

NEW DIRECTION

RELIANCE Industries is branching out into an unexpected direction: electronics. The company is applying for a licence to manufacture 1.5 million colour TV glass shells and half a million of the downstream product—colour TV picture tubes. The total investment proposed is over Rs 200 crore, and the additional turnover is expected to be in the region of Rs 350 crore. The company seems virtually assured of the licence. It is now negotiating with the two companies in the world (Corning of the US and Asahi Glass of Japan) who have the technology for making the glass shells.

LIBERAL DOSE

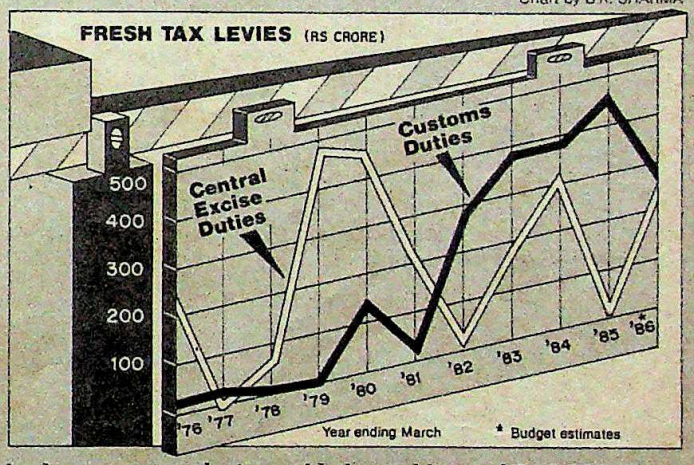
THE GOVERNMENT is getting ready to announce fresh liberalisations in its industrial policy, and some of the sectors—like power generation and road construction—that are now public sector monopolies will be thrown open to the private sector. The policy of de-licensing industries will also be given a fresh push, and capacity restrictions in some areas are likely to be abolished. Officials are working out the details of the new policy package.

Meanwhile, several private groups have already shown an interest in entering the power sector. The Birlas have proposed a joint sector 500 MW station in Uttar Pradesh, while the Tatas too have shown an interest in setting up a plant in Uttar Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh, the state Government is keen on getting foreign parties to set up 4,000 MW hydel stations on a turnkey basis. So far, none of these proposals has been cleared.

SHIFTING FOCUS

THE GOVERNMENT'S tax-gatherers seem to be following a strategy of import-led growth: the biggest increase in Central Government tax revenues in the last five years has been from customs levies, which earlier used to yield first place to excise duties. Thus, in the last five Central

Chart by B K. SHARMA



budgets, customs levies yielded an additional Rs 1,822 crore, while fresh excise duties fetched only Rs 850 crore. In the previous quinquennium, the ranking was quite the reverse, with excise duties fetching an additional Rs 1,247 crore, and customs levies bringing in fresh tax revenue of no more than Rs 256 crore. The lesson is clear: growth will come not from the production of indigenous industry, but from the production of foreign industry imported into India.

GLAD RAGS

MOHAN Murjani, the Hong Kong-based clothing magnate, has tied up with Coca-Cola for a new line of clothing that will bear the name of the soft drinks giant. Murjani, who first hit the headlines by acquiring the licensing rights for the Gloria Vanderbilt line of clothing, now has a turnover of $ 500 million. But his agreement with Coca-Cola has kicked up a storm in the United States, because the clothes will be made at his factories in Hong Kong and Macao. Consequently, Murjani is now working out a new arrangement with Coca-Cola for getting the clothes manufactured in the United States. The only problem might be that this will cost a lot more. But Murjani will, as usual, continue to make glad money out of glad rags.

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INDUSTRIAL SAFETY

Under a Cloud

WITH factories relentlessly spewing gas nation-wide, 1985 may well be remembered as the year of continued gas leaks. Last fortnight, as the chlorine gas leak from the Ilac plant at Chembur in Bombay *(see box)* hit the headlines, it became starkly obvious that the country had a cloud hanging over its head—industry was observing safety regulations more in the breach, the Bhopal plant disaster notwithstanding. As *The Times of India* reported, the Ilac plant had no business to keep its doors open: the Bombay Municipal Corporation had not renewed its licence since 1979 for failing to comply with fire brigade stipulations.

The leak at the Calico Industries subsidiary is no isolated event. Since last December, when the Bhopal incident rocked the nation, gas has spilled at well over a dozen chemical plants, five of them last month alone:

- two workers died and a chemist fell ill after inhaling poisonous gas at a chemical factory at Rudel village in Gujarat's Kaira district;
- at Thane, on the outskirts of Bombay, over 30 employees of a chemical firm were affected when a drum in the company's store sprang a leak;
- at a cloth mill in Gwalior, 16 people were seriously injured when chlorine gas leaked;
- a sulphuric acid plant in Kanpur discharged sulphur dioxide in the city's congested Panki area, creating panic and inducing nausea in the victims;
- again in Kanpur, another sulphuric acid factory discharged thick gas fumes, suffocating people in the thickly populated area.

Elsewhere in the country, over the past few months, nitrogen oxide gas leaked from a tanker after it collided with a truck, gas leaked from a chemical factory at Navsari in Gujarat, affecting the residents of four nearby villages, and ammonia leaked from the Gwalior Rayon factory in Madhya Pradesh and from a tanker unloading chemicals at the state-owned Rashtriya Chemicals and

ILAC

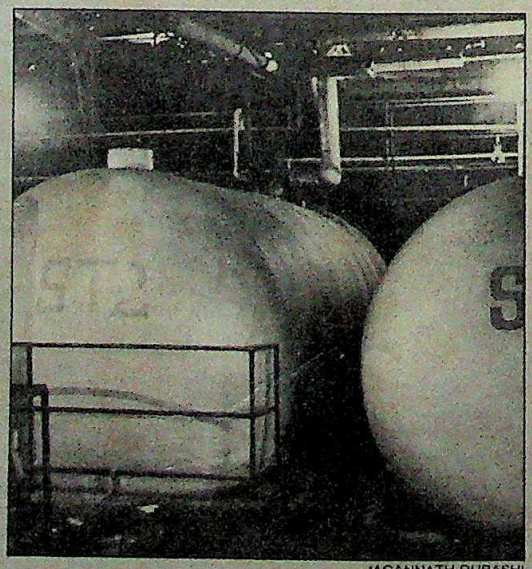
Chlorine Leak

GIVEN Chembur's history of gas leaks, it probably had to happen. On Friday, August 30, one of the three tanks which store chlorine at Calico's Ilac plant in Chembur began spewing the toxic chemical. It was not, fortunately, a replay of Bhopal but one employee, I.B. Mazumdar died and over a hundred people—including labour leader and MP Datta Samant—had to be hospitalised before the air cleared. And this latest in a long series of mishaps in the area brought sharply home to the people of Bombay the hazards of living and working in the city and the fact that something had to be done.

The negligence that characterises industrial chemical operations was effectively brought out in an environment report covering a score of the most important plants by a committee headed by Dr R.K. Garg of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (INDIA TODAY, April 30). The report specifically mentioned the Calico plant as hazard-prone and added: "The highly corroded valves, pipelines and storage vessels in caustic soda and the chlorine plant need to be replaced immediately. The plant is not safe to operate in the present condition."

As it happened, the plant wasn't being operated at all because of a dispute over electricity charges which had resulted in the Tatas cutting off power. According to an Ilac executive, the chlorine in the tanks shouldn't have been there in the first place. A by-product of the caustic soda process, it is supposed to be taken away in pressurised vessels called tonners. Company officials claim they had repeatedly written to the authorities that the chlorine was a hazard and should be removed but the workers—about 1,500 had been laid off since May—were refusing to let anything out of the plant, demanding full pay for the lay-off period as technically they weren't on strike. The chlorine had accumulated in the tank under very high pressure and corrosion did the rest.

The chlorine tank that leaked: corroded



JAGANNATH DUBASHI

Officials were quick to issue statements denying charges of gross negligence and pointed out that the firm spent Rs 2 lakh every year on anti-corrosion treatment. The management brandished a letter written in June to Samant seeking his cooperation in detailing 13 workers to help empty the three tanks and load the gas in drums but say they didn't get any response. However, the union has pointed out that the unit has 350 technical officers, 50 of whom work in the chlorine plant. Since none of them had been laid off they could easily have emptied the tanks. Executives complained of obstruction by workers when some vehicles were brought in to remove the gas, forcing the company to obtain an injunction from the industrial court in Bombay. Complaints were also filed with the labour commissioner and the police commissioner. Even after the management had conceded the demands of the union—50 per cent of the wages even to those who were not laid off and had yet absented themselves and who were needed for maintenance and other duties—the union remained uncooperative.

The wrangling only emphasised the enormity of those 30 minutes when the yellow gas swirled all over the plant and its vicinity. Said a shaken company bus-driver who evacuated officers and their families from their bungalows behind the plant to the relative safety of BARC: "I could barely see anything as I drove down." Birds and animals, even fish in the ornamental pond, died in

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Fertilisers plant in Bombay. The capital has not been spared either: early this year, a Bharat Petroleum tanker met with an accident, gas escaped from the tanker, and local residents ran away in alarm.

If this unnerving list of disasters is the tipshot of media attention, other unreported safety failures suggest that the problem is not created by the press. A major disaster was barely averted early this year when power failed at a Madras refinery. The unit's Indian-made universal power supply unit switched to the auxiliary power system far too slowly, pressure built up in the fluidised cracker catalyst and a mega-explosion was averted only because night shift operators rushed to close valves manually. Says Petroleum Secretary G.V. Ramakrishna: "We have now advised all refineries to switch to imported universal power supply units."

The horror of Bhopal has not yet resulted in the kind of preventive steps that were talked of then, and the prospect of more deaths in gas chambers remains ever present

Quite obviously, the horror of Bhopal has not yet resulted in the kind of preventive steps that were talked of then, and the prospect of more deaths in gas chambers remains ever present. Environment Secretary J.A. Kalyanakrishnan says: "One of the primary reasons for the gas leaks is that equipment maintenance is low down on the list of priorities in our industrial culture." That is probably true. But government officials fumble to a man when asked why correctives have not yet been taken. One senior functionary in the Industry Ministry argued that the tightening of laws immediately after Bhopal would have been an indirect admission of official negligence, and would therefore have helped Union Carbide fight its legal battle with the Government. Then, the Law Ministry objected to some of the changes proposed in the Factories Act, and in some other cases cost has been a deterrent: one result of additional safety measures adopted at liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) bottling plants is that the Government's subsidy on LPG cylinders will shoot up by 50 per cent, from Rs 107

minutes and trees and shrubs turned a sickly yellow. Plant Director N.N. Chaterjee, who claims he and other officers were present when the accident occurred, hinted darkly at sabotage: "There was some unauthorised manipulation of the chlorine tank," adding, "we allowed the pressure to come down to zero from 1.5 kg. Later we plastered it with cement to prevent further leaks."

The aftermath of the tragedy was predictable. Politicians of varying hues clambered over one another to assure people that everything was being done to ensure that such an incident did not recur. Chief Minister Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar, accompanied by two cabinet colleagues, walked through the plant, prudently wearing gas masks, and said: "A new awareness has grown in Bombay and in the state that polluting factories must be brought to heel."

As a first step in the programme, the Government took upon itself the task of pointing the finger at 13 companies which had failed to comply with the recommendations of the Garg committee report. The list included such corporate good boys as Tata Electric Companies and Hindustan Lever. The latter retorted angrily that they had been complying with all the recommendations made in the report. Finger-pointing apart, the state's chief secretary is planning to meet the chairmen and managing directors of all the 30 plants covered in the report to work out the first steps of a programme which will:

- list the hazardous chemicals being produced by 180 plants—out of Bombay's 19,300 plants—on the priority list of the Government and work out each one's harmful effects and possible antidotes;
- put together the framework for a programme to educate people living near such plants on the kind of hazards they might have to face along with some countermeasures. Alarm systems at the plant itself are necessary—the Ilac management told the chief minister that they had not installed a hooter system since it would spread panic;
- look into the possibilities of a certification system and institute penalties for operative negligence.

C.D. Singh, secretary, Department of Environment, said: "The incident could have a happy ending if we get down to work" and called for a listing of "all the hazardous chemicals produced in Bombay so that we at least know what we might have to deal with." He, however, regretted the fact that the water and air pollution acts do not authorise the Government to close down plants in case of trouble. Singh also complains that there is not enough awareness about toxic chemicals, their location and properties. Ironically, the Government has still not taken the first and most obvious step towards educating people about the potentially poisonous plants—it has yet to release the crucial Garg Committee report for everybody to read.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

Patil-Nilangekar (left) and others at the Ilac plant: constant danger

JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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crore to over Rs 160 crore. Adds Kalyanakrishnan: "We're now becoming aware of risk management in industry, but the capability is not built overnight. A lot of groundwork is necessary, all of which takes time."

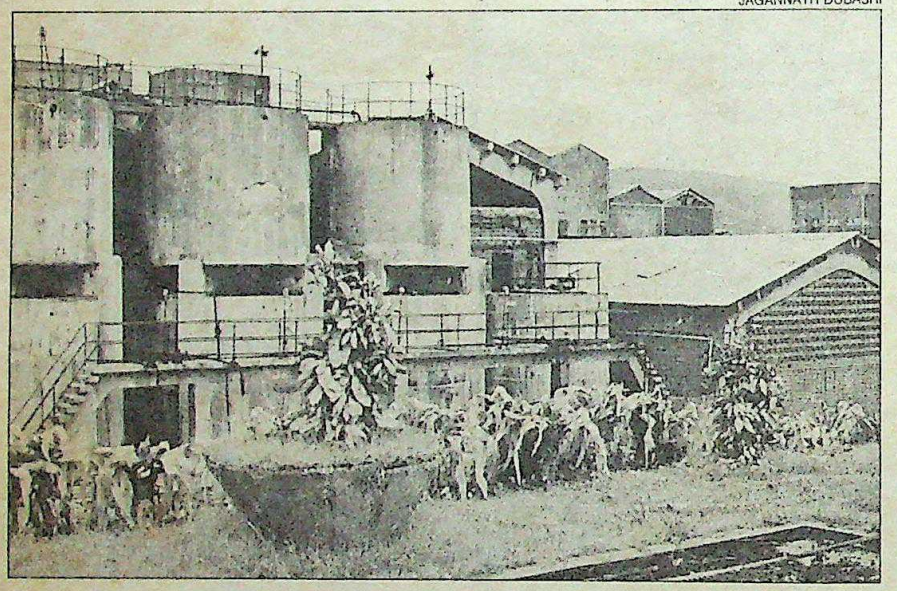
Despite the delays, however, action is in the pipeline to prevent fresh Bhopals. Sweeping changes to the Factories Act and the Indian Boilers Act will be legislated in the next session of Parliament. The latter will have more rigid equipment specifications, and the former is to be amended to define the occupier of a factory as the owner instead of a lower level company official, so that lapses will put the owner personally on the mat. The blame for equipment failures will be pinned on its manufacturers, and stiffer prison sentences will replace the six month term or the maximum fine of Rs 2,000 now awarded to those who repeatedly flout the law.

The Union Labour Ministry has also come up with a Safety and Health Accident Reduction Plan (SAHARA) under which state factory inspectorates are to be strengthened, and industrial hygiene laboratories are to be set up. Also, each factory will be required to set up a safety committee on which labour will be represented—and workers will have the legal right to complain to factory inspectors if safety norms are flouted. Says a Labour Ministry official: "Since complaints will be made in writing, the factory inspector risks his job if he ignores them and accidents subsequently occur. So the chances of the inspector being bribed by managements are slim." Companies will be asked to state in their annual reports what they have done on the safety front. Most welcome of all, plants that use dangerous processes will have to present some sort of evacuation plan to residents of the neighbourhood.

Other government bodies too have taken action. The Department of Environment has drawn up a list of 20 hazardous industries and plans to launch a Hazardous Substances Control Board, a watchdog body that will advise other official agencies on dangerous chemicals. It has also circulated among the states fresh guidelines on the location of industrial units. The Petroleum Ministry on its part is busy setting up an in-house safety directorate to tighten safety norms for refineries in the country. And refineries have now been asked to recycle the oil in the sludge at the bottom of crude oil tanks instead of allowing it to flow into lagoons where it can easily catch fire. Finally, the Government set up an inter-ministerial group some six weeks ago to look at the question of launching a national safety committee for transportation. The broad-sweep agency is meant to tighten the rules for transporting men and dangerous substances.

But for all the recent ferment in officialdom, a new law to deal with chemicals is not on the anvil. Referring to the safety laws, an official document notes: "Most of these acts have covered chemical safety only in a very casual way. Some of the rules framed under the acts have tried to cover only (a) few aspects of hazardous chemicals." Worse, the Industrial Toxicology Research Centre in Lucknow, which was handed the job of identifying the gaps in the present laws a year ago, has not yet submitted its report.

JAGANNATH DUBASHI



Wilted plants after the leak: poisoned air

The more serious problem is that revamping the laws alone is far from enough. Both officials and those who run industry agree that the problem lies at the implementing end. Says Manmohan Singh, managing director of Frick India Ltd, which makes pollution control equipment: "You can make any laws, but if you don't have the right people to implement them, they won't work." The point is well taken. The Factories Act is administered by the states. Despite Central Government concern, the state bodies responsible for policing industrial units do not have highly trained staff. Factory inspectors are qualified engineers, but do not have the technical background to police sophisticated chemical processes. Also, there are not enough of them to go around. The Factories Inspectorate in Madhya Pradesh still has only 18 inspectors to monitor some 8,000 factories. And Karnataka has some 21 inspectors to supervise 11,200 factories. M.J. Surendra Kumar, the state's chief inspector of factories and boilers, was told when he asked for more staff that there was no money for this. And the position may only get worse. An official study group on small chemical units has recommended that they be brought under the Factories and Boilers Inspectorate. That means Karnataka's overworked factory inspectors will have another 300 to 400 more units to inspect; at the moment they cannot monitor 57 per cent of the factories in the state, says Kumar.

Even where initiative is in evidence at the grassroots level, it is often short-lived. In the capital, chlorine gas leaked from a small factory, but dismayed Delhi Administration officials discovered that they did not have the power to close it down. Then labour commissioner Nita Bali recommended that the rules be amended for this purpose. But Bali was transferred out, and no action has been taken on the proposal.

Clearly, the mills of government grind too slowly. Sometimes, they don't seem to grind at all (as in the case of Karnataka not increasing the number of its factory inspectors), or grind in the wrong manner (as in the transfer of inconvenient officials). Meanwhile, the frequency of gas mishaps—big and small—suggests that Indian factories remain as leaky as Indian laws.

—PALAKUNNATHU G.MATHAI

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STATUTORY WARNING : CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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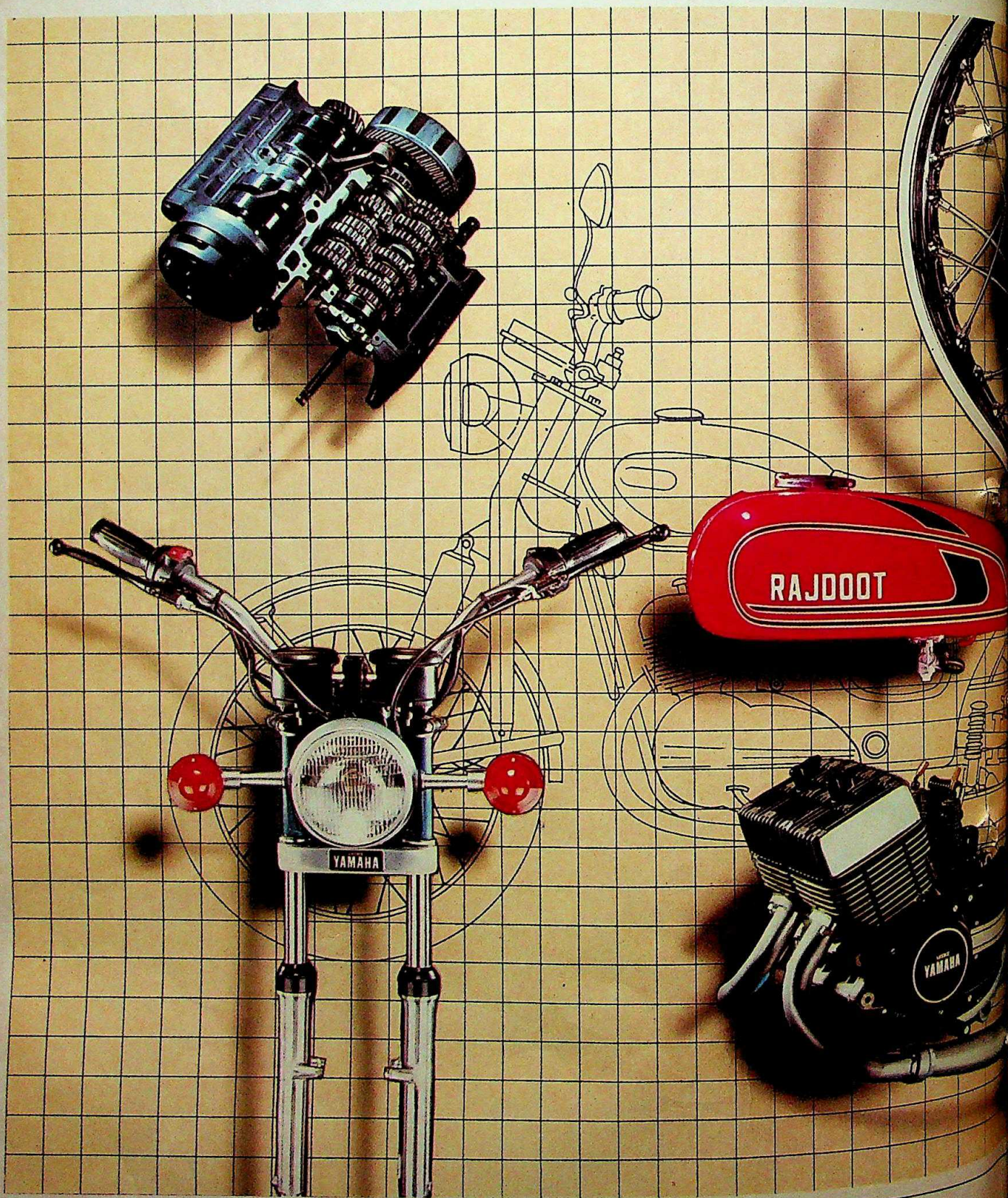
JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY IS NEWS FOR EVERYONE EXEPT



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FOR INDIAN BIKES EXPT RAJDOOT

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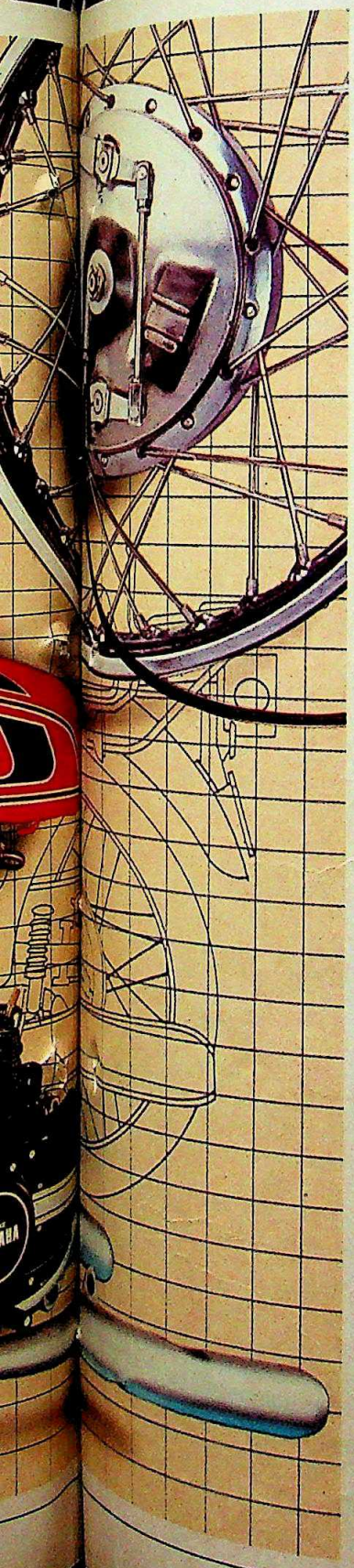

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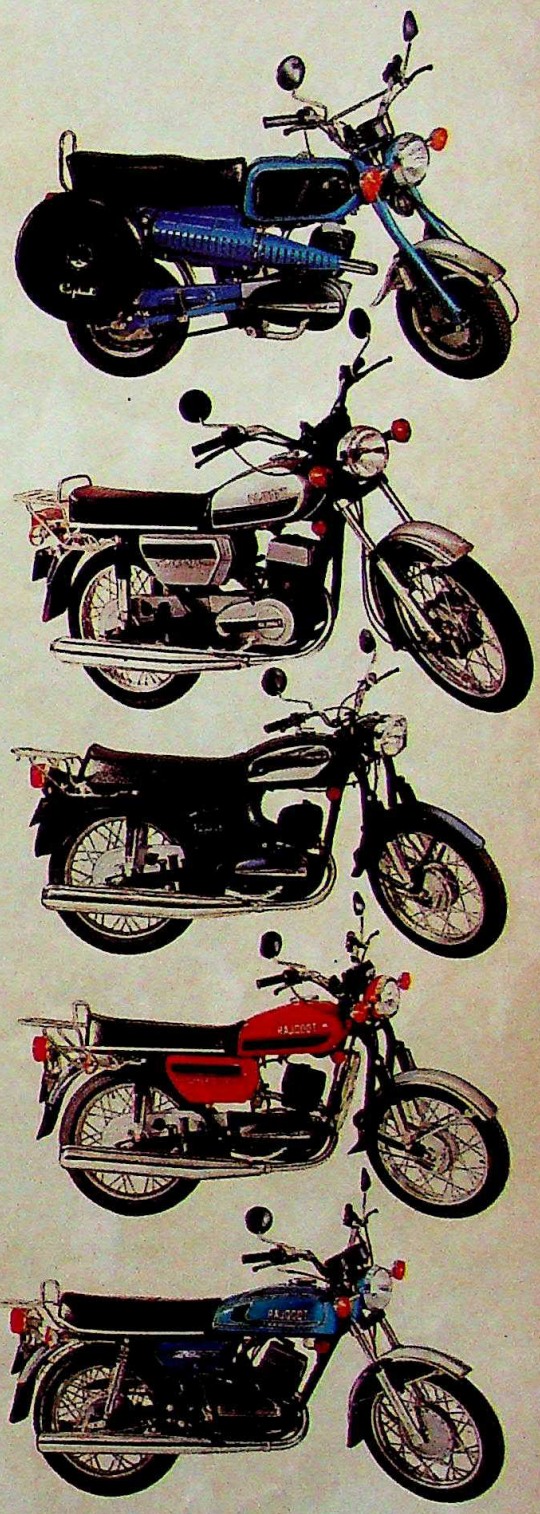

RAJDOOT

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A LEADER

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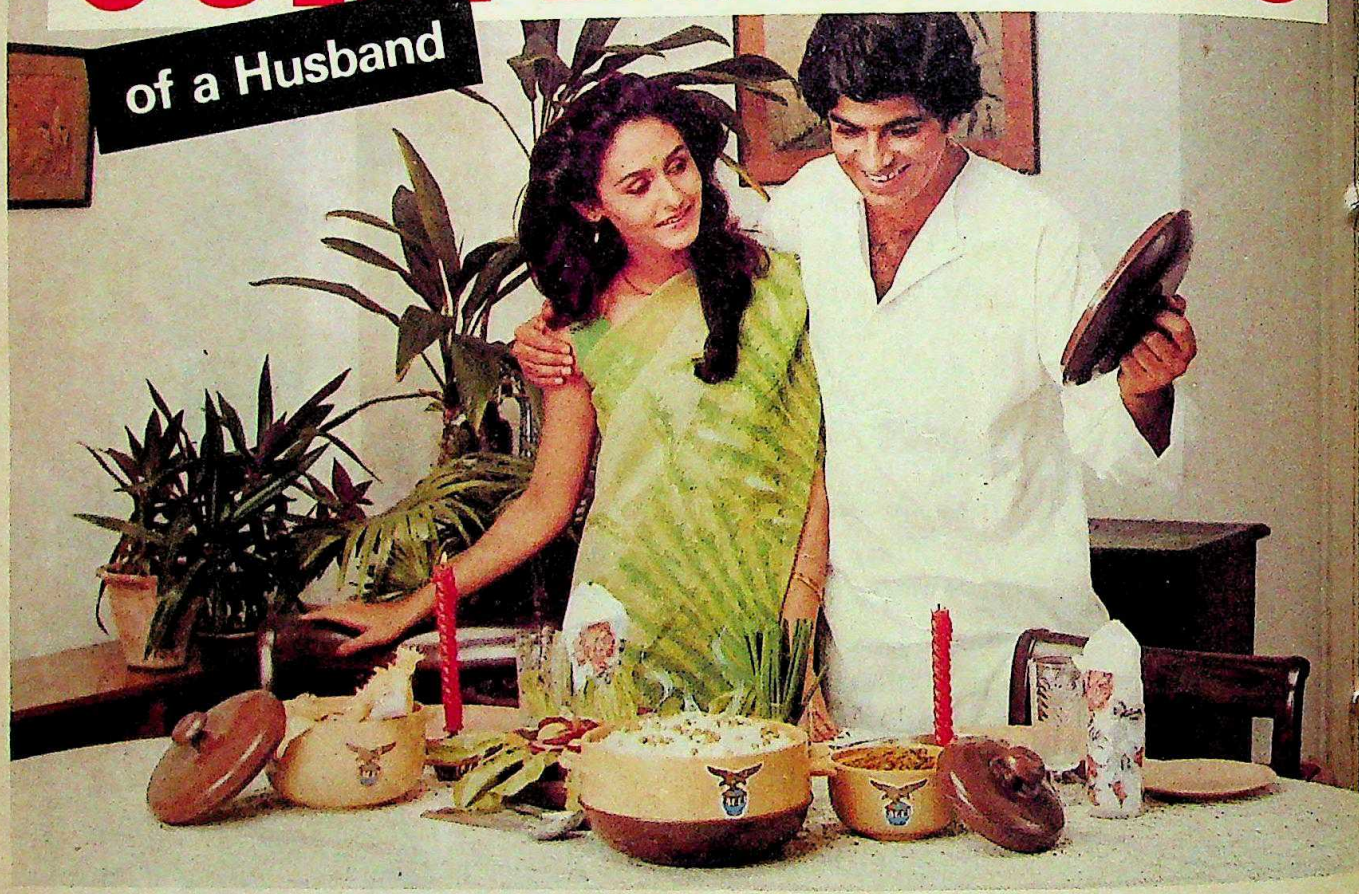
CONFESSIONS

of a Husband



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RAMESH SARIN

Few were in doubt that Ramesh Sarin's departure followed mounting differences with A.H. Tobaccowala, his predecessor as president and currently chairman of the Voltas board.

A.H. TOBACCOWALA

VOLTAS

Changes at the Helm

FOUR years ago, Ramesh Sarin was appointed president of Voltas, the giant Tata-controlled trading company, after the biggest and most publicised head-hunt for a corporate chieftain in the history of Indian business. Late last fortnight, climaxing weeks of speculation in the company about tensions at the top, Sarin announced that he was leaving Voltas in December, several months before the expiry of his five-year contract.

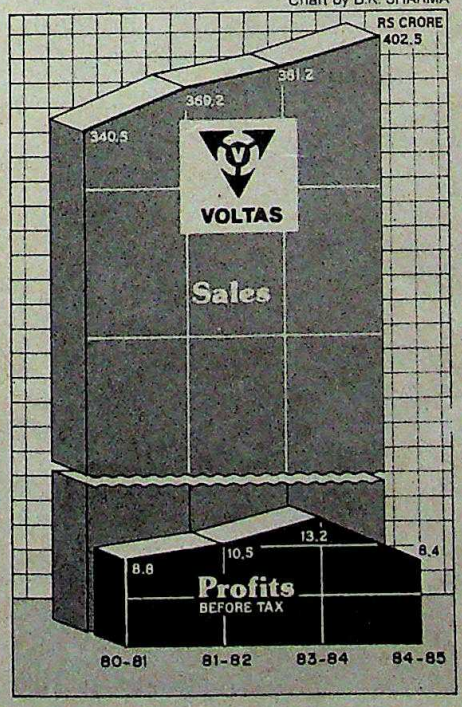
Sarin said he was leaving for "personal" reasons, but few were in doubt that his departure followed mounting differences with A.H. Tobaccowala, his predecessor as president and currently chairman of the Voltas board. Speaking some weeks before Sarin's announcement, Tobaccowala had obliquely admitted to these differences when he said that: "There are differences in approach," though he added that "these are not necessarily fundamental." And responding to the charge that he failed to allow Sarin a free hand in bringing about radical changes in the company, Tobaccowala said: "It is always a problem giving up control, but I decided voluntarily to hand over complete charge to my successor."

Sarin himself was less than forthcoming about his reasons for leaving mid-way through the process of transforming the company from a predominantly trading concern to one that had a firm manufacturing base as well, and talked of Tobaccowala without a hint of rancour: "He has been a positive help in making the changes." Sarin also tried to shoot down any suggestion that his crash course in re-orienting and reshaping Voltas amounts to a negation of what Tobaccowala did earlier, arguing that many of the projects that are now flourishing were initially conceived by Chairman Tobaccowala.

But there was no concealing the fact that the two did not share a common vision of the direction in which the company was headed. Sarin repeatedly emphasised the company's manufacturing thrust, while Tobaccowala declared that he would like to see Voltas do more marketing. Nevertheless, Tobaccowala too was generous in Sarin's praise, declaring that under Sarin "the pace of change in Voltas has quickened, decisions are being taken faster, there has been a great deal of internal organisational restructuring, there is better training of younger managers, and greater stress on accountability."

The crucial question now is what will happen to this pace of rapid change that Sarin had initiated. For there is little doubt that soon after he took charge in August 1981, he collared the then sleepy, rule-bound, financially threatened company by the throat and launched one of the more dramatic efforts at getting a large corporate ship to change course. In the four years since then, Sarin sacked, retired or forced the resignation of fully a quarter of Voltas' 800-strong managerial cadre, completely reorganised the company's internal structure, set new goals and made it more responsive to the market-place.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The problems that Sarin saw when he first took charge were many. A company that concentrated on selling goods manufactured by others could be in trouble if large customers took away their business, as Amul has just done—leaving Voltas short of Rs 100 crore in sales and Rs 4 crore in profits, but with a staff strength of 650 for whom new work had to be found.

Voltas also faced a profit squeeze because of inflation on the one hand and increasing competition in the market-place on the other, so that profits amounted to less than 3 per cent of sales, against the respectable 10 per cent that more manufacturing-oriented companies manage to achieve.

Voltas was simply not responsive to the market-place. Senior Vice-president Jagdish Chopra, whom Sarin brought in from Hindustan Lever as one of his key top-level appointments, was shocked to find that Voltas did not care to offer its air-conditioners to the Government on rate contract, even though this accounted for 40 per cent of the market. And only four towns in all of Uttar Pradesh were covered by sales offices.

Market research was simply unknown, so that Voltas was planning to introduce new products like toasters and electric irons without proper market testing of their acceptability. The result: numerous product launches in the past had been failures.

Since manufacturing and marketing were done by separate divisions, mutual bickering over problems led to a lack of internal cohesion, affecting the pushing of products in the market.

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So Sarin got down to business without losing time. Since the turnover lost because of Amul's pulling out had to be made up quickly, the company introduced in short order a new range of food products: Volfarm tomato ketchup, Ju-C soft drink concentrate, Gold Nut refined oil, Sneha dairy products and a few others. And since the manufacturing base had to be expanded, so that it became less vulnerable to product losses like Amul, a new push was given to the plans to start producing a host of new products, including refrigerators, compressors, hydraulic cranes, transformers and circuit breakers. Most of these involved acquiring new technology from abroad, and Sarin claims that all of them mark a step forward from the products already on the market.

THE REFRIGERATOR, developed in-house and introduced so far in the East and South, preparatory to a full-scale launch in the West and North in time for the festival season, marks one of the most ambitious of Sarin's projects. A new plant near Nagpur was built in a record 18 months, and with a capacity of one lakh is set to take on both Kelvinator and Godrej in a battle for leadership in the five lakh market. Somewhat daringly, the new product is priced higher than the established favourites. The manufacturing-marketing divide was ended by completely reorganising the company's internal structure, breaking it up into half a dozen business groups, each of them a profit centre, and each of them responsible for both manufacturing and marketing. The air-conditioners were placed on rate contract with the Government and the company's market reach extended by opening new offices, so that sales shot up by an impressive 40 per cent in three years.

Finally, Chopra took the drastic decision to scrap new products that were about to be launched, including the toaster and a mixer, because he found that they did not offer anything extra to the customer. He came up against flak on this, because designs had been imported from abroad and a manufacturing plant had been set up by a technocrat with whom Voltas had entered into a marketing tie-up. But Chopra would have none of it. "We probably ruined that technocrat, but the fact was that 80 per cent of the toasters failed when I did a trial market test in 200 homes," he explains. Market research is therefore a new discipline that Chopra is pushing on the company.

The results so far are gratifying. The refrigerators are said to be doing well, the new Danfoss compressors that Sarin hopes to introduce are claimed to mark a technological breakthrough, and the new food products show promise. Chopra says that Ju-C has already overtaken the established Rasna in Delhi, that the ketchup is a sell-out, and that Gold Nut has quickly provided turnover (if not profits) to partly neutralise the absence of Amul. But the price for this success has had to be paid: Chopra had to change all but two of his 30 managers by sacking or transferring them so that he got a team that was in tune with his own thinking and approach. Similar shake-ups took place in the other divisions, and when Sarin was asked whether he didn't ruffle feathers in the process, he came up with a spontaneous exclamation: "Oh by God yes!" But he pointed out that some heat was bound to be generated when a company that was rule-bound was being forced to become "more customer-bound."

Senior Vice-president Jagdish Chopra had to change all but two of his 30 managers by sacking or transferring them so that he got a team that was in tune with his new thinking and approach.

The results of the changes don't show in the figures yet. The profits in the year that ended last month will be down to perhaps as low as Rs 6.5 crore, compared to Rs 8.4 crore last year, which in turn was lower than the previous year's Rs 13.2 crore. And the turnover figure hasn't shown very big increases either, inching up somewhat unimpressively from Rs 340.5 crore in 1980-81 (before Sarin joined) to Rs402.5 crore in 1983-84. So two of the three goals implicit in the slogan that Sarin gave the company when he joined—'profits, growth and excellence'—have not been achieved as yet, although the turnover growth would certainly have been more impressive if Amul had stayed with Voltas. Insiders say the company's board of directors has not been very happy with the profit trend, but Sarin professed unconcern: "You can't expect financial results when the transition is under way. I am happy that the company has been set on a new course, now the rest will take care of itself. You mustn't forget that Voltas has undertaken more investment in the last two years than it did in the previous 25."

He has a point, of course, because as Chopra points out, "the post-tax profits haven't suffered because the investments that have been undertaken give us a much bigger depreciation write-off, so we retain more of our profits. Earlier, there were no investments to speak of, so we got no tax breaks." As one result of this, the company has been able to improve on its dividend payments adequately in recent years.

If all goes well, Voltas should pull out of its current profitability dip and head for long-term growth and stability—both assured by the new manufacturing thrust. But many middle-level managers in Voltas are known to have been unhappy with the Sarin regime, pointing out that all the fancy talk is not backed up by performance on the bottom line. Also, as someone sympathetic to Sarin pointed out, "he may have tried to change the Voltas culture, but this is not easy in such a large company."

Now, with Sarin heading for other pastures, the crucial question remains as to whether the changes that he initiated will be given the same support as before, and whether the pace of change will continue or slacken. Tobaccowala could not be reached for comment at the time of writing, but it is understood that all the company's vice-presidents have been asked to report directly to him.

Speaking to INDIA TODAY a few weeks before his decision to quit became known, Sarin had said that "I have made some terrible mistakes, but I now see growth ahead for Voltas; all it needs now for the strategy to work is time." He might have been right if he had stayed on. Now, with his leaving, the future has a question mark hanging over it.

—T.N.NINAN

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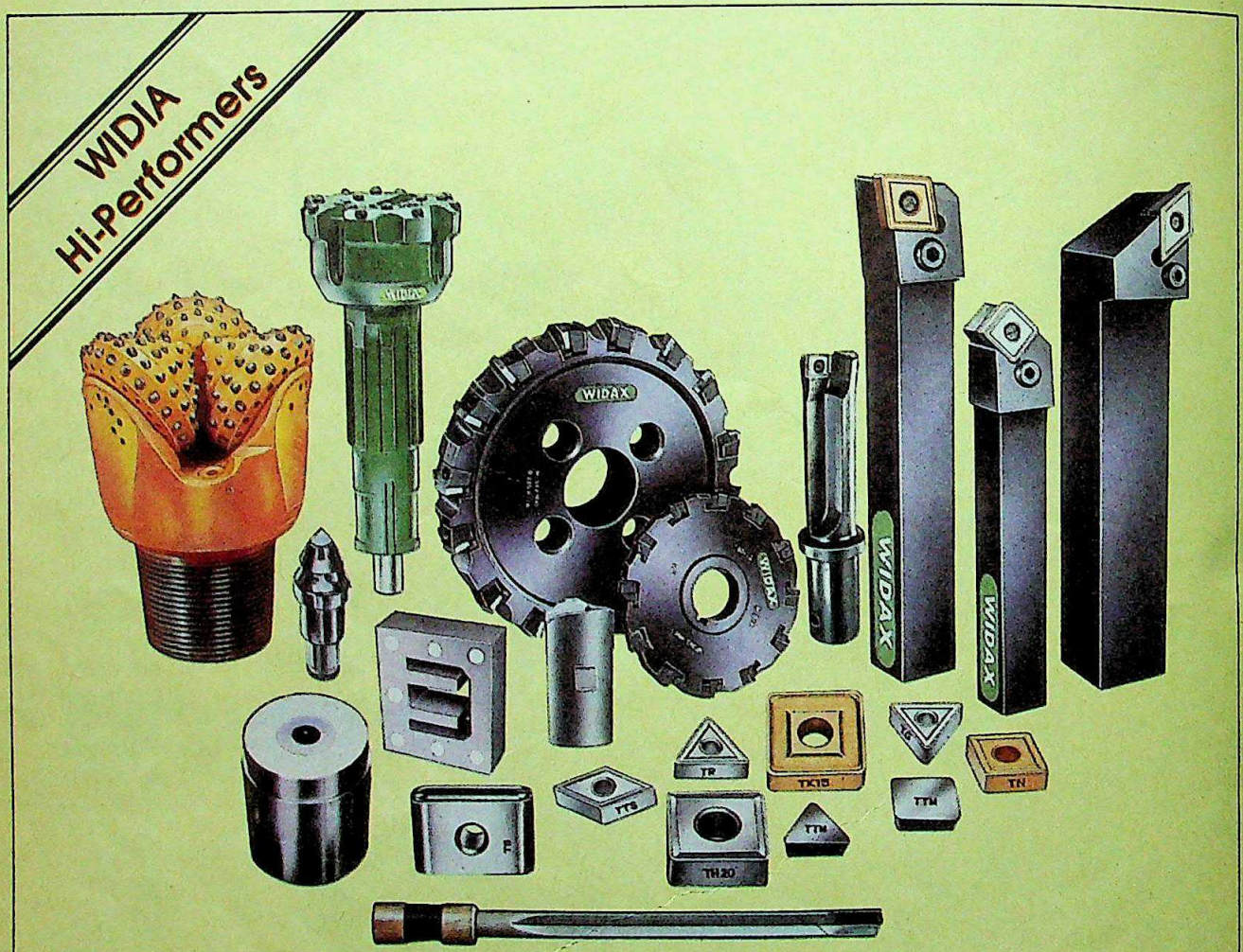

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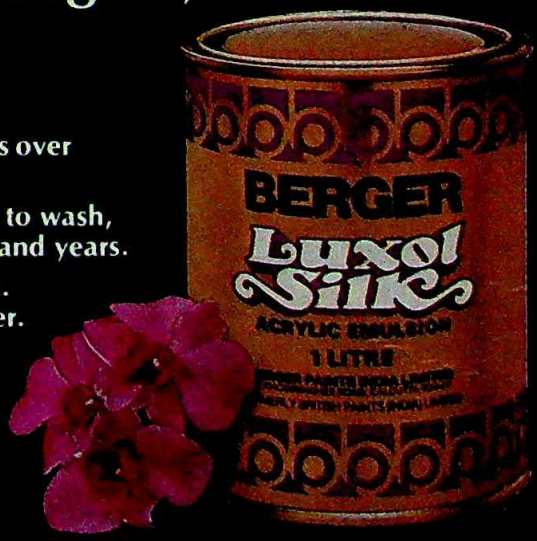

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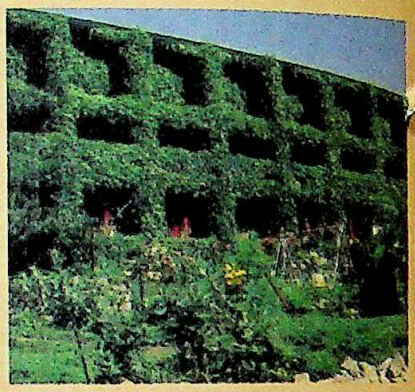

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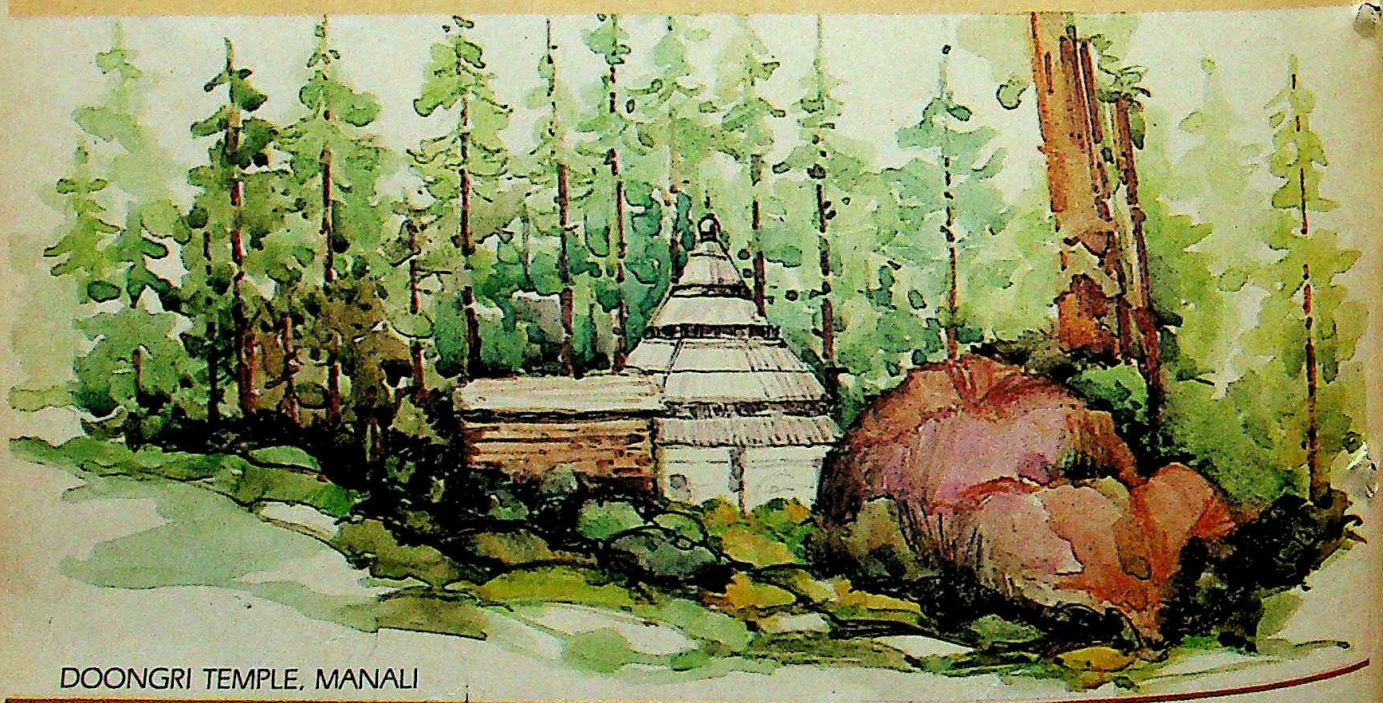

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MMC

Pruning Plans

WHILE most companies are scrambling to hitch their wagons onto the speeding computer train currently racing across the country's industrial scene, Machinery Manufacturers Corporation (MMC), a Calcutta-based Mahindra concern, is thinking of unhitching. Manufacturing micro-computers and other esoteric paraphernalia for the growing domestic market during the last four years seems to have been anything but an inspiring experience for the company. And today, MMC President P.K. Basu admits ruefully: "Computers are not our priority."

MMC is in deep financial trouble, needs cash badly and seems set on hiving off some of its divisions in the effort to put its house in order. Company insiders disclose that the company has suffered a staggering loss of Rs 15 crore on a turnover of Rs 40 crore in its latest accounting 'year' of 18 months. Institutions like the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India were being discreetly approached by the company last fortnight for bail-out loans.

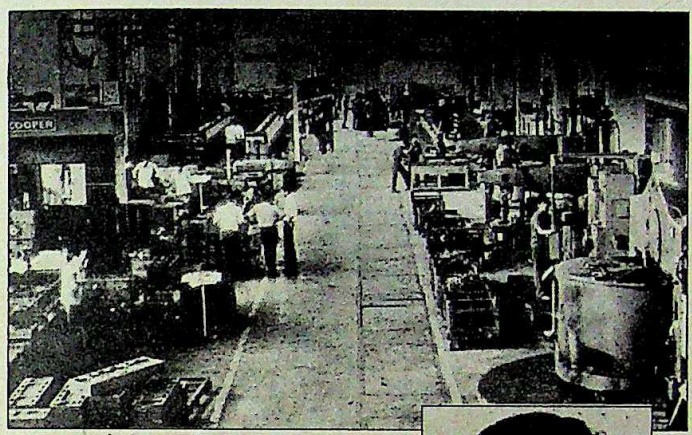
Meanwhile, the weight of unremunerative units will in all probability be off-loaded, among them the small factory-cum-office complex tucked away in an industrial side lane in Calcutta, making micro-computers, floppy disc drives and matrix printers. Though Basu dismisses the suggestion that the computer division is being sold off, it is no secret that MMC has negotiated with at least one company — Development Consultant Private Limited (DCPL) — for some kind of tie-up, if not outright sale. Other companies too have cast covetous eyes on this division, among them DCM. But at the moment the question of whether to sell seems to be open.

What is certain, however, is that MMC—which mainly produces textile machinery—has plunged headlong into the red. "During the last financial year we had a fairly large number of orders but the Government's decision not to expand the spindleage of its mills last year hit our despatch plans," says Basu. This together with the general recession in the textile industry and the Government's delay in announcing a textile policy completed the damage.

All of MMC's woes cannot, however, be blamed fully on the textile recession. Accusing fingers within the company point to deficiencies in marketing, which the management is now desperately trying to make up by seeking export markets. Last fortnight, Basu and a team of MMC engineers were hard at work in Bangladesh trying to hawk textile machines. They came away after signing a contract with a local company — Bangladesh Machine Tools Pvt Ltd — for participating jointly on a tender floated by the state-owned Bangladesh Textile Machinery Corporation.

In the circumstances, MMC's decision to concentrate more on its principal product—which admittedly has only a shrinking domestic market — while according second priority to its computer division, seems quixotic. "Computers constitute less than 5 per cent of our turnover," offers Basu in explanation, "and now textile machinery is our priority." In a more candid vein, he adds: "Due to the recession we started looking at restructuring the organisation and our priorities got changed."

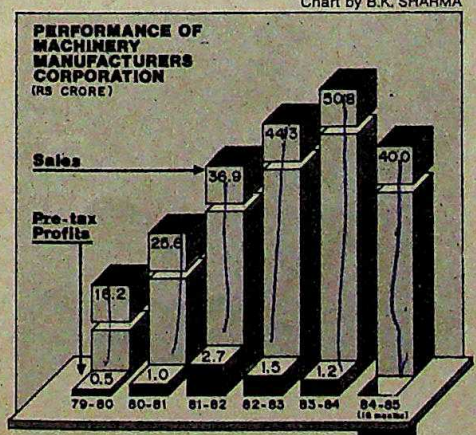
The Belwadi Works in Mysore



"Computers are not our priority."

P.K. BASU
president, MMC

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The recent change in the company, however, seems to be more in the nature of pruning rather than "restructuring". The first casualty was the company's office in Bangalore. Started in 1981 to prise open new markets, the Bangalore office with its 140-odd employees was wound up abruptly last month. More than a dozen executives were brought back to Calcutta, some were retained at the MMC regional sales office, and the rest were bidden adieu. The company's factory at Mysore is also reportedly proposed to be taken out of MMC and transferred to Mahindra & Mahindra, a related company.

The MMC management vehemently dismisses this gloomy scenario. "When we decided to have the Mysore factory, we wanted to control it from Bangalore," says Basu, "once this project was over we felt it was no longer required to keep the office , which we brought back to Calcutta." As a matter of fact, the Mysore project was completed in 1981, which is when the office was opened. Besides, why a corporate office should be set up with export and central marketing wings simply in order to "control" a factory is not clear.

While Basu insists that there is no move to close down the Mysore factory, which currently employs about 850 people, he glosses over the fact that the factory is in trouble because of the failure of one of its two major products — the draw frames. "The draw frame was a dud right from the beginning and it was felt our collaborators had duped us," says a company engineer.

Only time will now provide the verdict on the management's decision to give textile machinery activity its fullest attention, while a potential money-spinner, a computer division for which other companies are hungering, seems set to receive the butt end.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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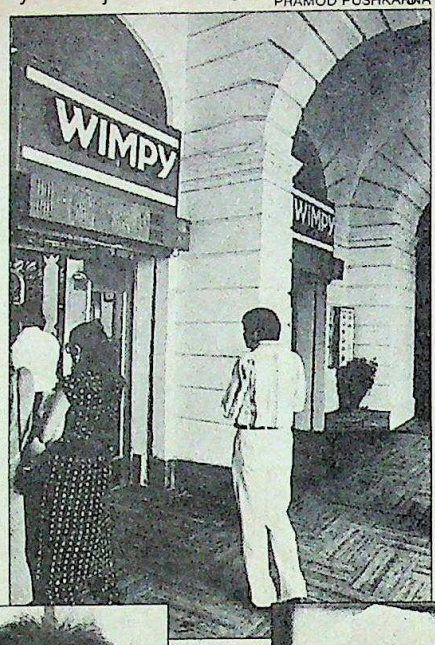
WIMPY

Burger Split



Wimpy in Delhi: unpalatable charges

WHEN the first Wimpy fast food outlet opened in New Delhi early this year, it had everything going for it: a prime site in the capital, sales growing at a fast clip, and a prized foreign connection. Infected by the upbeat trend, entrepreneur Avtar Singh Selhi talked of opening 200 parlours country-wide.

Nine months later, the cash registers continue to ring at the ritzy parlour in the capital, but 'Wimpy Fast Foods' (monthly turnover: around Rs 7.5 lakh) horizons are clouded by a legal battle involving sordid charges of cheating and forgery. The battle was scheduled to begin last fortnight at the Delhi High Court, which appointed an observer to keep tabs on cash inflow.

Pushing for winding up the company—though only as a last resort—is Ramesh Hemnani, who along with his non-resident brother Ajit runs a clutch of trading companies in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Africa. In the dock is the UK-based Selhi, one of whose firms has been franchised by British hamburger giant Wimpy International to operate Wimpy parlours in India.

The issues at stake are whether the Hemnanis had bought equity in the company and were its directors. Ramesh Hemnani has claimed in court that he and his brother in effect were eased out of Wimpy Fast Foods although they had invested Rs 9 lakh in the venture, as had Selhi. He also claims in his petition that the duo sounded Wimpy International two years ago in London on launching fast food parlours in India, and that they were steered to Thames Trading Company, the Channel Islands firm of which Selhi is a director. The two sides struck a deal: each would put in half the cost of the New Delhi venture's plant and machinery. Hemnani says that the brothers put up the cash and were allotted shares in the new Indian company.

But, as he says they learnt subsequently, no company existed then. Wimpy Fast Foods was incorporated only in January 1984. So they received shares in a non-existent company. In support of these contentions, Hemnani produces the share certificates, a letter from the British solicitors of Thames Trading Company informing him in September 1983 that according to its clients the company had been incorporated, and documents in which he is listed as a director of the company.

The petition goes on to add that Hemnani set up the outlet. Shortly afterwards, things began to sour. Selhi, the petition suggests, started milking the company by charging exorbitant rates for the food and equipment supplied by some of Selhi's other companies, and by diverting funds from a common bank account to these companies.

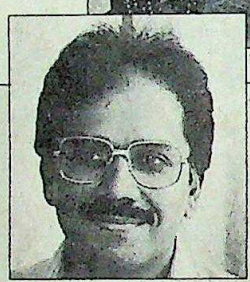
Selhi denies all this. His lawyer says the brothers had no stake in the company's equity, were not directors and have tampered with documents to suggest the contrary. Selhi got the parlour going, and the money from the bank account was due to Selhi's companies for goods supplied.

Selhi said that he appointed Hemnani as an additional director of the company in February last year. His one-year term expired at the end of the company's financial year last April but could not be extended at a board meeting for lack of a quorum. But, according to Selhi, Hemnani feared that Selhi had no intention of reappointing him and called a board meeting on June 7, when Selhi and his wife (also a director) were out of the country. Hemnani appointed himself company chairman and his brother and brother-in-law as directors. He then proceeded to oust the Selhis from the board on a legal technicality. Claims Selhi: "Hemnani has filed this case to harass and embarrass the company. He wants to be reinstated as an additional director."

The court will have to decide who is telling the truth. About the only matter the two warring sides agree on is that Hemnani called the June 7 board meeting. What also seems evident is that he was unable to enforce his orders in the parlour after he tried to take over the company. While the case drags on, the Selhi saga has other sidelights. Sidharth Bhandari, who held half the equity in Selhi's Wimpy India, has pulled out of the company in order to look after his own business, though he retains a presence on the board of Wimpy Foods, also owned by Selhi but different from Wimpy Fast Foods. Wimpy Foods itself owes over Rs 1 crore to the banks and financial institutions.

With his sole right to run the money-spinning fast food outlet in question, the high-profile Selhi has much more to chew on than just hamburgers. A question mark also hangs over the parlour itself. As Bhandari puts it: "No one likes to deal with a company where a court case to control it is on." Selhi, apart from proving his case in court, will also have to prove his former business partner is in the wrong.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI



Hemnani claimed in effect in court that he and his brother were eased out of Wimpy Fast Foods although they had invested Rs 9 lakh in the venture.

Selhi says the brothers had no stake in the company's equity, were not directors and have tampered with documents to suggest the contrary.

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WINTER WEAR

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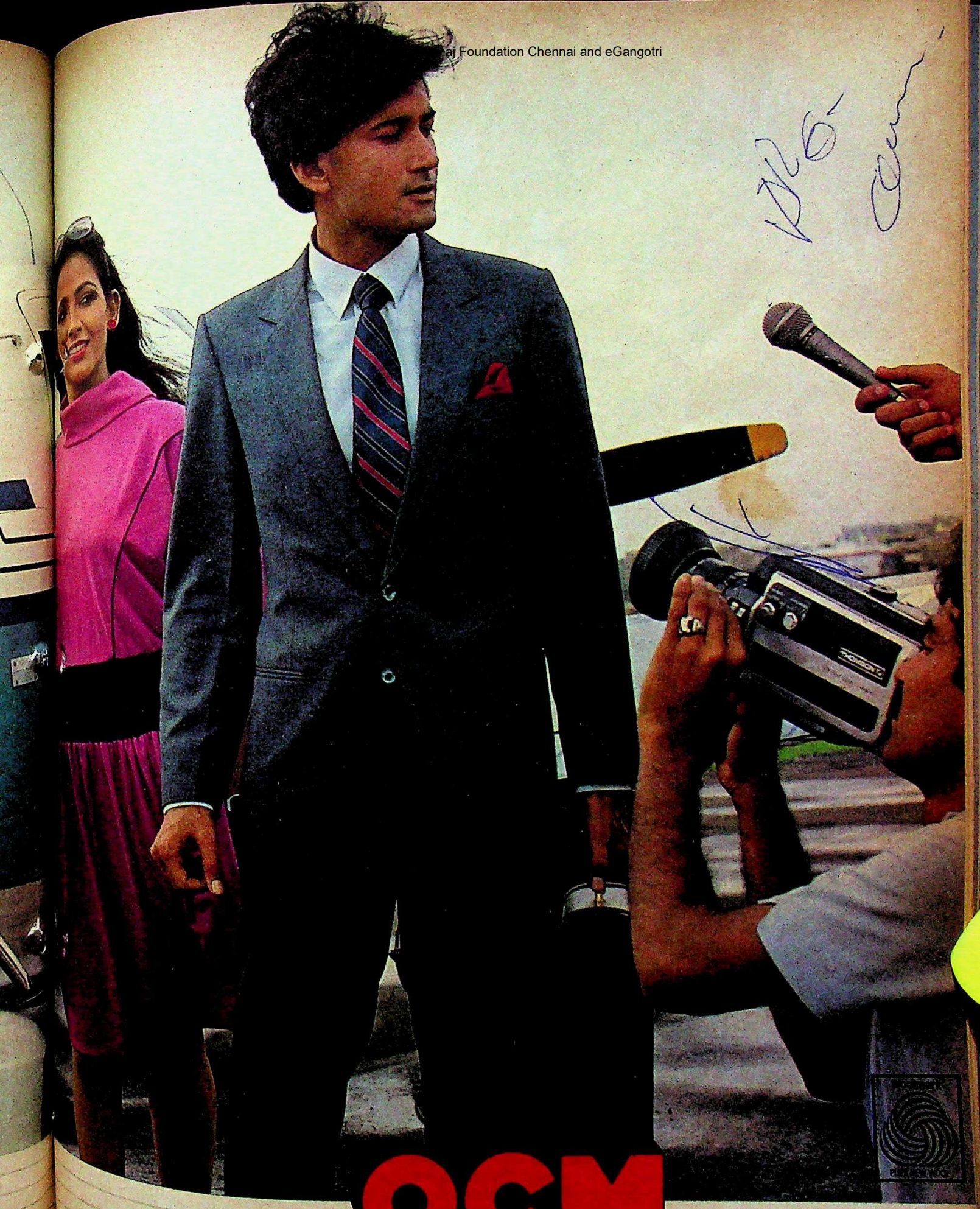

OCM

SUITINGS

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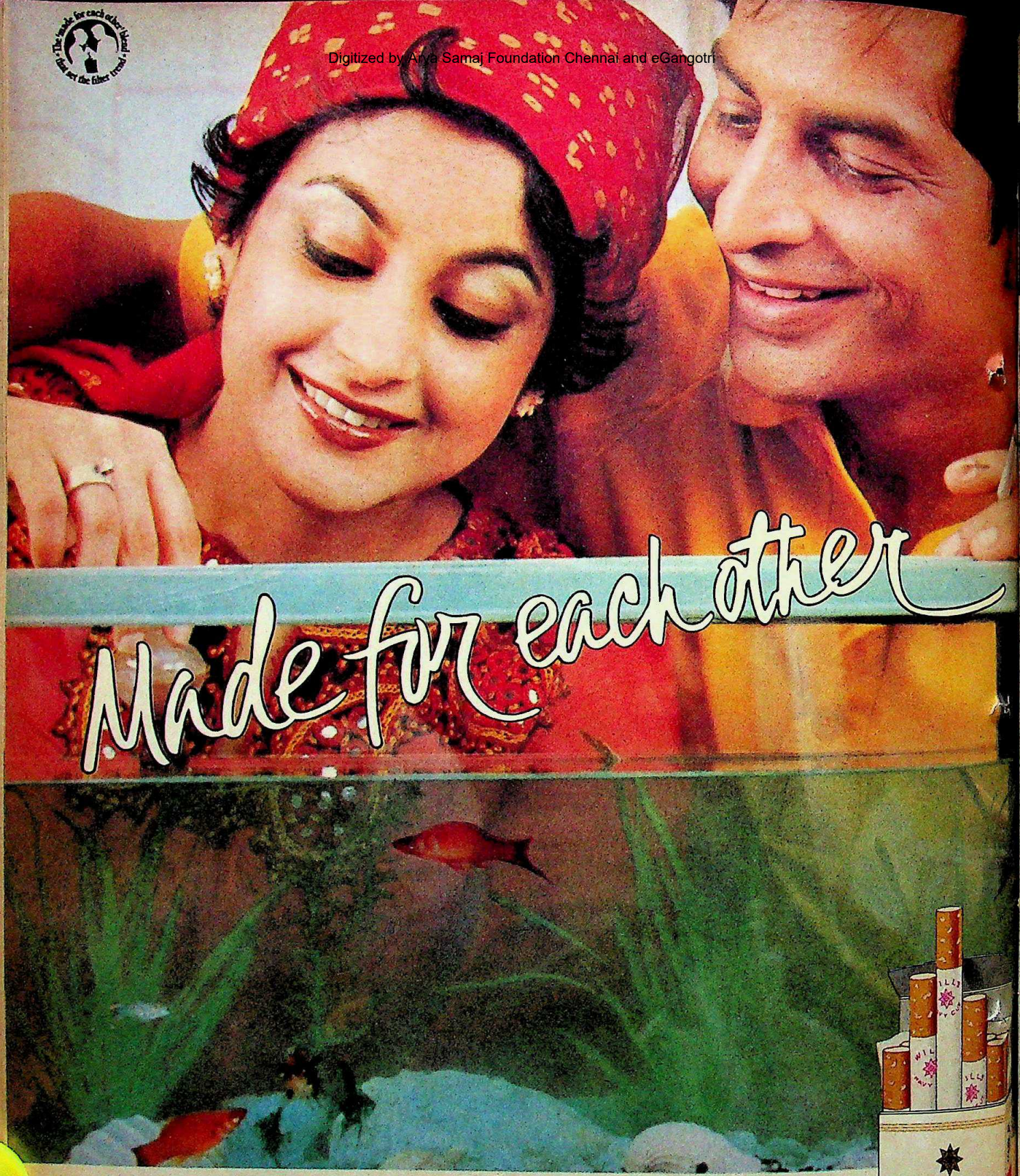

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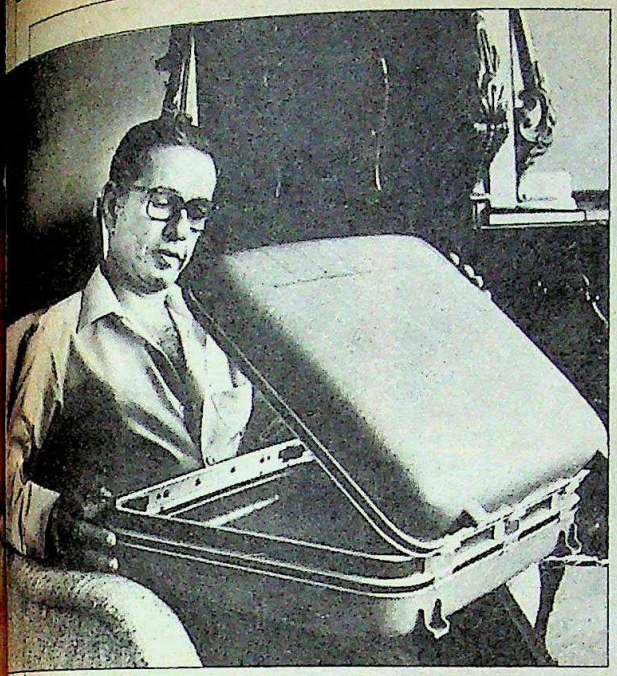

"We must stop thinking in terms of wars and more about quality."

JAL ENGINEER, *proprietor, Universal Luggage*

"We have established ourselves as the definite leaders of the industry."

DILIP PIRAMAL, *chairman, Blow Plast Limited*

MOULDED LUGGAGE

Mobile Market

THE BATTLE of the bags has always been a fierce one. Last year witnessed a no-holds-barred contest when Universal Luggage, makers of the Aristocrat range, offered price cuts of up to 35 per cent in a spirited effort to overtake Blow Plast Ltd, makers of the competing VIP range. When the dust settled and both companies totted up their takings, it was clear that Universal's Jal Engineer, the founder of the moulded luggage industry in India, had lost out badly to arch-rival Dilip Piramal. Piramal's Blow Plast came out of 1984-85 with luggage sales totalling a hefty Rs 60 crore, a 50 per cent increase over the previous year. Universal came through rather battered with Rs 33 crore, a meagre 10 per cent increase over 1983-84, and well below the targeted Rs 50 crore. Says Engineer: "It's been a bad year and a bad setback."

The prime reason for the reclusive entrepreneur's company doing so badly is labour trouble. A prolonged strike lasting over nine months had shut down its Bombay plant since September last year. The plant contributes 40 per cent of production. A shorter shutdown crippled the working of its Satara factory for about four months. Universal executives assert they lost Rs 17 crore of production mainly because of the strikes and that Blow Plast and the industry number three—Safari Industries—which has increased its sales from Rs 9 crore to Rs 15 crore this year, carried away the rest of the pie. Indirectly confirming this, Piramal says: "Whatever it is, we have established ourselves as the definite leaders of the industry."

But both Engineer and Piramal could face stiff competition in the coming years because of the proposed entry into the Indian market of the world's second largest manufacturer of luggage, American Tourister. The US giant has tied up with the B.D. Group of Industries—a steel group with a turnover of Rs 100 crore—to promote a company called Gujarat B.D. Luggage. Its plant, with an investment of Rs 20 crore—equal to the investment of all the three Indian manufacturers put together—is to come up near Vadodara. Says Harmeet Singh, project coordinator and former chief executive of Blow Plast: "Superior hand luggage is not available in the country and the status connotation of the product has gone. We aim to produce high-class bags for the upper segment of the market and think they will sell even if they are priced 30 per cent higher."

The entry of American Tourister will almost certainly cause fresh ripples in a market that is expected to grow annually at about 25 per cent. Already moulded luggage accounts for 65 per cent of the market, with rexine/plywood cases a distant second at 25 per cent. In that contest the new contender for the plastic sweepstakes is definitely someone to contend with. Says Engineer: "They are certainly going to take a major share of the market." He mentions that American Tourister had earlier offered him a collaboration—which the proud Engineer countered by making a similar return offer. Piramal—who had tied up with Samsonite briefly before this first Indo-US luggage marriage broke up—feels on the other hand that there is little to worry about in the American Tourister challenge: "We make the same bags they do."

Not quite. The new bags will be vacuum formed out of a new material called ABS, which is used for bags all over the world—except in India. Here HDPP, a much cheaper but also considerably heavier material, has been the staple diet of the injection-moulding machines. "Ours is the new technology," says Singh. "Theirs is the

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old. We will give India contemporary luggage." And as a part of the war of words that is heating up before the battle begins in the market-place, he scoffs at the fact that most Indian bags have only token locks and token keys. "Not so," retorts Safari Chairman Sumati Mehta. "The newer generations of bags have exclusive safety features like combination locks and vault locks comparable to the best in the world."

The luggage landscape has been energised not just by the arrival of one of the giants, but also by the success of soft luggage–bags and totes–launched by Blow Plast in its Skybag range. Piramal claims that sales last month at some of his larger stores were almost equally divided between hard and soft luggage. Safari is thinking of introducing a similar line, while Engineer says he is looking into it. The new company is also going to produce what Singh calls "soft bags of a superior quality." And says Mehta: "The market for this range of luggage is the upwardly mobile professional who wants to look good when he travels."

Blow Plast now expects sales to shoot up to Rs 90 crore in 1985-86, while a chastened Universal is aiming for about half that. Says Engineer: "When a man is hospitalised you don't think of running, you have to walk first." Universal's new Oscar range is a low-priced 90 per cent plastic suitcase turned out on integrated machines–which produce almost an entire bag in one go–at its new Aurangabad plant. Engineer has reportedly gone in for mass production, targeting a rate of one bag every 50 seconds. However the plant has teething problems and is producing at only half that rate. Safari, on the other hand, plans to nearly double its turnover this year to Rs 30 crore, and is looking for a tie-up with the Bata chain of shoe stores to sell its bags. "We don't want to downrate our product by giving discounts," says Mehta. "We'd rather depend on strong marketing."

Over the next few years, therefore, the bright bags will be pawns in a developing struggle for markets. Says Piramal: "The new ranges now coming out every day—I do not know my own complete range—indicate that the industry has come of age." Engineer is more circumspect: "The next few years will see steady consolidation of markets. We must stop thinking in terms of wars and more about quality." What seems likely is that the American Tourister stress on quality will in fact be one of the many elements in a new battle of the bags.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

ITDC

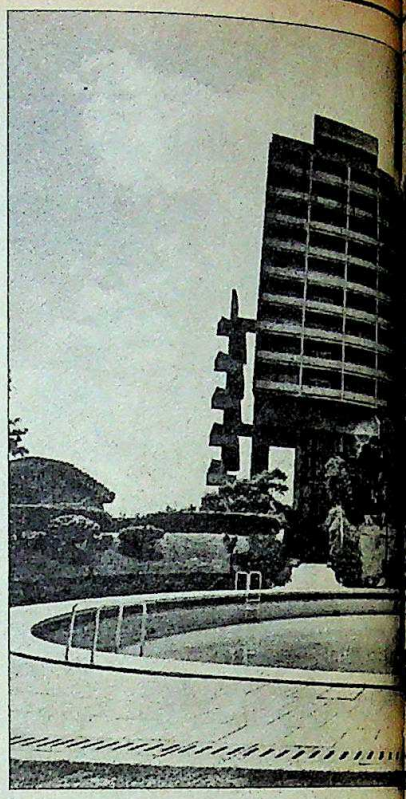
Akbar's Loss

THE FOREIGN office is getting a foreign office, or offices to be precise. And in keeping with its image, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is going five-star. The new offices will have central air-conditioning, wall to wall carpeting, a shopping arcade, attached bathrooms with showers in every office, a swimming pool, cafeteria and ornate dining halls. Sounds familiar? It should, at least for those acquainted with Delhi. The new offices of MEA will be housed in the plush and prestigious Akbar Hotel, built in the distinctive Corbusier style and considered the second-best hostelry after the Ashok in the India Tourism Development Corporation's (ITDC) hotel chain.

As one tourism official snidely commented: "There are going to be an awful lot of bathrooms in the MEA's new offices." The 318-room hotel has as many bathrooms but nobody in the foreign office, now housed in the sandstone confines of South Block, is complaining. Especially considering that one of the few available toilets in South Block was walled in for the private use of former foreign secretary M.K.Rasgotra, and another commandeered by security personnel.

But toilet facilities aside, the new move was somewhat inevitable and arose from the coincidental question of the MEA's desperate hunt for office space and the ITDC's desire to shed some of its extra rooms. The common link which brought the MEA and Akbar together in plush partnership was the Minister of State for External Affairs Khurshed Alam Khan. In his previous job as minister for tourism and civil aviation, Khan was aware of the problem of low occupancy at most ITDC hotels in Delhi. And, at a recent meeting between the MEA and tourism officials, it was decided that there could be no better way to secure much-needed office space for the MEA and at the same time rescue the ITDC from a glut of unoccupied hotel rooms than to transfer one fully equipped five-star hotel from the ITDC to the MEA.

Both the external and defence ministries have been jockeying for more space in stately South Block, which they share with the prime minister's office. Earlier, the ground and second floor of the west wing of South Block were occupied by MEA officials who were gradually elbowed out of the ground floor as the needs of the Prime Minister's Secretariat expanded. The second floor was taken over as a



security measure. Now the Defence Ministry wants more room, despite having constructed a large new office complex behind South Block, and so does the MEA. As one senior official pointed out: "If the MEA wants more room it will have to move out." And that is exactly what is planned once the Akbar Hotel is handed over to the foreign office, probably by December.

Nevertheless, the move to convert the Akbar into a ministry-base comes as a boon to the ITDC, which has been faced with a persistent problem of low occupancy in its nine hotels in the capital, especially after the Asiad-inspired hotel construction boom. So the Akbar, earlier a profitable enterprise still popular for its Sheeshmahal restaurant, decked with chains of bangles dangling from the ceiling, slipped into the red, losing Rs 60 lakh last year.

There has been persistent talk of the ITDC hiving off another of its hotels in the capital, the Rs 19 crore Samrat, which lost a staggering Rs 2.27 crore in 1983-84 and Rs 1.25 crore last year, and newspaper reports have spoken of the hotel being offered as office space to Air-India and Indian Airlines. But ITDC Managing Director Rajan Jetley denied this, saying that the Samrat would be developed as a hotel for business travellers and airline crews. Nevertheless, both the Akbar and the Samrat have already been leasing out large numbers of their rooms, if not entire floors, to various companies. DCM

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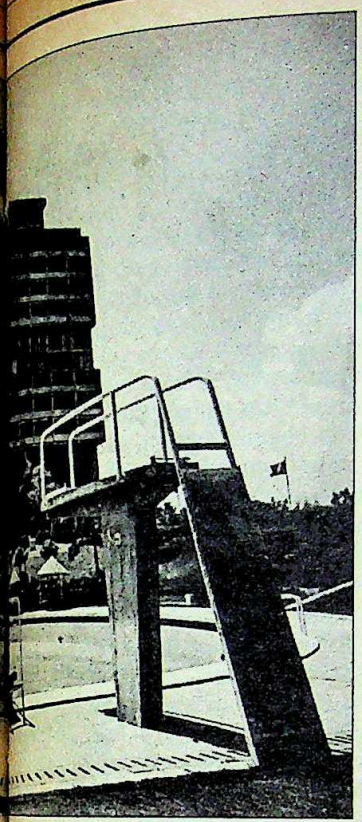

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The Akbar Hotel and (right) its lobby: new occupants

...ga and the Gas Authority of India, for ...ke, maintain offices in the Samrat, ...ohia Machines, the International ...ports Authority of India, as well as the ...re for Development of Telematics, ...e leased out a part of the Akbar.

Tall this cast doubts on the wisdom of ...hotel construction boom in the capital ...st of the new private hotels too have ...n leasing out rooms as office space), ...e is one precedent in the capital for the ...l of shift now planned for the Akbar: ...s of the Jawaharlal Nehru University ...mpus in south Delhi were initially de-...ped as a new centre for the Lal ...adur Shastri National Academy of ...ministration, the currently Mussoorie-...ed training establishment for fresh ...ntrants into the Government's blue-...ed services like the Indian Adminis-...tive Service (IAS). But the move was ...n up, and rooms that were designed to ...se IAS probationers were converted ...o class-rooms, which consequently ...d mirrors in the corners and – like the ...Akbar – adjoining bathrooms. Now, with ...ing learnt from past experience, the ...ri Academy is proposed to be shifted ...a new location in Ghaziabad, just across ...hi's border with Uttar Pradesh.

But it remains far from clear whether a ...el is in fact suitable for ministry use: ...ce most of the rooms are of the same size, will a joint secretary sit in the same kind of room as a section officer? And how much money will have to be spent in ordering suitable office furniture after throwing out the existing beds, mirrors and other fittings? Besides, the car park is almost certainly too small for the ministry's purposes.

For the ITDC, it must be a bit of a wrench losing one of its prized hotels. Jetley said he had decided to give up the Akbar because, apart from losing money, it was competing with the corporation's other hotels. Worse, with tourist traffic still falling, as many as 1,000 hotel rooms are being added this year with the expected commissioning of the Meridien and the Park Hotel. After the changeover, the Akbar's existing clientele is expected to move to ITDC's other hotels, boosting their room occupancy. The corporation will get compensation of about Rs 2 crore immediately (most of it as payment for the 150 rooms that it had added to the hotel a couple of years ago—the property itself belongs to the New Delhi Municipal Committee), and some of the hotel's 500 staff-members will be retained to maintain the infrastructure, at the MEA's expense. The rest will be dispersed to other existing establishments of the corporation and to handle catering at Delhi's new international airport.

In any case, the Tourism Ministry's new policy is to leave the business of five-star hotels to the private sector. The corporation has been asked not to invest its money in five star hotels like it did in 1982-83 when it added the Kanishka and the Samrat to its Delhi chain at a cost of nearly Rs 40 crore. The corporation is reverting back to its basic role — of providing tourism infrastructure in places where it is non-existent, inadequate or where the private sector is hesitant to invest. Infrastructure established, the ITDC will move elsewhere. In keeping with this philosophy the corporation is now building nine three star hotels at places like Ranchi, Bodh Gaya and Agra, some of them in the joint sector. It is also transferring its small travellers' lodges and hotels of less than 20 rooms to state tourism corporations, and its Delhi hotels have been permitted to rent out up to 30 per cent of their space commercially.

With all this, ITDC's hotels division may finally be able to show a profit. At the moment virtually the entire profits of the corporation (Rs 1.25 crore last year) come from the duty-free shops that it runs. But with the latest asset-stripping operation and other juggling, Jetley will be sniggering all the way to the bank with expected profits of over Rs 3 crore in 1985-86. But for others who have tender memories of moments spent in the Akbar's beautiful Sheeshmahal restaurant or the Madhuban coffee shop, the idea of bringing the MEA rushing in where ITDC feared to tread, seems nothing short of sacrilege.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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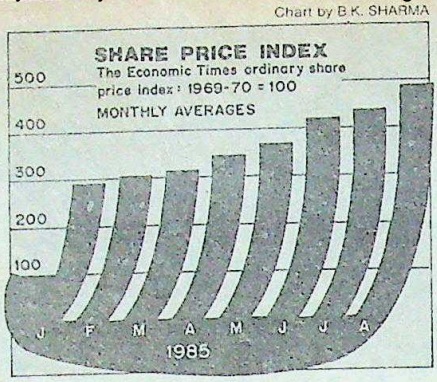
THE MARKETS

Bulls Retreat

IT WAS a sight that had become unusual on the stock-market for many months: that of bulls turning tail and fleeing down a descending share price index graph, with newly confident bears in hot pursuit. If the decision by the financial institutions to unload shares in July had checked the bulls mid-stride, after they had been on an unchecked rampage for more than six months, last fortnight saw them running scared.

More than 20 leading scrips on the market came down by more than 10 per cent in price during one short fortnight, with engineering, automobile, chemical, pharmaceutical and tyre companies suffering heavily. Such fancied counters as Lohia Machines, Kinetic Engineering, Motor Industries, Bajaj Auto, Brooke Bond, Ceat Tyres and SPIC saw the bulls take a hammering, while even TISCO and TELCO suffered losses. Among the few that managed to seek the high ground while the others fled were Baroda Rayon (cheered perhaps by the lower excise duties announced by the Government), Food Specialities and Indrol.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



This sharp turnabout in fortunes on a battlefield that had earlier been littered with the corpses of luckless bears fighting in a bull-dominated market is difficult to explain, especially since the institutions had stopped selling and showed no immediate inclination to return to the market. Indeed, with the monsoons having delivered their bounty and a record kharif crop expected in a few weeks' time, most companies should be expecting bumper returns during the current financial year. But the market often defies such obvious logic, and it is a brave man who will forecast what the immediate future has in store.

Nevertheless, yet another reversal of fortunes may already have taken place, with share prices picking up again in the closing days of the last fortnight. Also, the authorities on the different stock exchanges have relaxed the heavy margins that they had imposed earlier in an effort to restrict speculative purchases. With room thus having been created for buyers to grab shares without paying margins, the sellers might find the ground tilted against them as the share graph begins climbing once again.

The somewhat chastening experience of the past couple of months should teach new players on the market two lessons. The first is that even the most recklessly booming market can be forced to crash by the financial institutions unloading shares worth no more than Rs 30 crore, which is only a tiny fraction of their total holdings. And the second is that the tide never flows in one direction for too long a time; it is certain to be reversed at some point. The trick for those trying to swim with the tide is, of course, to gauge correctly when the tide is about to turn.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1985 HIGH	1985 LOW	CLOSE 5.9.85	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	59.00	29.00	43.50	2.50 –
Associated Cement	610.00	385.00	512.00	22.00 +
Atlas Copco	70.00	37.50	55.00	6.00 –
Associated Bearings	735.00	425.00	690.00	30.00 –
Bajaj Auto	2000.00	855.00	1665.00	185.00 –
Ballarpur	65.00	45.00	48.50	7.00 –
Baroda Rayon	460.00	281.00	435.00	55.00 +
Bata India	88.10	48.00	63.50	2.50 –
Bayer	480.00	305.00	380.00	70.00 –
Best & Crompton	115.00	61.00	96.00	9.00 –
Bharat Forge	95.00	35.50	72.00	4.00 –
Blow Plast	85.00	36.50	68.00	10.00 –
Blue Star	85.00	33.00	80.00	2.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	156.00	66.00	111.00	4.00 –
Brooke Bond	83.00	47.50	57.00	6.00 –
Ceat Tyres	290.00	180.00	255.00	35.00 –
Century Spinning	1310.00	810.00	1120.00	nil
Chloride India	91.00	56.90	77.00	5.00 –
Citurgia	85.00	32.25	58.00	nil
Colgate	318.00	147.00	171.50	1.50 +
Cyanamid	90.00	33.00	56.00	11.00 –
DCM	74.00	18.00	62.50	9.00 –
Dunlop	48.75	22.30	42.00	1.00 –
Elecon	108.00	54.00	85.00	5.00 –
Escorts	102.00	49.87	75.00	15.00 –
Food Specialities	215.00	86.00	177.50	17.50 +
Garware Nylon	56.00	24.50	48.00	1.00 –
Glaxo	79.00	24.00	66.00	1.00 +
G.E. Shipping	36.50	14.25	27.50	1.50 –
Gujarat St Fertilisers	810.00	537.00	685.00	20.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	87.00	53.75	67.00	7.00 –
Hindustan Lever	125.00	51.25	92.00	nil
Hindustan Motors	86.00	37.50	68.50	5.50 –
Indian Dyestuff	390.00	267.50	317.50	2.50 –
Indian Explosives	73.50	33.00	54.50	2.50 –
Indian Hotels	135.00	76.00	105.00	nil
Indian Organic	124.00	50.50	115.00	5.00 +
Indian Rayon	125.00	66.00	108.00	1.00 –
Indrol	250.00	90.50	195.00	20.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	365.00	162.00	325.00	15.00 –
ITC	65.50	29.00	51.50	3.40 –
J K Synthetics	118.00	52.75	94.00	6.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	380.00	128.00	260.00	50.00 –
Kirloskar Oil	38.00	23.00	24.00	1.00 –
Lakme	200.00	74.00	137.50	7.50 –
Larsen & Toubro	175.00	72.00	147.00	2.00 –
Lipton	58.50	26.50	46.00	3.00 –
Lohia Machines	85.00	42.00	62.00	8.00 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	102.00	48.00	73.00	6.00 +
Motor Industries	690.00	321.25	570.00	60.00 –
National Organic	550.00	240.00	437.50	47.50 –
Nirlon	70.00	37.75	50.00	nil
Peico Electronics	99.00	38.40	71.75	4.75 –
Premier Auto	645.00	322.00	535.00	20.00 +
Ranbaxy	127.50	49.00	92.00	5.50 –
Raymond	120.00	59.00	79.00	7.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	95.00	57.00	85.00	nil
Reliance Industries	252.00	120.00	219.00	11.00 –
Sandoz	82.00	31.00	61.00	4.00 –
Shriram Fibres	81.00	34.00	67.00	7.00 –
SPIC	137.00	43.50	102.00	12.00 –
Tata Steel	1195.00	381.00	915.00	70.00 –
Telco	1030.00	409.00	735.00	40.00 –
Vulcan Laval	125.00	64.00	80.00	32.50 –
Zenith Steel	75.00	28.00	60.00	4.00 –
20th Century Leasing	84.00	31.50	51.00	5.00 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.4466	8.3104
Austria	Schilling	100	60.0438	59.7380
Bahrain	Dinar	1	31.8032	31.7603
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.2013	42.1990
Canada	Dollar	1	9.0854	9.0082
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.1589	1.1469
Egypt	Pound	1	14.4347	14.4293
France	Franc	1	1.3956	1.3698
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6041	1.5885
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0732	1.0690
Iran	Rial	100	13.1773	13.1581
Italy	Lira	100	0.6401	0.6392
Japan	Yen	100	5.1177	5.0777
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7024	0.7021
Kuwait	Dinar	1	39.7028	39.6822
Malaysia	Dollar	1	5.0081	4.[illegible]
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.7942	0.78[illegible]
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6439	0.63[illegible]
Netherlands	Guilder	1	3.7766	3.7429
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7631	0.7443
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.4641	5.4248
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0726	0.0721
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4413	0.4409
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.4477	1.4335
Switzerland	Franc	1	5.1452	5.0977
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7039	0.7010
Thailand	Baht	100	44.9531	44.8223
UK	Pound	1	16.2661	16.1472
USA	Dollar	1	12.5475	12.4235
UAE	Dirham	1	3.0972	3.0813
USSR	Rouble	1	14.6078	14.5833
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	4.3122	4.2087

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd. New Delhi, and quoted between the Banks on 10.9.85.

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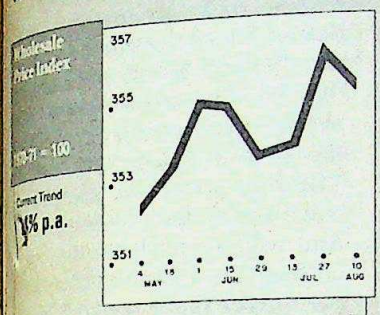
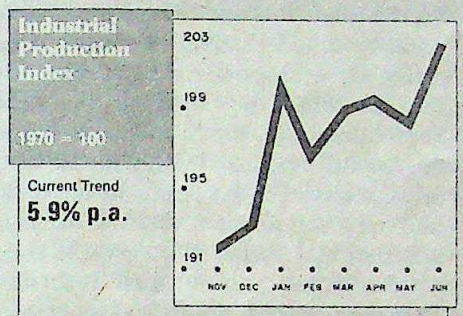
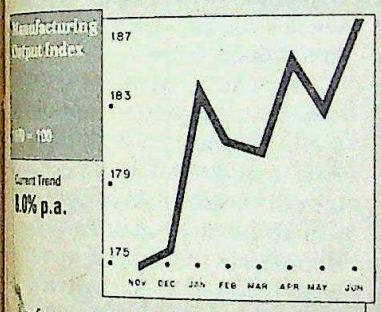
THINGS were a bit rosier last fortnight with wholesale prices having gone back to the long run trend and industrial production rising. Power generation has also increased, as has manufacturing output. Money supply showed a marginal growth, bank credit expanded a bit, and bullion prices continued to fall. *ALL DATA are seasonally adjusted. The current trend is computed on the basis of the past six months data to which a regression is fitted.*



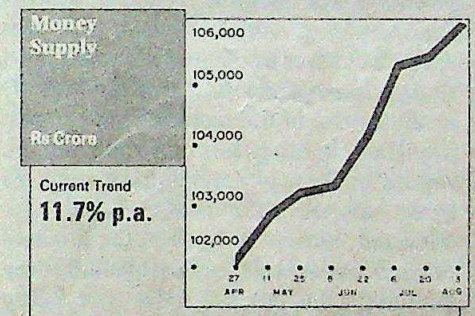
Wholesale prices fell back to the long run trend owing to drops in the prices of manufactured products, food products and non-food articles.



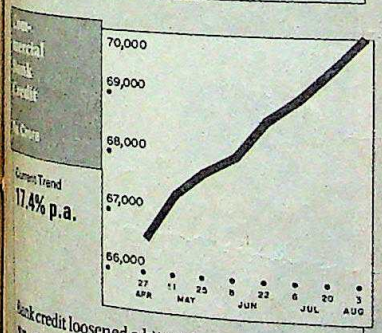
Industrial production rose by 1.8 per cent in June owing to an increase in power generated and, more importantly, in manufacturing output.



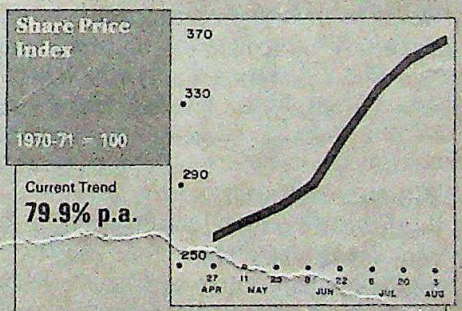
Manufactures, which had dropped by 1.8 per cent, rose by 2.3 in June and contributed to the current trend rising from 7.6 to 8 per cent



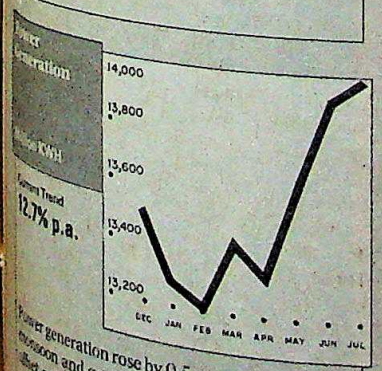
It showed a fortnightly growth of 0.47 per cent which was largely due to a 0.84 per cent growth in commercial bank credit to business.



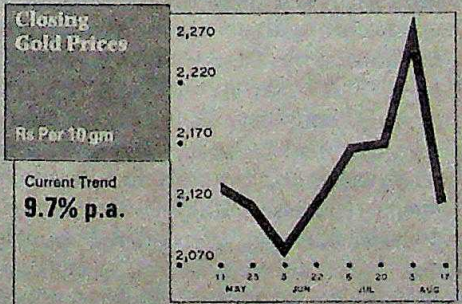
Bank credit loosened a bit with an increase of 0.8 per cent, which was above the long term trend.



The share market rose by 2.5 per cent, due to upswings in the scrips of transport equipment, silk, woollen and rayon textile companies.



Power generation rose by 0.5 per cent due to the monsoon and growth in hydel generation; this offset a 0.4 per cent fall in thermal power.



Gold prices fell sharply by 7.2 per cent last fortnight, continuing the reversal of the sharply rising trend in the previous month.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Items with maximum growth in April 1985

	% Growth
Locomotives	89.63
Earth Moving Machinery	86.40
Metallurgical Machinery	67.61
Agricultural Machinery	65.23
Textile Machinery	47.49
Tea	40.70
Industrial Instruments	37.29
Shipbuilding	36.12
Special Steels	34.98
Photographic Instruments	32.66
Dairy Machinery	30.24
Machine Tools	26.49
Vaccum Pumps & Compressors	26.47
Typewriters	25.84
Jute Machinery	23.69
Motor Cars	22.91
Fine Chemicals	18.82
Skip Hoists & Cranes etc.	17.64
Scientific Instruments	17.51
Saw Mills	17.33
Surgical Products	17.22
Hard Board	16.82
Electrical Machinery	16.73
Mathematical Instruments	16.62
Iron & Steel Casting Forging	16.45
Artificial Leather & Oil Cloth	15.40
Generation & Transmission Equipment	13.50
Vegetable & Animal Oils	13.37
Air-conditioners & Refrigerators	12.81
Chemical & Pharmaceutical Machinery	12.25
Transport Equipment	10.93
Matches	10.88
Sewing & Knitting Machines	10.84
Jewellery	10.53
Storage Batteries	10.35
Dairy Products	10.33
Tea Machinery	9.55
Electrical Lamps	9.36
Nuts & Bolts	9.33
Telecommunications	9.17
Motorcycles & Bicycles	8.74
Cotton Fabrics Decentralised Sector	8.36
Insulators	8.00
Inorganic Chemicals	6.98
Grain Mill Products	6.66
Bakery Products	6.23

The growth of 80 series with a total weight of 44.657 has accelerated. The growth of 39 series with a total weight of 49.860 has decelerated 119 series listed.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1984
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand tonnes, July	3369	2887
Fertiliser Thousand tonnes, July	451	408
Electricity Generated Million Kwh, July	13882	12707
Termal Plant Load Factor Per Cent, July	47.0	41.9
Call Money Rate Per Cent, July	10.0	9.87

—Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP/ICIM

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CRICKET

Taming the Devils

CRICKET in Sri Lanka resembles its rumbustious form in the Caribbeans in more ways than one. The grounds are picturesque and ringed with palm trees, and the beer-guzzling crowds boisterous and forever in a holiday mood, with loud pop music to entertain them during the lunch and tea intervals. More vitally, the cricketers are tall, dark, and ruthless, as the Indian cricket team suddenly discovered last fortnight in the course of what had developed into a disastrous tour.

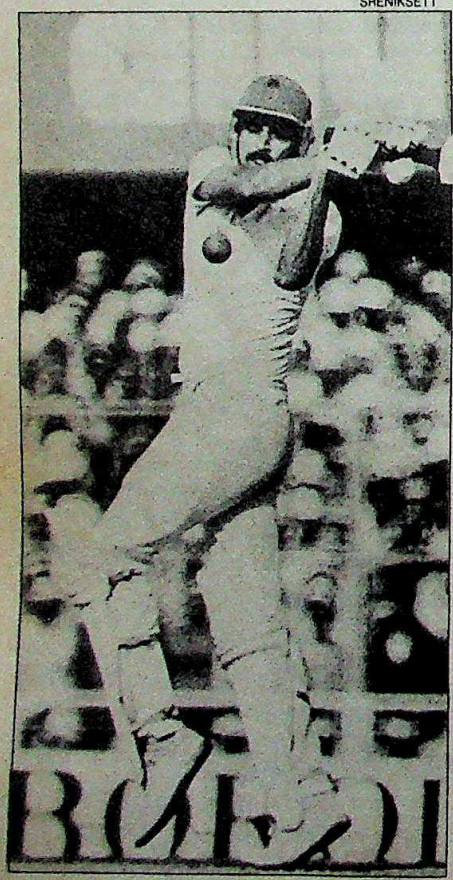
Landing in Colombo three weeks ago with the tag of world champions, Kapil's Devils seemed to have forgotten that modern cricket is tough and demanding. And faced with the pressures on a losing side, they began blaming bad umpiring and other extraneous reasons for their remarkably poor showing in the first-ever official cricket series in the island. But the tour record permitted few such excuses: a one-day international had been won by the skin of their teeth, and the first Test drawn by the grace of the rain God. But two brief showers on the final day of the second Test failed to prevent defeat, and the humiliated world champions had to admit that the Sri Lankans had been in the driver's seat almost right through the tour. So when they trooped out of the Sarawanamuthu Stadium at the end of the second Test, defeat writ large on their faces, many of the veterans in the team had the grace to admit that the babes of international cricket fully deserved their maiden victory in only their 14th test. They had played the way test cricket should be played—hard and inspired.

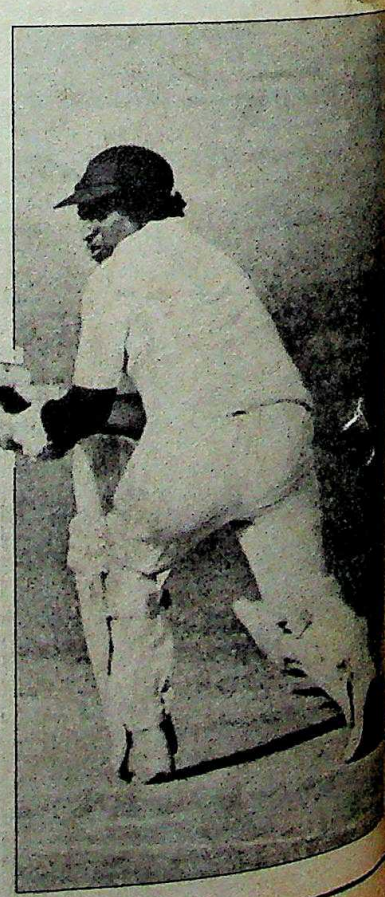
Even as shock and disbelief enveloped the Indian camp, many of the veterans admitted that they had failed to do just that. A team which floored just two difficult catches in the entire Benson and Hedges tournament had dropped over 10 in the course of the second Test, captain Kapil Dev claiming the pride of place in the rogues' gallery by dropping as many as three catches. "We fielded badly," he admitted later. "I think our bowlers bowled just as well. But what could they do when the catches were not being taken?" Veteran Sunil Gavaskar said: "It became so bad that we even stopped smiling in embarrassment after dropping a catch, for no one knew whose turn it would be next to drop a catch." The same lack of application and character was evident in the way the batsmen folded up in all four Test innings, barely getting past 250 once and totalling fewer than 1,000 runs for the loss of 40 wickets. Batsmen with substantial reputations to defend found their armour pierced repeatedly by the Sri Lankan attack. Three wickets fell for six runs at the start of one innings, and if these had succumbed to good bowling there was no such excuse for the collapse of four wickets in the space of 49 balls later in the same innings, making a mockery of Kapil's prediction of a 75-run lead for India. The second innings was even more pathetic. Greenhorn opener Lalchand Rajput, rattled by a bouncer-barrage, surrendered tamely; last year's superstar Mohammed Azharuddin committed *harakiri* by hooking in a fit of rage so apparent it was visible from the press-box, and Shastri, that doughty defender of Lahore and Melbourne, followed a harmless ball outside the off-stump to his doom as if engaged in giving the slips catching practice.

In contrast, Sri Lanka played to a plan within their limitations. Their fast bowlers are pacy, inspired and accurate, not the most hostile in the world. True they made generous use of the bouncer but they never threatened the batsmen in the way a Malcolm Marshall would. "They are good," said Gavaskar. "They bowl a nice line outside the off-stump. And with so much one-day cricket the batsmen have forgotten how to leave the ball outside the off-stump. They all want to nudge it and get a single, and only succeed in getting out." Twenty-seven of the 40 Indian wickets to fall were snapped up behind the batsman — 16 of them by wicket-keeper Silva who was having a marvellous series.

The Sri Lankan batsmen also responded positively to the team's game-plan in crucial stages of the game. Aravinda de Silva almost certainly went into the history books when he hooked a six off the first ball of the innings from Kapil Dev in the first Test, when Sri Lanka were engaged in a run chase. de Silva's exhilarating partnership with Roy Dias

SRENIKSETT





Rival captains Kapil (left) and Mendis: one-sided encounter

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on the fourth day of the second Test enabled skipper Duleep Mendis to declare with enough time to bowl India out.

Team manager M.L.Jaisimha and Kapil Dev admit that the team has so far been unable to get into top gear. On the fourth day of the second Test, a disgusted Kapil was overheard saying in the dressing-room: "Something is wrong, nothing is jelling on this tour." Jaisimha, his forehead creased with worry, felt similarly helpless. This, for once was a tour not marred by a Kapil-Gavaskar fight or unseemly shenanigans over team selection. And the players could not complain of an excess of cricket.

Yet they found themselves so woefully short of fighting spirit that Kapil had to remind his players at a team meeting on the eve of the final day of the second Test: "This is a Test match and should be taken seriously. This is like our final examination, how can we take it lightly? For nine days out of ten in the Test series so far they have dominated us. Let us change that now." The exhortation was in vain. And though Kapil Dev set an example of sorts by walloping the Sri Lanka attack for 78 runs, this was not Tunbridge Wells. The bowling had more variety than that of the limited Zimbabwean attack and no other batsman barring Sivaramakrishna, to a lesser extent, showed Kirmani-like staying qualities.

But disappointment turned into rage and led to Kapil's angry outburst at the umpires during the post-match press conference. Asked if his team had been outplayed in all departments of the game, batting, bowling and fielding, he angrily added, "... and umpiring." He went on to predict sardonically: "This Sri Lankan team played very well here, but they will not look so good when they go to play outside." The Indian skipper bristled when asked whether the Indian batsmen did not have to blame themselves for their plight. "What can you do when the other man stands in front of you holding a gun? The first hour of the game was crucial today and they got the breakthrough, in the form of the wickets of Srikkanth and Vengsarkar, with the help of the umpires. I was standing there and do not think that Viswanath was out. Just see how many LBW decisions have been given against us and how many against them? If umpiring remains like this we have no hope in the third Test also."

WHILE Kapil could be faulted for his broadside, it must be said in fairness to him and his teammates that they were getting a raw deal from the umpires. Srikkanth's leg-before decision was open to question, and there were many who doubted that Vengsarkar had touched the ball which Silva caught. There was a deviation from the pad and for seconds after the umpire's finger went up Vengsarkar stood his ground, pointing at his right pad. Viswanath could claim the benefit of the doubt in the same manner, as could Gavaskar in the first innings, when he was given out stumped for only the second time in his career. But that hardly explains the collapse.

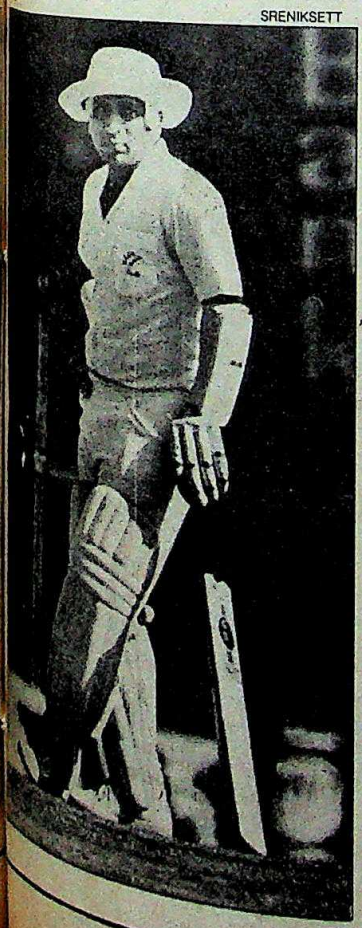
What made matters worse for the visitors was the leeway the umpires gave the Sri Lankan pacemen in merrily overstepping the crease. "This is much worse than what Sarfaraz used to get away with in Pakistan," said a senior Indian batsman, pointing out that the Sri Lankan pacemen were customarily overstepping by almost a yard — something that was even visible from the press box. Time and again, Gavaskar diplomatically drew the umpires' attention to this by using his bat to draw a new crease far ahead of the bowling crease at the non-striker's end. "Imagine what happens to the morale of the non-striker when he sees the bowler overstep so often and the umpire says nothing," said Kapil. "Look at the scoreboard and it tells the whole story. In over a hundred overs they have been no-balled only twice."

The Indian team at one stage seemed to be battling the umpires instead of Mendis' men. Srikkanth, usually a happy-go-lucky slogger, was having a particularly miserable time, perhaps because of his ethnicity. He had an angry exchange with umpire Vidanagama who, angered by his appeal against the light failing on the fourth day, told him to "bloody well get on with the game". This followed a similar exchange with Maninder Singh, who as an extra picked up the ball innocently during a drinks break. The same umpire told him to "bloody well" leave the ball there. Jaisimha promptly lodged a written protest against the use of "unparliamentary language" by the umpire.

With so much bitterness it is unlikely that the last word on umpiring has been said. On tours where things are not going right, it is easy for teams to develop a persecution complex about umpiring. But that only makes life more difficult for them in the field. The Indians can only salvage their reputation by going out and winning the third Test the only way Test matches can be won—by giving no quarter and expecting none.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Colombo

SRENIKSETT



Gavaskar (left) and Roy Dias: hard lessons

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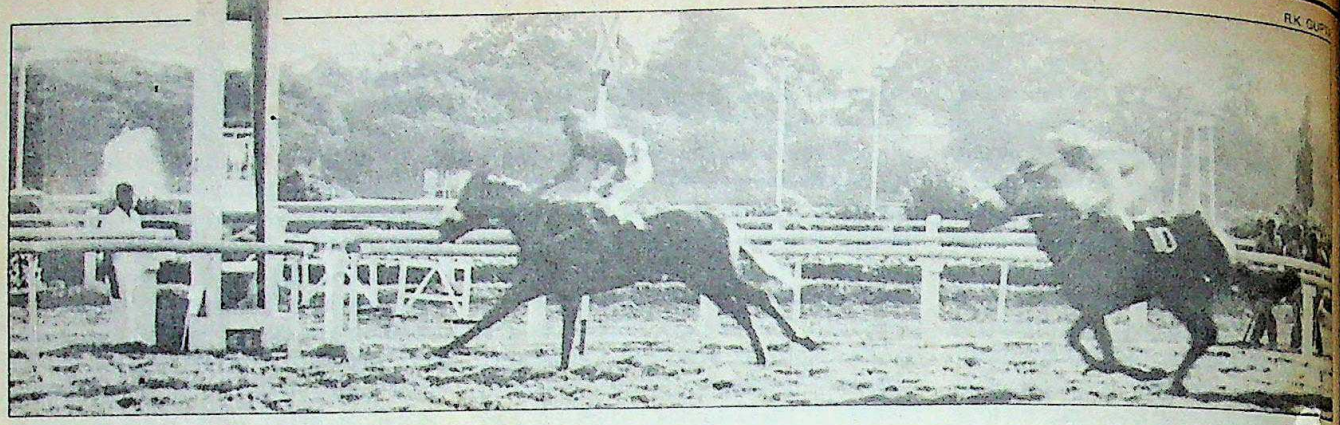

Certain Smile winning from *Gorerdhan* disputed race

BTC

Reining in

SINCE August 16, the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC), the country's biggest racing circuit, has been enveloped in a shroud of silence that is infinitely more deafening than the raucous reverberations heard on popular race days. What's more, the shutdown has come right in the middle of the BTC's bustling racing season, causing panic in the ranks of those responsible for the running of the races.

The panic is, however, somewhat self-imposed. In what is easily the most traumatic—and dramatic—setback in the club's 23-year-old history, the state Government on August 16 suspended horse-racing at the BTC following investigations by the police into the alleged rigging of two races by none other than the club's powerful stewards. The investigation report indicated clearly that there was definite evidence of "rigging" by some of the stewards but a lack of enough facts prevented the police from officially charging them.

The suspension order led almost inevitably, to a fierce fracas between BTC officials and the state Government, the outcome of which is likely to change character and face of horse-racing in the city. The two government orders passed are controversial enough to ensure that eventuality. The first stipulates that "no race-horse owner should be a steward in the managing committee of the club" and the second holds that stewards will not be allowed to bet on the races either directly or indirectly.

Though largely welcomed by the club's 344 members and the swelling number of punters, the orders, specially the one barring race-horse owners from becoming stewards, predictably kicked up clouds of dust in racing circles. In the BTC context, the immediate implication was that four of the nine racing stewards, who happened to be horse-owners as well, would have to resign from the club's managing committee. Conversely, it also meant that horse owners, the most powerful lobby in Indian racing circles, would no longer be eligible for the pivotal posts of club stewards. The stewards not only control racing in the clubs but are also responsible for enforcing the rules and are the final arbiters of disputed races.

The loudest neighs of protest, therefore, emanated from the Karnataka Race Horse Owners Association whose President Hajee Abdul Sattar Sait charged that "not allowing us to be stewards would mean eliminating the people who have the biggest stake in the game". Sait went a length further by filing a writ petition in the high court questioning the powers of the Government to impose such rules on an autonomous club. But the Government promptly cracked the whip again by withdrawing the licence of the club to conduct off-course betting till its orders were carried out. That was a pill too bitter to swallow. Off-course betting is the most profitable aspect of racing and BTC rakes in an average of Rs 1.25 lakh a day in earnings from the 217 off-course betting days in the season.

The crack-down appeared to be having the desired effect. Last fortnight, all four stewards-cum-race-horse owners resigned from the managing committee. Said Kumar Siddanna, ex-chairman of the club and one of the four: "We are quitting not because we think the Government is in the right but in the larger interests of the club. We don't want it to lose any more revenue."

However, the Government was still not through. Its next move was to announce that off-course betting would remain suspended till the club incorporated the new rules as articles of its constitution, a measure, it claimed, to ensure non-violation of its orders in the future. It then hammered the point home by announcing that the proposed racing commission would not be set up till the club held an extraordinary general body meeting and ratified the new rules. Pushed to the rails, the club had little choice but to comply.

While the club officials continued to chaff at the bit, a majority of the punters have been backing the government horse. As P.G.Halarnkar, city police commissioner and himself a member of the club managing committee, said: "I have received numerous complaints from the public about how stewards were interfering with the results of races and contrary to the code of conduct expected, were even placing heavy bets on some races."

Two races in particular sent punters galloping to the objection box. In the first, held in November last, the stewards revised the final placings despite the fact that neither the jockey nor the trainer of the losing horse had complained. In February, *Certain Smile* ridden by jockey Warren Singh, romped home by two lengths in the Linganmakki Plate. But the jockey riding the second-placed horse, *Goverdhan*, raised an objection claiming that Singh had cut into his path, forcing him to check his horse. The objection was upheld and *Goverdhan* placed first. What queered the pitch was the fact that *Goverdhan* is jointly owned by two of the turf club's stewards.

For the BTC, it has proved a costly lesson. Already, the club has lost around Rs 20 lakh in revenue from off-course earnings and, strapped for cash, it now faces the haunting prospect of cancellation of its winter races. Club officials are making frenzied efforts to get the Government to soften its stand, but with the odds stacked against them, only the very foolhardy will place bets on who will canter home the winner.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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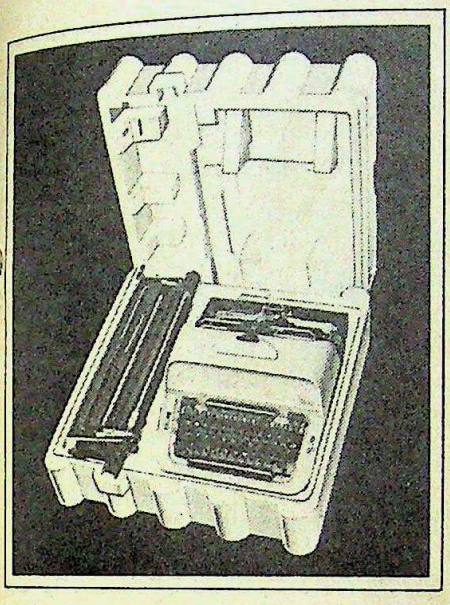
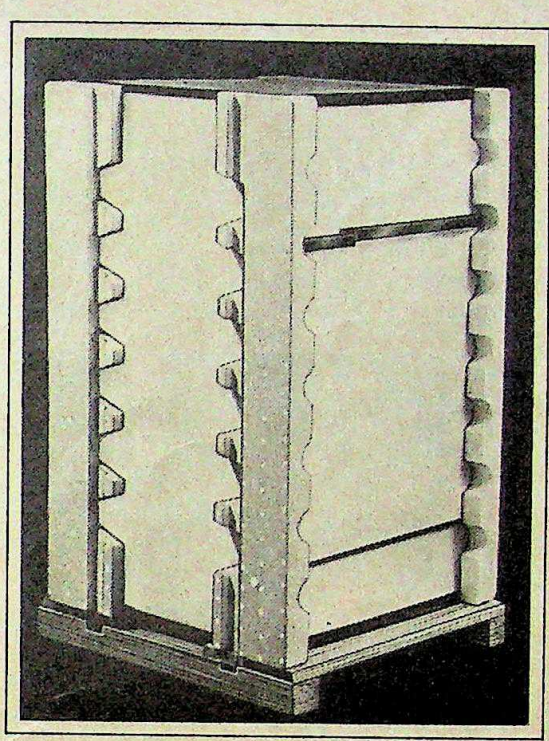
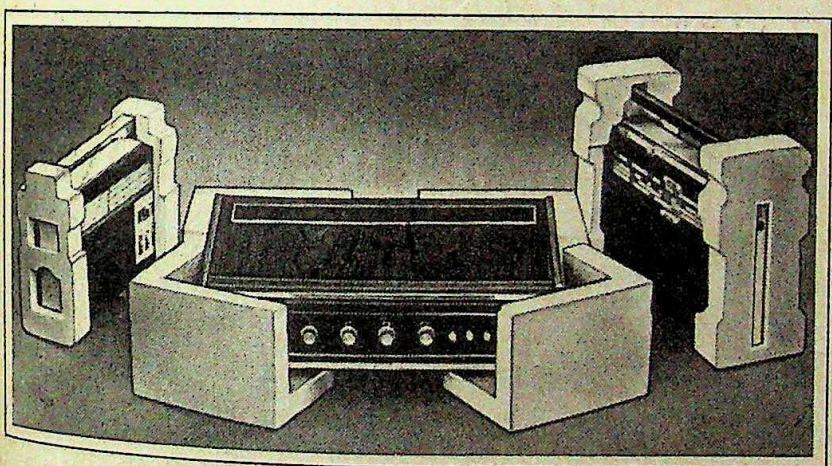
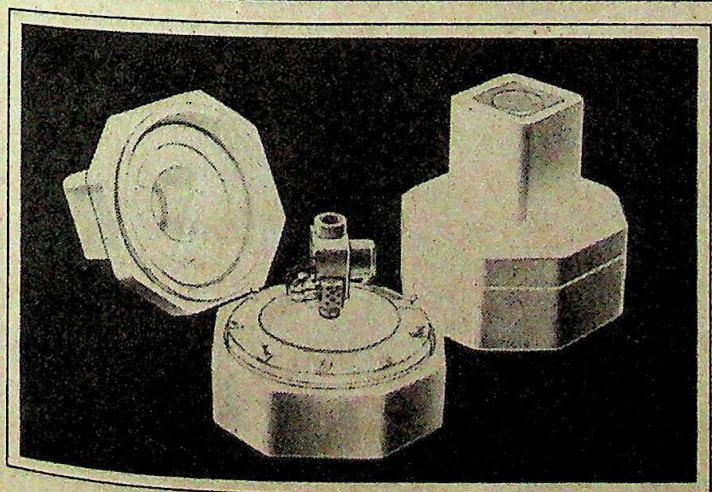
Looks good- performs better-









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BIHAR

Varsity Row

IT IS not without reason that Bihar is called the graveyard of education. If anything, it has more than earned the sobriquet with its regular and unfailing monopoly of education scandals and controversies. To the state's dismal academic record was added yet another black mark last fortnight when Bihar University Vice-Chancellor Dr L. K. Mishra was unceremoniously sacked on charges of corruption, misuse of official machinery and funds, irregular appointments and mismanagement.

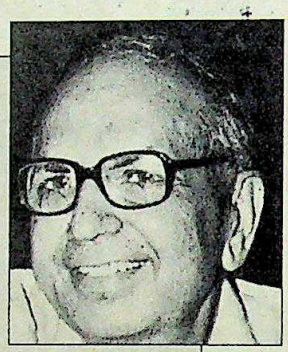
Even as his dismissal sent shock waves through academic circles, Mishra entered into an unseemly row with Governor P. Venkatsubbiah, who had taken the decision in his capacity as chancellor of the university. Asserting that the chancellor's action was "illegal and whimsical", Mishra said: "I offer myself for an open enquiry by a high court judge and am prepared to face the consequences. In the circumstances, the chancellor also must be prepared to resign the high office that he holds if the charges levelled by him are not proved."

Though Venkatsubbiah was well within his rights in acting as he did, Mishra alleged that the action was arbitrary and aimed at "creating a smokescreen to cover up his (Venkatsubbiah's) prejudices and vindictiveness." Mishra went on to allege that the chancellor was settling scores with him. He claimed that the chancellor was cut up with him because he could not have honorary doctorates conferred on Telugu poet Seshendra Sharma and his wife.

But whatever Mishra may be saying now, the allegations against him had not piled up overnight. He had been under severe criticism for quite some time from the Bihar University Teachers' Association, the University Departments Teachers' Association and the Nagrik Parishad of Muzaffarpur. Among other things, he was accused of ordering Rs 3 lakh worth of paper from an Allahabad firm without inviting tenders. It was also said that he had sanctioned unauthorised construction works costing nearly Rs 72 lakh, besides irregular transfers and appointments for a "consideration".

According to the Raj Bhawan communique: "Oral complaints had also been received by the chancellor. Enquiries by the former chancellor, Dr A. R. Kidwai, had indicated that there was a *prima facie* case against Dr Mishra." It added that the summary of charges against Mishra had been prepared under the instructions of the ex-chancellor. It also pointed out that a show-cause notice had been given to Mishra in April to which he had replied only in May, followed by further clarifications later. These were considered by the chancellor in detail after taking into consideration all the legal implications of the case. "The majority of the charges against Dr Mishra stand proved," the communique concluded.

Venkatsubbiah



Mishra

Even as his dismissal sent shock waves through academic circles, Mishra entered into an unseemly row with Governor P. Venkatsubbiah, who had taken the decision in his capacity as chancellor of the university.

But there were quite a few people besides Mishra himself, who questioned the chancellor's action. One former vice-chancellor said that allegations alone could not become the basis of summary dismissal of a vice-chancellor. If allegations carried such a lot of weight, then no vice-chancellor could hope to survive for a day, however clean or upright he may be, he said.

However, Education Department sources contended that the chancellor had violated the Bihar State Universities Act by not holding an enquiry before dismissing Mishra. Moreover, they pointed out that merely consulting the chief minister did not mean that the chancellor had consulted the Government as the Act required. He ought to have taken the education minister into confidence, they argued. They went on to point out that Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey had given only his verbal consent, which too could be ascribed to his own personal and political reasons, since Mishra is known to belong to former chief minister Jagannath Mishra's camp.

Rebutting the various charges against him, the ousted vice-chancellor said: "The charges of misappropriation of funds are baseless and mischievous. Not a paisa has been spent without the sanction of the (university) syndicate and the finance adviser and without the prescribed financial procedures."

However, teachers' association sources said even if Mishra had obtained official sanction, it did not take away from the gravity of the charges as all the university bodies were full of Mishra's yes-men and all those who opposed him were weeded out. Mishra lent this allegation some credence when he said that some of his rivals in league with local politicians had engineered his ouster. Among the names he mentioned was that of Professor Raghunath Jha, who was the university's registrar until not long ago.

Jha, on his part, dismissed Mishra's claim as "rubbish". "Everything was regularised on paper," he said, referring to Mishra's alleged malpractices. Mishra, who was principal of a college for 18 years, has faced enquiries twice during his six-year tenure as chief of the Bihar School Examination Board. The first enquiry had fallen through as the commission headed by the then Patna high court judge Nand Lal Untwalia failed to complete its work. In March 1972, a second enquiry was entrusted to a commission headed by Justice Sarwar Ali. The commission submitted its report in August 1975, finding Mishra guilty on a number of counts. The report was submitted when Jagannath Mishra was in power and was shelved.

Mishra then went on to hold various important posts and his progress was ascribed to his mentor, Jagannath Mishra. But in Bihar's politics-ridden educational scene, it seems fair to assume that Mishra picked the wrong godfather for himself.

—FARZAND AHMED

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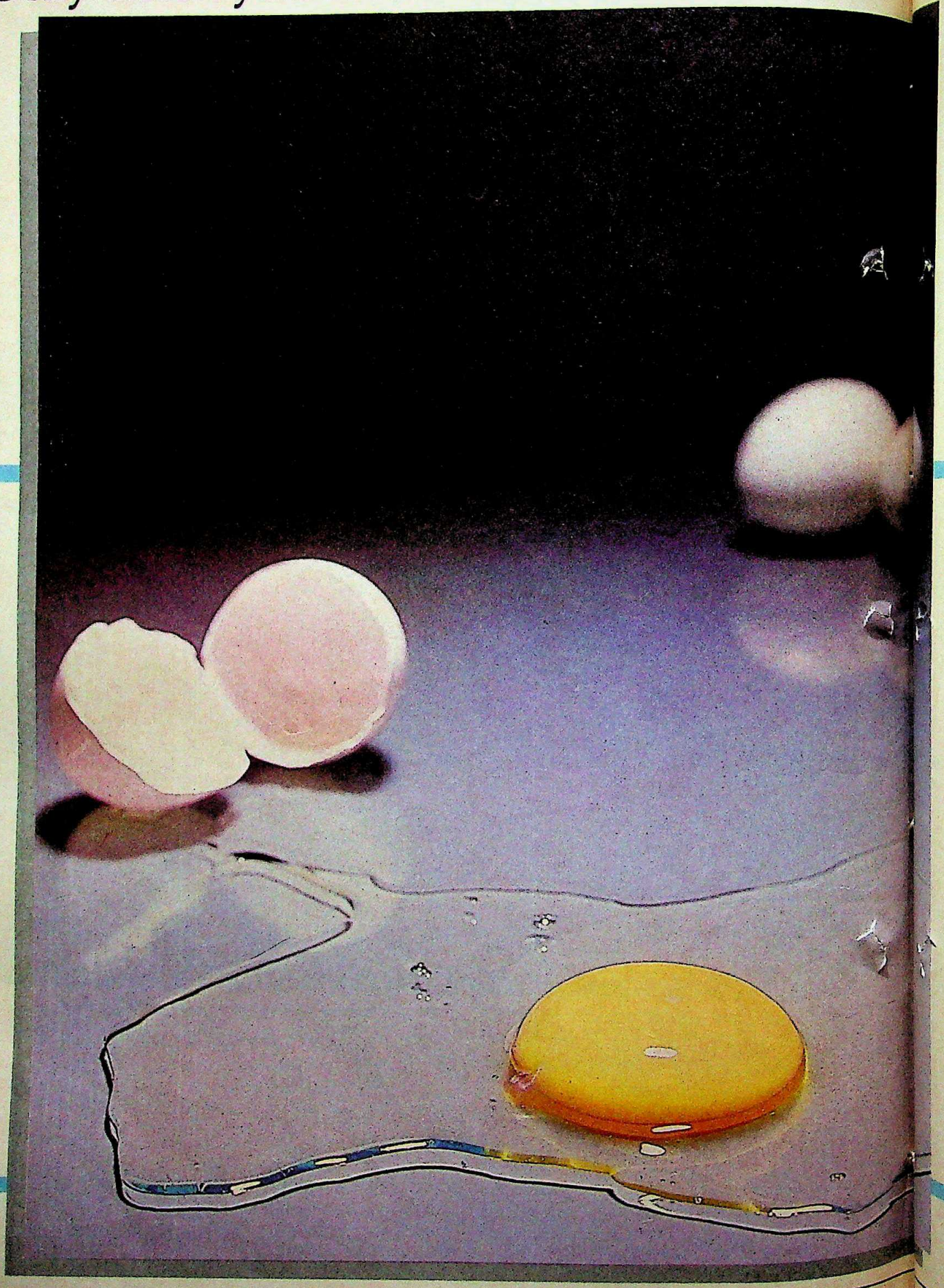

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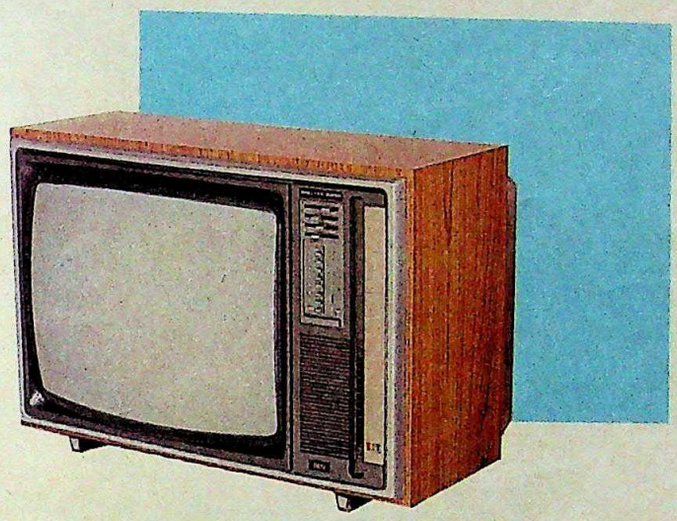

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MYSORE PALACE

A Right Royal Battle

IT'S TURNING out to be a riches to rags story. But for a man who owes the Central Government Rs 30 crore by way of unpaid taxes, Srikanta Datta Narsimharaja Wadiyar, the chubby scion of the late Mysore maharajah, is surprisingly unruffled. On the contrary he seemed delighted when last fortnight the Income Tax Department announced that it was provisionally taking control of two of his palaces including the Mysore Palace and would dispose of these if Wadiyar did not cough up his dues.

The drastic move could reduce Wadiyar, who only this year was elected to the Lok Sabha, to a pauper. But he seemed most unconcerned. Instead he was more worried about reducing his sizeable bulk of 121 kg to what he thinks is a trim 90 kg. In a bid to slim down the dhoti-clad Wadiyar, wearing a printed cotton shirt with two buttons open exposing his voluminous chest, now takes long morning walks alongwith his wife, Pramoda Devi, in the Mysore Palace gardens that soon may not be his.

Earlier he had dispatched a letter, bearing the former maharajah's insignia of two lions, to the Income Tax Department asking it to collect his dues from the state Archaeology Department which is looking after a major portion of the Mysore Palace. Nine years ago it was Wadiyar who had requested the state Government to manage the massive three-storeyed palace till he could afford to maintain it. The Archaeology Department had since then opened a section of the palace for visitors and charged an entrance fee of two rupees each.

Wadiyar, who lives in another wing of the palace, now contends that the Department had so far collected Rs 5 crore as gate fee without giving him a share of it. He wanted this amount to be remitted to the Income Tax department towards payment of his dues. Denying any impending financial crisis the 32-year-old former prince said confidently: "I will repay all my dues. The Income Tax department order saves me the bother of collecting the money from the Archaeology Department. Otherwise I would have had to file a suit against it and that would mean spending Rs 45 lakh on stamp paper itself."

The sheer audacity of Wadiyar's claim caught the Archaeology Department officials by surprise. The department, housed in what was formerly the maharajah's soda factory, is located a stone's throw away from where Wadiyar takes his morning walk. Seated inside, Dr A. Sundara, director of archaeology, said indignantly: "What people don't know is that we are spending more money on maintenance of the palace than what we get from gate collections. We have never made any profit so far." He points out that

The Mysore Palace (right) and Wadiyar: unruffled

Photographs by RAJ CHENGAPPA

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le last year the department spent Rs 45 to maintain the palace, it had re- ed only Rs 35 lakh from gate ections.

In fact maintaining the palace is a ly and painstaking business as the rtment has realised to its dismay. ently when 44 pillars of the Durbar in the palace had to be recoated with gold foil, the estimate worked out to 3.5 lakh. It is spending a whopping Rs akh to rewire the whole palace. The rtment has 24 sweepers to keep the e clean, 34 gardeners to maintain gardens and 30 electricians for the ting arrangements. Another 65 po- men patrol the palace, which among er valuables has the famous gold Pea- throne weighing 240 kg.

The Archaeology department has asked the law secretary to examine egality of Wadiyar's claims. But what made many government officials sus- ous is the alacrity with which Wadiyar, after he was elected an MP, has ed to settle his long pending debts. n his father died in 1974 Wadiyar, the only son, not only inherited four palaces including the ones at Mysore and Bangalore now taken over by the Income Tax Department, but also had to pay up Rs 20 crore by way of estate duty and unpaid income tax and wealth tax. Since then his personal dues have mounted too and now in all he has to pay Rs 35 crore to Rs 40 crore in taxes. State officials view Wadiyar's latest tactic as a bid to not only regain control of the palaces at Mysore and Bangalore but also to settle his debts—all in one shot.

> **"I will repay all my dues. The Income Tax Department order saves me the bother of collecting the money from the Archaeology Department."**
>
> NARSIMHARAJA WADIYAR

Both the palaces have never ceased to be subjects of controversy. After his father's death Wadiyar wanted to form a public charitable trust to run the Mysore Palace but the move fell through when his stepmother Satyapremkumari, the maharajah's first wife, refused to sign the trust deed. When the maharajah, Jayaramchandra Wadiyar was alive, he wanted to convert the Bangalore Palace, which is modelled after the famous Windsor Castle in England, into a hotel. He entered into a partnership with Chama Raju, a civil works contractor, but the deal fell through when the state Government refused permission. Since then it has been hired for film shootings and even David Lean shot a few scenes in it for *A Passage To India*. Right now Wadiyar is locked in a battle for control of the palace with Chama Raju's family who claim a share of the grounds.

But with the state Government keen on converting both the palaces into public monuments Wadiyar is going to find it difficult to regain control of them. The Government is unlikely to entrust Wadiyar with the management of the Mysore Palace. Sundara says: "Because of the huge costs of maintenance only the Government can look after it properly. Also it needs expertise to preserve the palace in its original character and the Archaeology Department is best equipped to do so." The Government fears that Wadiyar would only use the palaces to earn enough money to clear up his tax debts.

Wadiyar is upset that the Government thinks he would not be able to look after his palace. These days he makes it a point to show his visitors how he has been maintaining his wing of the palace and claims that the department is slowly destroying the original character of the palace. As an example he points to the fresh paint used by the department to coat the Durbar Hall walls which he says is nowhere near the original shade. Wadiyar asserts: "My intentions are certainly not commercial in nature. We are conscious of the need to preserve the palace and we would be able to maintain it better than the Government does.

But the Government is unwilling to take his word for it and a right royal battle for control of the palaces seem to be on the cards. For Wadiyar the stakes are even higher. The outcome would determine whether he could live as a prince or as a pauper.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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FOOTBALL

The New Mercenaries

CALCUTTA is a city of strange paradoxes, football being the foremost. The city started competition football in 1893, only 30 years after the Football Association (FA) was founded in Britain and 21 years after championship matches were first held in the country where the game originated. As early as 1911, India created history when a home team of "natives", Mohun Bagan, defeated the true blue East York Club.

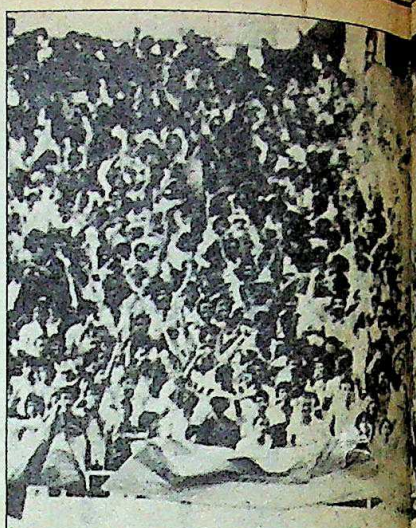
The city's obsessive involvement with football has, however, transformed the character of the game into a gladiatorial contest. Earlier this year, 150 spectators were knifed or stoned in group clashes after an exhibition match of the Calcutta Football League between East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting—the two clubs that, with Mohun Bagan, form the ruling trinity of football in the city. Soccer violence is not the only change: the name of the new game is money and vast sums now change hands under the negotiating table as transfer fees. Not surprisingly, the top stars on Calcutta's soccer maidans are foreigners, ostensibly students, playing full-time professional football for the big clubs. From a maximum seasonal earning of Rs 20,000 a decade ago, players are now netting upwards of Rs 1.5 lakh for a season's contract, plus expenses. Curiously, despite the incursion of television and the deterioration in the quality of football on display, more and more spectators are turning up at the grounds. Principal Correspondent SUMIT MITRA *reports from Calcutta on the game's new priorities in the acknowledged soccer capital of the country.*

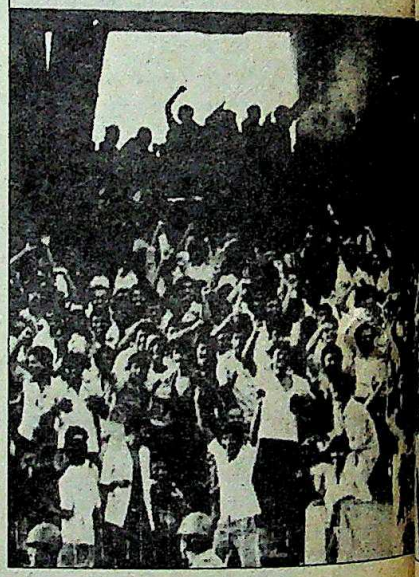
MAROON and green. Red and yellow. Black and white. Even a schoolboy in Calcutta knows what these combinations stand for. Maroon and green are the colours of Mohun Bagan club, established in 1889; red-and-yellow is East Bengal of course, this year's reigning monarch of the *maidans*, and the most enduring institution of the men from the "other Bengal", founded in 1920; black and white are the colours of the 94-year-old Mohammedan Sporting Club, which gets its frenzied support from the Muslims who form one-seventh of Calcutta's population.

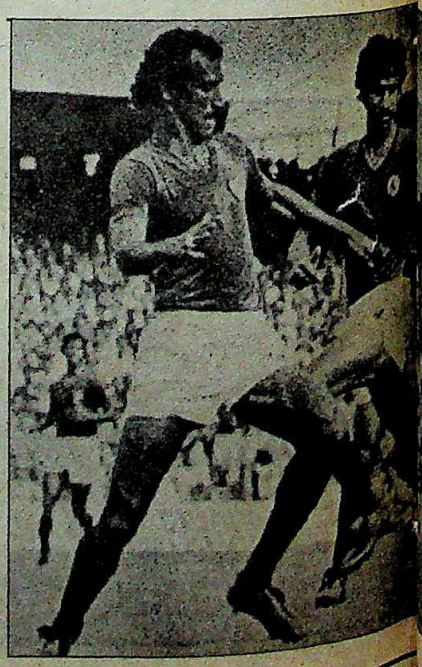
Right up to February, these titans will battle each other at the new, imposing Salt Lake Stadium to the roar of a 100,000-strong audience—yelling, cheering, swearing, lighting fire-crackers, storming through the fencing, and occasionally indulging in bloody clashes on the long trek back to the city through the marshy wastes of the urban fringe now being reclaimed, where the stadium is situated. One such soccer "classic", between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, was aborted last month when the former, unable to cope with large casualties among its players, gave East Bengal a walkover. And even the ritualistic victory was witnessed by the club's 20,000 fans. In July, when East Bengal beat Mohammedan 2-1 after a cliff-hanger of a match, knife-wielding supporters of the losing side invited East Bengal supporters, armed with brickbats and iron rods, to a grisly duel that went on for four hours and left 150 injured. Last fortnight, when Mohun Bagan and Mohammedan met again for the return match of the Calcutta Football League, the Calcutta Police had to deploy a special commando unit of 200 men, besides 1,500 cops on regular "football duty" to keep order on and off the field.

Calcutta has always been drunk on football. But this year it seems determined to outdo all previous records. Despite the rise in ticket prices—the maximum costing Rs 10 instead of Rs 5 for an exhibition match—and doubling of seating capacity, the city's hunger for watching football seems to be hardly assuaged. With only four exhibition matches held so far this season, Rs 19 lakh have already been grossed from ticket sales whereas last year's earning from 20 exhibition matches was only Rs 12 lakh.

And there is more, much more money for the players in the soccer sweepstake even though the gate collection goes not to the clubs but to the state Government's coffers and to the All-India Football Federation (AIFF), the national governing body for the game. Two years ago, Prasanta Bannerjee, the Mohun Bagan linkman, made waves when he was reportedly offered one lakh rupees to switch loyalty from East Bengal. This year, as many as 11 players are known to have earned between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1.7 lakh each (*see box*) and at least 15 more are tantalisingly close to the six-digit borderline. Only a part of the money comes from







Rowdy fans at Salt Lake during a classic encounter between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal: heavy price

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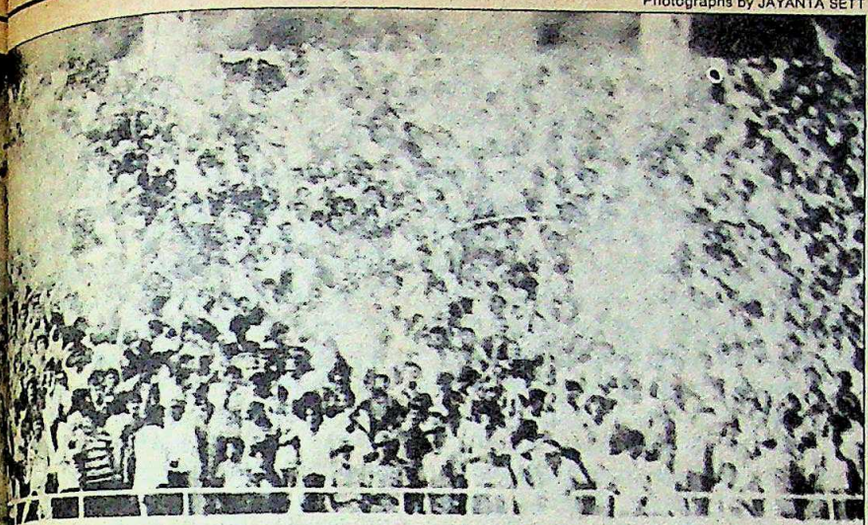

the clubs' subscription revenue, the rest coming from donors who off-load their surplus wealth, often without keeping any record. Says Aslam Khan, Mohammedan Sporting's spirited striker: "So long only cricket had money. But things are changing fast. There is already a lot of money for those who deserve it."

It is in fact the burgeoning fan-strength of the clubs, particularly that of East Bengal, the most broad-based among all three, that has caused this surge in interest. The club got over its nine-year-long hibernation this year when it hired the best line-up of players and went on a winning spree, clinching at first the Federation Cup, the national best-club honour, and then the championship, decided in Colombo last month, in the central Asian zone for the Asian Club trophy. It is now poised to make a clean sweep of the Calcutta Football League. The fact of East Bengal, the favourite of the teeming millions, being through a run of luck, coupled with the Salt Lake Stadium, the largest in the country, expanding its capacity, resulted in the spurt in soccer-watching in a city that had always been hooked on club soccer anyway. "The people in Calcutta," says football commentator Arijit Sen, "go crazy over football; but they get crazier over their favourite clubs."

The club fanaticism, and the will to win at all costs, have gone to such extremes this year that soccer officials—unlike in the past—are no longer interested in catching football talents young, grooming them up to grow and join the big league. The accent now is on buying players, as Sen says, "off the shelf". The inevitable spin-offs from this policy are:

► the three big clubs are now only looking for proven talents, either in Calcutta or outside, and have no room for youngsters who can form the second or the third line-up;

► this season's two topmost goal-scorers so far are both foreigners, Jamshid Nasiri—the Iranian striker playing for East Bengal, and Chima Okerie, Mohammedan's Nigerian-born shock striker. East Bengal's officials are scouring the football markets of Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Pakistan and Bangladesh now in search of players instead of relying on Indian citizens who, from playing club football, can graduate into the national team;

► the scramble for players who, according to a club official, "can deliver the goods", has unleashed the spending race on such a scale that money-power has become the only determining factor for supremacy in club soccer.

All this madness and money, how-

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ever, have not been able to shore up the quality of the game in Calcutta, which is indeed the Mecca of football in the country. Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international controlling body of the game which publishes a computerised list every year showing the hierarchy of football-playing countries on the basis of game quality on home-and-away basis, ranked India 95th this year among 153 member countries. The Asian Football Confederation (AFCON), a subsidiary of FIFA, accorded 17th position to India among 35 countries affiliated to it. After finishing at the top in the 1951 Asian Games, and fourth in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, India slid so far down to the bottom that most nations forgot it played football. When Chile was invited by the AIFF to play for the Nehru Cup in India in 1981, the Chilean Football Federation telexed back: "Do you play football ?"

Says Ashok Ghose, AIFF secretary and president of its West Bengal unit, which proudly calls itself the Indian Football Association (IFA): "Whether we play world-class football is indeed questionable. But we are undoubtedly among the most ardent football-lovers in the world. And I mean Calcutta in particular." In 1981, when the first Nehru Gold Cup tournament was held in Calcutta, all seats at the Eden Gardens (capacity: 60,000) were sold out for 16 days at a stretch. In 1983, the Nehru Cup matches again drew full-capacity crowds, this time at the Salt Lake Stadium where only 80,000 out of its 120,000 seats were ready by then. All seats were sold for the 13 days of the tournament. This year, 100,000 seats are ready at the stadium, yet no seat is seen empty during an exhibition match. The Iraq-Qatar match for pre-qualifying round of the World Cup was held in Calcutta this year at the instance of the AIFF. Despite wide television coverage, the demand for tickets was so high that five-rupee tickets were selling in the black for a mind-bogging Rs 150.

THE RECORD books testify to Calcutta's, and Bengal's, absolute domination of the game over a long time. West Bengal wrested the Santosh Trophy, the inter-state championship, 21 out of the 41 times it was held, having been the runners-up for nine times. "The city breathes football," says its newly-elected Mayor, Kamal Bose, himself a soccer-enthusiast. Gostho Paul, architect of the 1911 victory of Mohun Bagan, is a household name whose birthday is commemorated by the state Government. There is a Mohun Bagan Row in the city as well as a Mohun Bagan Lane. Feature films in Bengali made on football invariably create box-office records regardless of their quality. Stars of the *maidans* in Calcutta are a tribe apart: they avoid

EARNINGS

The Top Ten

Prasanta Bannerjee: (Mohun Bagan linkman; reported contract price this year—Rs 25,000) Regarded as the coolest linkman in India, Bannerjee is Mohun Bagan's most reliable schemer. Tall and wiry, he is credited with an uncanny sense of distribution, though, at 29, he is certainly past his prime and age shows in his dwindling capacity to sweep and cover a wide ground. He is regarded as the first player on the Calcutta grounds to command a seasonal fee in six digits. That was when he left East Bengal in 1983 to join Mohun Bagan. A former captain of the East Bengal team, Bannerjee dons the Indian colours in all international matches.

Krishanu Dey: (East Bengal striker; Rs 120,000) A master of gentle chipping and delicate touches, 24-year-old Dey made splashes early this year when he and Bikash Panji left Mohun Bagan dramatically to join the side that offered more money. A master of dodging, and dribbling past the defence lines of the opponents, the little lad of East Bengal has helped others score more frequently than scoring himself. According to coach P.K.Bannerjee, Dey's strongest points are his perfect ball control and an ability to angle his shots precisely. However, Dey is shy of direct contacts and would either dribble or resort to a short pass when the need of the hour is to blitz one's way through.

Bikash Panji: (East Bengal linkman: Rs 120,000) By far the hardest tackler in Calcutta football. Can use both his feet with equal ease and power and therefore often interchanges position from left to right. Plays the most outstanding mobile football, moving up and down in lightning bursts of speed. At 23, he is regarded as East Bengal's, and India's, toughest combatant around the midfield. Says AIFF coach and former national player Aroon Ghosh about Panji: "He is a world class player who would have gone to much greater heights if we could have let him have more international experience".

Manoranjan Bhattacharjee: (East Bengal right stopper; Rs 170,000) Stockily built and a keen header, Bhattacharjee, 28, moved to East Bengal from obscure George Telegraph Club as early as 1976 where he has been since. The club was so grateful to him for his loyalty that it reportedly agreed not to hire anyone with a higher contract price than him as long as he stayed in the team. Captain of the team in 1981, Bhattacharjee is nick-named the "Chinese wall" for his bulldog-like tenacity. Age has somewhat slowed him down, but has not undermined his spirit of aggression and his readiness to pay the rough tactics of enemy strikers in their own coin.

Atanu Bhattacharya: (Mohammedan Sporting goalkeeper; Rs 110,000) The 23-year-old former Railways player, is now the No.2 goalkeeper in the country, next only to East Bengal's experienced Bhaskar Ganguly, and is also the vice-captain of the Mohammedan team. Not particularly good at saving frontal shots at close range, Atanu's strong points are his accurate gripping and his perfect sense of timing. Soccer specialists in fact rate him higher than Ganguly for his better reflexes and superior power of anticipation. Says Balaram, the legendary former East Bengal forward: "Atanu's outstanding quality is his fine sense of trajectory of a ball which is swerving in the air".

Bhaskar Ganguly: (East Bengal goalkeeper; Rs 125,000) Strong, courageous and enterprising, Ganguly's reliability is evident from the fact that his club be

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ublic appearances for fear of being bbed by fans.

But the popularity of the game is riably linked with the "club system". d, unlike in the Latin American capi- the three big clubs of Calcutta repre- distinct social groups: East Bengal mbership:7,000), the institution of easterners — or *bangals* — who infil- ed into the city even since the pre- ition days; Mohun Bagan (member- r 7,200), the club whose history is ed with nationalist fervour and which n institution of the traditional Calcut- (even Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, who s from East Bengal, is a Bagan sup- er); and Mohammedan Sporting mbership: 4,100), the pride of the im traders, labourers and artisans entrenched in the city.

The players and the coaches are of re like mercenaries and can change at will, depending on who bids the highest for the particular season. But the club managements represent continuity to a high degree. Only East Bengal elects its office-bearers through regular elections. Mohun Bagan chooses its office-bearers through a process of selection as does Mohammedan which is controlled by a trust.

However, Mohun Bagan has for two decades had as its Secretary Dhiren Dey, a director of Dey's Medical Stores, one of the state's pioneer pharmaceutical companies. Similarly, the controlling levers of Mohammedan are held by Irfan Taher Randerian, a front-ranking exporter of tea, Ibrahim Ali Molla, a wealthy trader, and Mohammed Omar, a Youth Congress(I) activist.

The supremacy of the big three over the small fry — the 169 also-ran clubs affiliated to the IFA — is unquestionable and is ensured, year after year, by the efforts and the resources of the organisers. The newly-elected East Bengal Secretary, Bhabaranjan Sengupta, and its football Secretary, R.P.Bhowmick, say they owe their success entirely to the dedication and enterprise of two club members, Dipak Das and Jiban Chakravarty. Das, known in football circles as Paltu, and Chakravarty, an ordinary employee of Calcutta Corporation, are both in their early forties. The Paltu-Jiban duo made its mark as player-snatchers as early as 1970 when they cajoled, threatened and bribed the best players of the country to play for their club. That instantly ushered in the club's "golden era". It won both the League championship and the IFA Shield for all the years between 1970 and 1975 except for 1971 when the shield was wrested by Mohammedan. In 1976, the patrons of the two-man hit-team, however, were routed at the club elections, the big players left, and East Bengal's performance went downhill.

ceded the least number of goals so far the League this year. Possessing a ng, athletic body, Ganguly,30, dis- s indomitable courage and can ch the ball without flinching from foot of the marauding striker. An nt admirer of Gordon Banks, the rated goalkeeper of the England Ganguly, even at this late stage in career, has been switching styles, ing all a long the top box instead of ng close to the goal line. "A modern taller cannot be bound to a tion," he says.

Jamshid Nasiri: (East Bengal striker; Rs 170,000 plus the highest perks ever enjoyed by any footballer in India) Towering above the short Indian players his 6 ft 2 inches height, the Iranian er is an enigma to his opponents. ering almost from nowhere, he is in grab at the ball at a moment he is the least expected and score deadly, pinpoint accuracy. A battering ram for his team, Jam- was with Mohammedan in 1983 1984 when he, with Majid, the -Iranian who is still with mmedan, scored all the goals at the ation Cup finals. Mohammedan on both occasions. This time round, g for East Bengal, he scored the y winning goal. Ironically, only two Iranians have scored all the in the past three years at the Federation Cup finals, the highest inter-club tournament of the country. Now a student of Aligarh Muslim University, Nasiri, 29, has not gone back home reportedly for political reasons. This year, he shares the honour of scoring the largest number of goals at the league with Chima Okerie, the Nigeria-born Mohammedan striker.

Tarun Dey: (East Bengal left stopper; Rs 110,000) A scheming defender, 25-year-old Dey plays in brilliant combination with Manoranjan Bhattacharjee, playing a strikingly mobile game and generating attacks with well-distributed shots. The general impression is: Bhattacharjee is a superior header, but Dey has a superior head. Actually, they play a complementary role to each other, Bhattacharjee blocking attacks and Dey continually pushing the battle into his opponents' side.

Biswajit Bhattacharjee: (East Bengal striker; Rs 125,000) The lanky 25-year-old striker is the league's second highest scorer so far with a margin of only two goals between him and the Jamshid-Chima duo. A talented all-rounder who can go down to play as a linkman with ease, Bhattacharjee made waves a few years ago when, playing for a weak Aryan Club, he became the season's top-scorer. He is a fine header as well as an acknowledged master of short passes.

With **Sudip Chatterjee:** (Rs 110,000), the East Bengal linkman who also occasionally plays in the stopper position, Bhattacharjee forms a formidable attack-defence team.

Chima Okerie: (Mohammedan Sporting's star striker; low price this year, his first season in Calcutta, but likely to be fixed at upward of Rs 175,000 and high perks next year) The 23-year-old Nigerian tornado is the most sensational discovery this year in the Calcutta soccer scene. He was studying for a degree in commerce at Waltair, and "playing occasionally", when Mohammedan organisers spotted him and brought him over to Calcutta. "I don't want to be a football player. I want to be a chartered accountant," Chima says with a boyish smile on his face. On the field, however, Chima is like an unstoppable battletank, usually taking charge of the ball from a few yards below the top box and then storming his way through to take a low but sizzling shot that is designed to beat the goalkeeper in its punch if it cannot beat him in angle. The force and grace of Chima moving up with the ball is aesthetically one of the best spectacles in Calcutta football. —SUMIT MITRA

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With the return of the twosome into active management of the club's affairs this year, the old magic was back again. Jamshid Nassiri, the Iranian player and prize catch of the year who, as Mohammedan's ace striker, had enabled it to clinch the Federation Cup twice, was literally whisked away from Calcutta airport and persuaded to sign for East Bengal. Also to be roped in were Krishanu Dey, Mohun Bagan striker, and Bikash Panji, Bagan linkman. The operation was straight out of a thriller with negotiators discreetly changing cars at the dead of night to "make contact" with the two players in distant Cochin, where they were playing, and money being sent to their parents in West Bengal by secret emissaries. Says Chakravarty with unconcealed glee: "The idea was to break the back of Mohun Bagan."

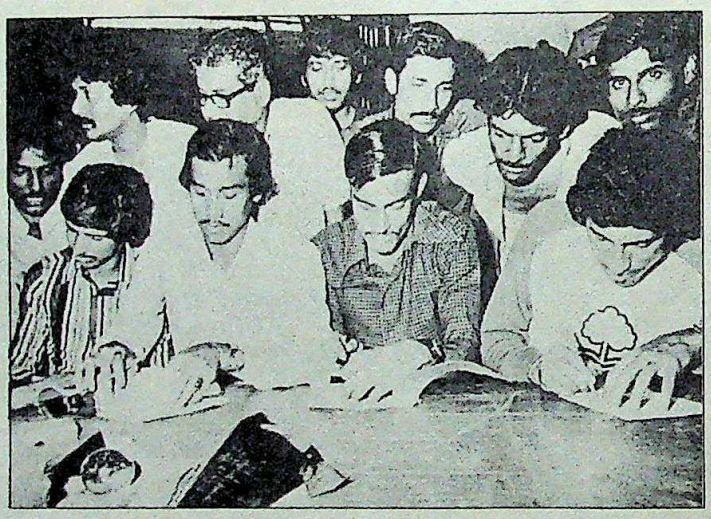
That is indeed regarded as a most laudable motive in the soccer ethics of a city inebriated by club fanaticism. As P.K.Bannerjee, or PK, who has been selected the national coach this year and who coached the East Bengal team to victory, says: "It is the emotion for the clubs that has kept the game alive."

THAT and, of course, political patronage seem to have achieved new highs. The Big Three often use their growing political clout to get away with virtual murder; offences and infringement of rules that would earn the smaller clubs the axe or heavy penalties. The fact that the top three clubs also earn big money for the state's coffers gives them an added lever to neutralise the IFA. This year, Mohammedan Sporting's demand that they be exempted from playing their third exhibition tie till after the Id festival created a major controversy till Chief Minister Jyoti Basu personally intervened and got the IFA to agree.

More recently, Mohun Bagan participated in the Kohinoor Shield tournament with a line-up that included several unregistered players, a clear violation of the state association rules, but not a murmur was raised. That is hardly surprising considering the growing political patronage they enjoy. Jatin Chakravarty, West Bengal minister and a die-hard Mohun Bagan supporter, takes time off from the secretariat each day his club has a match. And Subhash Chakravarty, the sports minister, is present on the ground every day East Bengal has to play.

The joy and gloom of victory and defeat permeates the city. Mohun Bagan supporters feasting on lobsters, the gastronomic insignia of the authentic West Bengali, on their victory day, and avoiding the fish market on the days of their defeat, leaving it to East Bengal men to order *hilsa*, their marine mascot. For a supporter, a lean season means one of foul tempers when talk of football is better avoided. Dhiren Dey, for instance, is so crestfallen this year that he avoids the media like some of his firm's bitter pills. "Go to *them*," says he with his patrician drawl, taking care not to mention by name his adversaries.

It is the quality of the game that ultimately has suffered from over-competitiveness. Says Shabbir Ali: "The emphasis today is on quickly scoring a goal and then to shrink into defence." When football was less defensive, Calcutta produced its quota of big scorers like Chuni Goswami, Balaram and PK himself. But it has to rely now on more athletic foreigners, like Jamshid and Chima, to dribble, volley and finally muscle their way across the defence lines and score the goals. The number of goals scored per League match has been steadily declining from well over four in the mid '70s to less than three now.



Top soccer players signing transfer contracts: money madness

But the show must go on regardless, and the clubs must play to win. Picking up the best line-up of players means arranging for money. East Bengal's football budget this year is a mind-boggling Rs 23 lakh, and it does not include spot-incentives paid to successful players—often running into Rs 5,000 for a good match. The money comes mostly from yearly renewal of membership—varying from Rs 160 to Rs 220 per member. But private lenders and nationalised banks often come into the picture. East Bengal was granted a loan of Rs 10 lakh this year by the United Bank of India.

The excitement of club soccer is like a lodestone that has attracted to Calcutta the best football talent from the country. "To hear the roar of the surging crowds on all your sides is an unforgettable experience. It goads you on to give your best," says Shabbir Ali, the Hyderabad-born veteran Mohammedan striker. Venkatesh, Sale, Mewa Lal, Vardaraj, Balaram, Habib, Akbar, Shabbir and today's Jamshid and Chima—the list of outstation performers on the football grounds of Calcutta keeps getting longer.

The crowd often does much more than roaring though. During an exhibition match between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal at the Eden Garden on August 16, 1980, 16 people were stampeded as brickbats flew in all directions. The day is still grimly commemorated, but its lessons obviously haven't been fully learnt, as evident from the fiasco at the East Bengal-Mohammedan match this year. Says B.K.Saha, the affable joint commissioner of Calcutta Police who is himself a keen soccer enthusiast: "Referees and linesmen on the Calcutta grounds are an endangered species. After a match, police guards are often posted at their houses lest supporters of the defeated team assault them. And if a small team ever records an unexpected win over a big one, its players cannot hope to leave the ground without police escort."

In no soccer-playing country of the world, however, has club-fanaticism constituted a bane by itself. The FA clubs have sustained British football, and so have the clubs in Italy which were once so much taken in by the spirit to win somehow that they raided the football talents in Argentina on a large-scale and then paraded the Argentinian players on Italy's national team, falsely claiming common Latin lineage for them. But the questions that are uppermost are: will Indian football survive in the frenetic atmosphere of Calcutta? Will competition breed talent? PK perhaps had the last word when he said: "We Calcuttans want the club colours to flutter atop the buildings. Let football go to hell. Long live the clubs."

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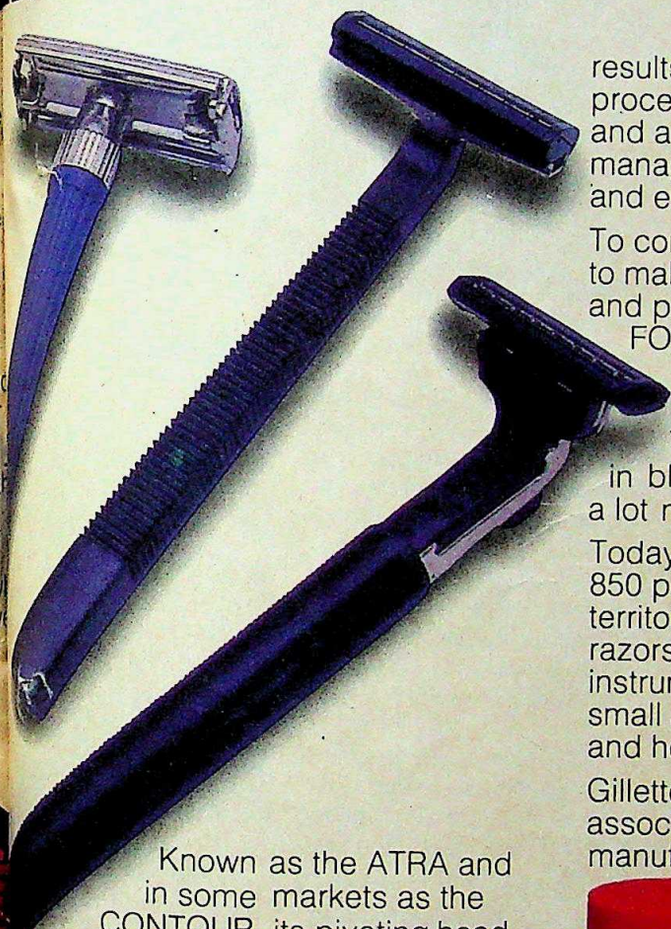

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◆ Adultery is in, at least in Bombay's swinging film circles, and baby, is it growing. Actually, the one growing the fastest is the beautiful, green-eyed and obviously pregnant starlet **Sarika** who announced last fortnight that she would be joining the growing gaggle of single parents. Adding *mirch* to the *masala* was Kamal Hasan, the superstar from the south, who confirmed speculation that he was the cause of Sarika's effect. Obviously, the new trend of relationships involving married men and single women has caught on fast in tinsel town. "I've thought things over calmly. I do sincerely believe this is the right time for me to have a child," said the 25-year-old actress while literally making the issue public.

HARI OM GULATI

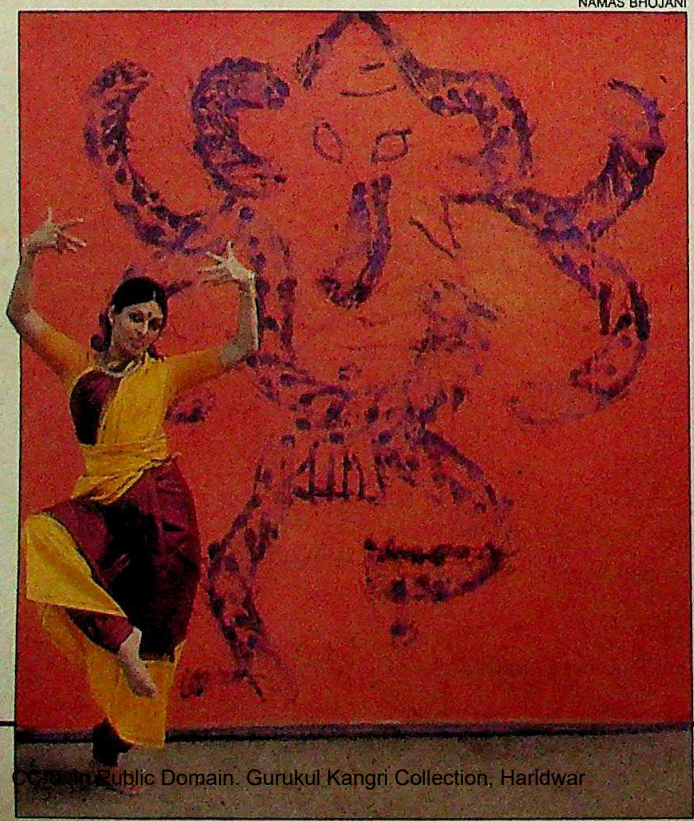
Sarika: public issue

***Phoolan* poster: no foolin'**

◆ Fresh from her triumph in Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* in France, **Mallika Sarabhai** sped through a lightning dance tour at home last fortnight with a dazzling display of footwork. Standing on two cloth screens, the second superimposed with wet paint, she went through steps that a New Delhi audience found mystifying. But the mystery was soon cleared. The screen was lifted to reveal a perfectly-etched image of Ganesh.

Sarabhai learnt the technique, once performed in Andhra Pradesh temples, from a reluctant guru who thought audiences may misinterpret it as defiling a deity. Instead she received a thundering ovation. Quipped an exuberant Mallika before returning to Athens for the European tour of the *Mahabharata*: "It's just a small footnote in my career."

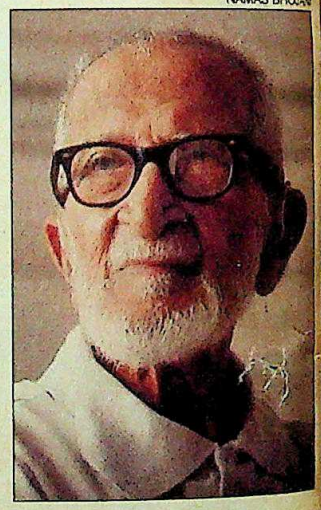
NAMAS BHOJANI



Sarabhai: career footnotes

◆ No foolin'. Bandit queen **Phoolan Devi** is on the warpath again. This time, however, her target is the Bombay film industry which has produced the celluloid version of her life story. But the queen was obviously not amused and from the confines of Gwalior Jail, she slapped a defamation suit against 13 people, and demanded a king's ransom of Rs 50 lakh in damages. Phoolan was no devi in real life but her main objection to the film *Kahani Phoolwati ki*, amongst others, is that Chambal valley viragos don't dance around trees when they're in love. However, the film's producer Geeta Roy was not caving in. "I haven't heard anything about such a suit, till I do, I'm not going to say anything either," she sniffed.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Salim Ali: fresh fields

◆ The Birdman of India, Dr **Salim Ali**, the internationally celebrated ornithologist, will be watching a new species of his two-footed friends—his loguacious colleagues in the Rajya Sabha. The ageing birdwatcher, now a sprightly 89, was last fortnight nominated to the Upper House of Parliament, though the news itself was greeted rather owlishly by him. "Well, I'm gratified though I don't quite know what it implies. I just hope it will enable me to promote the cause of conservation of nature and the environment," he says. Ali's reputation will ensure that he doesn't ruffle any feathers in the Rajya Sabha. After all, he *is* known as a dove.

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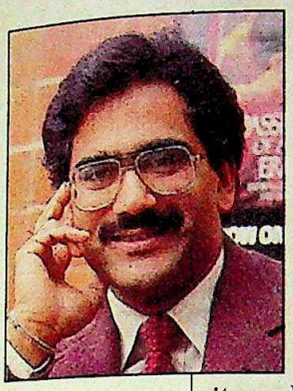

THE LAST 10 years have been a roller-coaster ride for the country, fast-moving, exhilarating, scary, always gripping, with barely a moment's pause. Editing a magazine in this period has been as exciting and as demanding as the decade itself: to stay level-headed through the slow climb to news peaks, as in the case of build-up of the Assam agitation and Operation Bluestar, and not allow blood to rush to the head through the fast downhill stretches, like the disintegration of the Janata government or the assassination of Mrs Gandhi. It has been a period of unprecedented action: an internal emergency, four prime ministers, three general elections, sharp swings in the popular mood, the myriad tensions of nation-building.

People tend to react with surprise when told that INDIA TODAY *is 10 years old. For all the action that has been packed into the last decade, it seems a short time since the magazine made its modest foray into journalism in December 1975. Since then, we have been dubbed anti-national (by Mrs Indira Gandhi), pro-establishment (vis-a-vis Rajiv Gandhi), practitioners of hovercraft journalism (skimming along the surface of issues), much too serious, and overly political. There have been the bouquets too, for* INDIA TODAY *has won increasing reader acceptance and the circulation graph has climbed from 5,000 in December 1975 to 370,000 this issue, with another 23,000 on the international edition that was launched in 1982.*

Fortunately for the country, and INDIA TODAY, *the last decade has been a period of enormous innovation and advancement, once the Emergency was ended. There has been a new freshness, a new breed of journalists breaking new ground, new technologies such as the word processor and the computer terminal, a broad-basing of mass media ownership following from a new entrepreneurship in journalism, increased advertising support, and much more. If journalists and publishers have benefited from all these, the readers have benefited even more. For as Harold Laski once said: "A people without reliable news is sooner or later a people without a basis for freedom."*

It has been a period of enormous rewards for everyone in INDIA TODAY: *to watch a fledgling publication grow to a size that few have managed. Along the way to achieving this, the magazine has expanded its staff, invested in a national teleprinter network, and recently acquired the most advanced computer system that any publication has in the country, so that all staff in New Delhi now write, re-write and make-up pages on computer terminals, all of which makes for shorter lead-times and more up-to-date coverage.*

THIS special anniversary issue commemorates this decade of the rebirth not merely of the media, but of the democratic spirit of India, of its transformation from the archetypal country immersed in poverty into a nation that is still poor but confidently looking ahead. It presents the high points of the last 10 years in a tapestry of the best available photographs of the highs and lows of the years, reflecting both the hope and despair this country has felt and experienced.

Since the decade has been, above everything else, a period of rapid change, this issue focusses on the change since 1975. It looks at the thoroughgoing change in political culture this past decade, and the indelible stamp left on it by Mrs Gandhi. In the economic sphere, it looks at the rise of the middle class as a political and economic force, at the emergence of a new breed of small businessmen who have stolen the thunder from the larger business houses, at the birth of the agricultural entrepreneur who has built on the successes of the green revolution. It has been the decade when the small screen—television—came into its own and the big screen was battered by the winds of failures. The magazine also looks at the triumphs and tears of Indian sportsmen and women in a period when Indian sport has come into its own, at the media revolution and some of the movers and shakers of the decade, the people who made it all happen or who have been tossed aside by the tide of events.

It is an issue that commemorates the roller-coaster ride of the last 10 years no less than INDIA TODAY*'s decade-long presentation of it. And as we look forward to our second decade we hope that, like the poet, we can say that our glory is our friends.*

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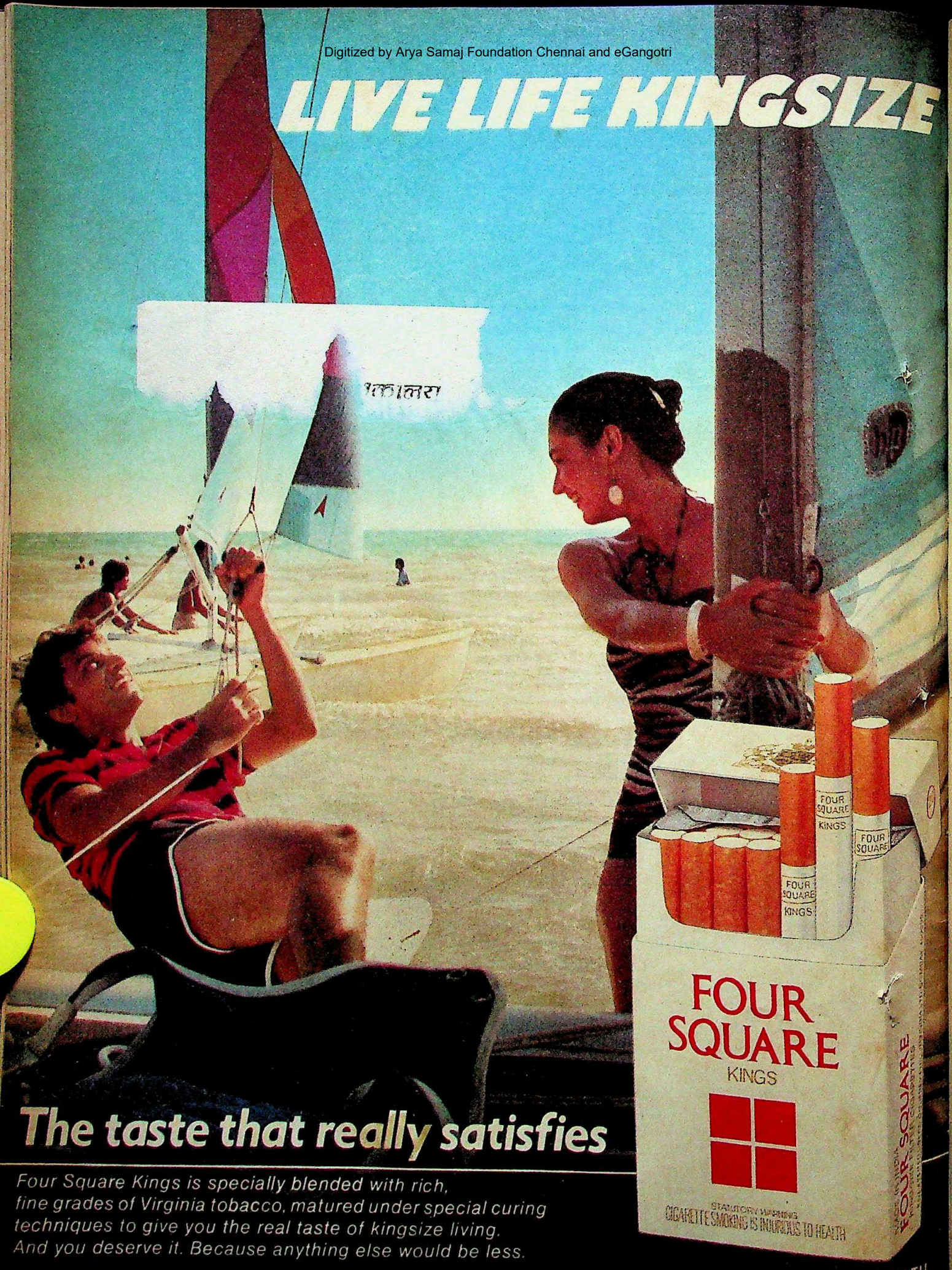
LIVE LIFE KINGSIZE



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INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME X NUMBER 24
FOR THE FORTNIGHT DECEMBER 16–31, 1985

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1975-1985 THE DECISIVE DECADE

CONTENTS

THE INSIDE STORY
The magazine looks back at its origins and evolution over the last decade and the people behind its success.
6

IMAGES 1975-1985
A visual recapitulation of the events and personalities that dominated the most eventful decade since Independence.
12

CHANGING POLITICAL CULTURE
In a decade of confrontation and violence, politics has gone through its most telling changes from the Emergency to the birth of a new consensus.
61

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
INDIA TODAY *tracks down the people who made the headlines and have now faded out from the public eye.*
77

RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS
The growing middle class represents the emergence of a new and major political and economic force.
109

DAY OF THE FARMER
An aggressive and alert new breed of farmers is revolutionising foodgrain production and infusing the economy with the prospects of self-reliance.
123

SMALL IS BOUNTIFUL
New entrepreneurs were at the forefront providing the platform on which broad-based industrial growth can take place in the decade ahead.
132

'AWARDS'
A satirical tribute to the people who didn't make it elsewhere but still deserved mention.
140

OFF WITH THE COBWEBS
The Indian media shook off its shackles during the decade and emerged in an exciting new avatar.
146

'MY DECADE'
First person accounts by prominent people who experienced an eventful decade in their respective professions.
154

THE FADING GLITTER
The Indian film industry faces its biggest ever crisis with the advent of video and television and changing audience tastes.
165

ON THE RIGHT TRACK
Indian sports received a major boost with the Asian Games and the new confidence is encouraging.
173

THE SPREADING SCREEN
Indian television has come a long way since its hesitant and humble beginnings.
185

NEWSMAKERS
Individuals who made waves during the decade with their outstanding contributions in their respective fields.
198

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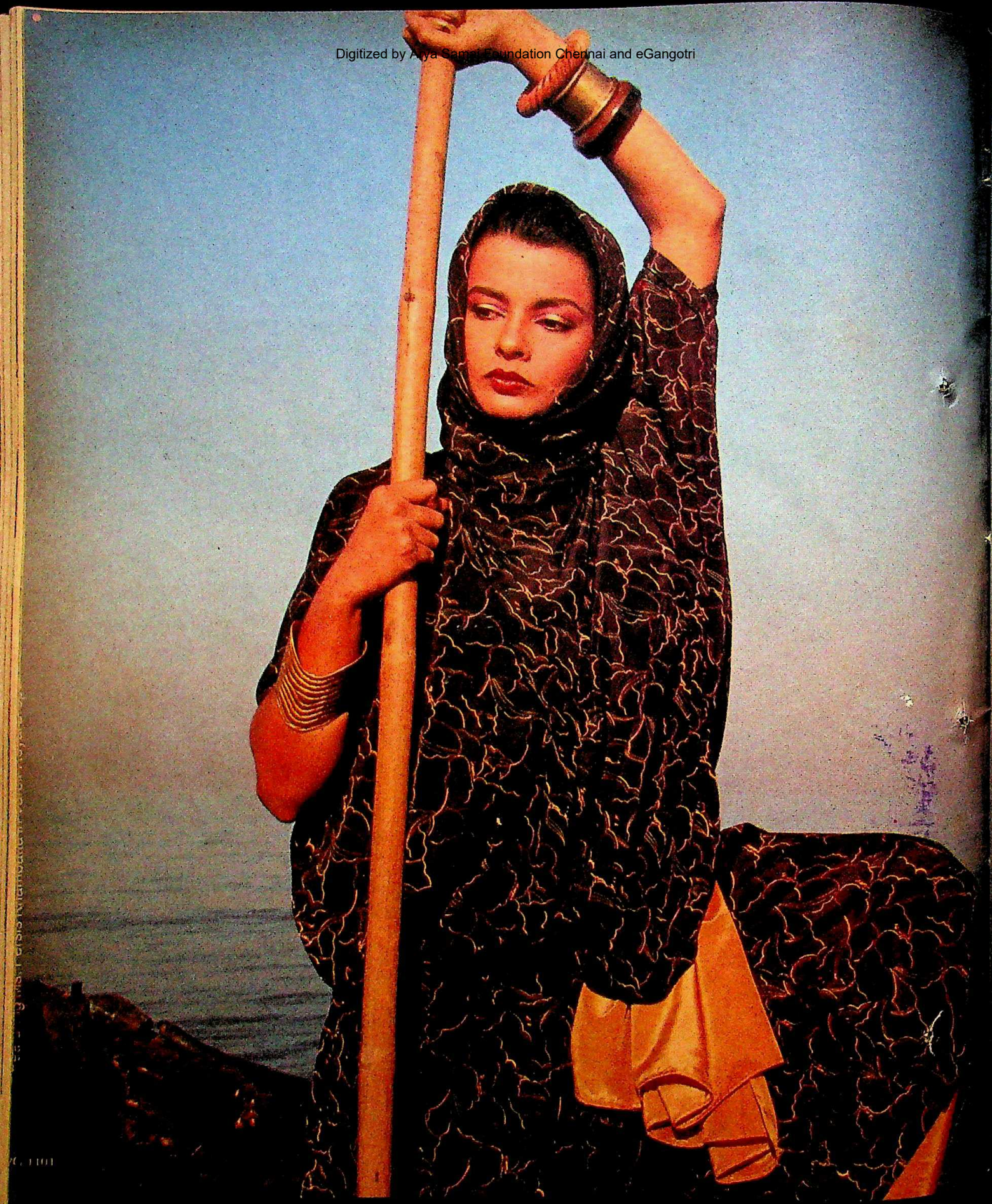

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INDIA TODAY

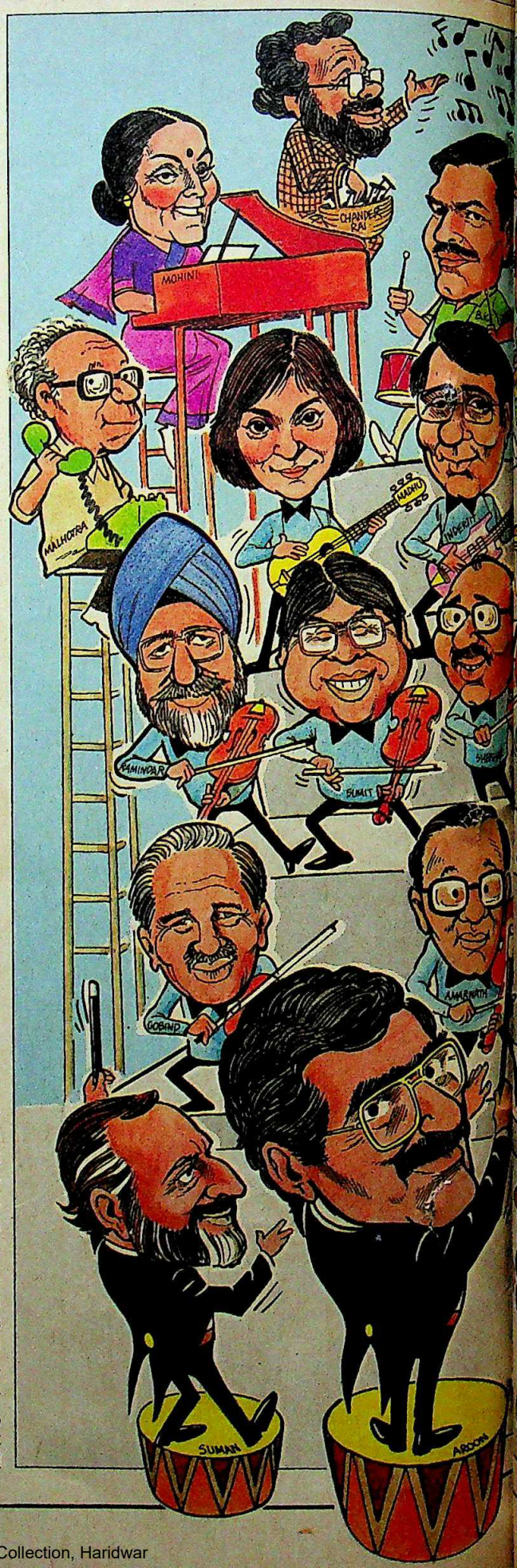
THE INSIDE STORY

IT WAS the worst of times, it was the best of times. The flickering flashbacks that summon up the scenes of INDIA TODAY's early evolution are almost surrealistic. The dog days of the Emergency, when the entire staff of half-a-dozen spent long and langurous afternoons at the packed Press Club over cold beers and hot gossip—censorship having cremated initiative and investigative ability. Then the sudden surge as the floodgates crashed open and it all came spilling out, all the words and the knowledge that had been bottled up for those claustrophobic months, and suddenly INDIA TODAY came into its own.

That was 1977, 15 months after the magazine made its initially modest appearance on the news-stands. Looking back at those formative years, and the pre-eminent position the magazine enjoys today, it's hard to believe that it could have happened at all, that a magazine born during the Emergency should have gone on to become the country's leading newsmagazine. In actuality, the idea wasn't as ludicrous as it appeared. Its promoters, the Purie family of New Delhi, had among its various business interests a sophisticated printing plant on the outskirts of the city. A move into the publishing business was therefore, a natural diversification, and the idea of a news oriented magazine for Indians living abroad had been tossed around for quite a while.

Planned as a small venture, the magazine had the humblest of beginnings. The first office was a cramped corridor-like space in a Connaught Place office barely enough for four desks. In fact, the five original members of the staff usually preferred to operate from the restaurant next door (the coffee was better). The original INDIA TODAY gang of five was a mixed bag. There was Madhu Trehan, an expatriate from New York and the oldest Purie daughter who had a journalism degree from Columbia University and some working experience with local publications in the US. Aggressive and savvy, Trehan was the office hen, shepherding and guiding the young brood that trooped in one by one. Shirley Joshua arrived

Looking back at those formative years, it's hard to believe that it could have happened at all—that a magazine born during the Emergency should have become the country's leading newsmagazine.



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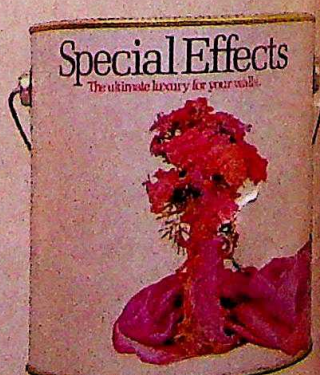

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There was an undiluted sense of fun and adventure in those early years, even though the initial requirements and challenges of putting together a magazine for Indians abroad were limited.

fresh from university, and displayed an instant knack of convincing others to do what she wanted without them realising it. Then there was Mandira Purie, Trehan's equally aggressive younger sister who discovered she had a hidden talent for photography and eventually did double duty as staff photographer. Being rather short and the only woman photographer on the scene then, Mandira often managed to persuade her fiercely competitive counterparts from other publications to lift her up for a better shot over the heads of the crowd. And there was Dilip Bobb, a disillusioned tea planter-turned-freelance-journalist, who was to become a human word-processor, stamping the magazine's distinctive style on every page. Orchestrating the operations from above was Aroon Purie, a chartered accountant by training but with an uncanny instinct for journalism's jugular. Shortly after, in breezed Sunil Sethi from the now defunct *Junior Statesman*, seeming to know everybody worth knowing in Delhi. His flying fingers and turn of phrase added a new quality to the magazine's prose. The average age of the office that first year was 25.5, at which age most journalists in other offices haven't got beyond the local crime beat.

There was an undiluted sense of fun and adventure in those early years, even though the initial requirements and challenges were limited: Putting together a magazine for Indians abroad was more of a cut and paste job with only special stories deserving special attention. But then a funny thing happened on the way to the circulation department. Though planned as a magazine for Indians abroad, part of the 5,000 copy print run was let loose on the domestic market as an experiment, to be immediately devoured. Overnight, INDIA TODAY experienced a total turnaround in its target market which was now larger, better informed and far more demanding.

It seemed a daunting challenge. The INDIA TODAY team was relatively lacking in terms of professional experience. But what it had was compensation enough—an abundance of enthusiasm, initiative, ambition, and the collective will to make the magazine a success. It was a combination that proved contagious. Within weeks of the magazine's debut on the domestic market, the INDIA TODAY office had become a hyper-active den with senior journalists dropping in constantly throughout the day to offer advice, expertise and even articles. There was the portly, paternal figure of Jay Dubashi of *The Economic Times* whose quotations from T.S.Eliot or Auden made the intricacies of the economy more understandable to the housewife. There was the ever-jovial Satindra Singh, who brought with him reams of inside information and won all bets in the office on the results of the 1977 elections. And, of course, there was the irrepressible Chand Joshi, of *The Hindustan Times* whose political jokes and gossip helped keep spirits high, including his own.

This trial and error period was mercifully brief. By the time Mrs Gandhi aborted the Emergency and called for elections, INDIA TODAY was ready and capable of meeting the sudden, unexpected upsurge in demand and challenges. In retrospect, those post-Emergency days seem one constant blur of movement and motivation with hardly a pause between one damning expose' and another. Nobody minded the endless travel and travails, and everybody did multiple-duty from writing to subbing, proof-reading and production, even driving off to Faridabad, where the press was located, in the middle of the night wearing pullovers and pyjamas! There was history and destiny in the atmosphere and INDIA TODAY breathed it in great and generous gulps.

IF 1977 marked a major turning point for the country, it was equally so for INDIA TODAY. The Emergency had left in its wake a vast treasure store of scandals that were ideal grist to its mill. The sordid history of the Maruti project. The antics of accused and witness alike in the Shah Commission hearings. An expose' on torture. All this in a new, aggressive, independent, chatty and informative way of looking at the world around. Issue after issue, the stories kept imploding in sensational bursts with an equally sensational burst in circulation figures. The result was that almost overnight, the magazine found itself catapulted into the big league. The period of experimentation and change was over.

Having, in no small measure, pioneered the country's magazine boom, INDIA TODAY's staff shifted gratefully to a more expansive office eventually acquired a sophisticated computerised text editing system. The magazine began to attract writers and staffers from among the best talent available. Arun Shourie first gave notice of his limitless crusading zeal as a regular contributor to the magazine. When two young men—Prannoy Roy and Ashok Lahiri—proclaiming themselves to be psephologists, a word virtually unheard of in India at the time, walked into the office and offered to run a forecast of the 1980 election, the idea was lapped up as an innovation worth trying. Not only did their Lok Sabha forecasts work, they started a whole new trend in journalism.

Raghu Rai, India's best known photographer, joined the staff as picture editor and has ever since been embroiled in a running battle with the writers over visual space ("windows versus the brickwork of text"), which in his case invariably meant five columns for pictures and the remaining one column for text. The talented Bhawan Singh followed suit to join him and the durable Pramod Pushkarna to make a potent team of lensmen. The magazine did its bit to reverse the brain drain: Inderjit Badhwar, part of the crack Jack Anderson investigative team, signed on as Washington correspondent and has been recently lured into making his passage back to India. So was Design Consultant Aurobind Patel, who was weaned away from his work for *Esquire* magazine to design a new

Issue after issue the stories kept imploding in sensational bursts—all this in a new, aggressive, independent, chatty and informative way of looking at the world around.

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The magazine's main strength lies in giving its staff a free hand with no expenses spared in pursuit of exclusive and important stories.

magazine format and introduce new type faces. And after Chotu Karadia's three year stint, the experienced and personable Suman Dubey left *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and Reuters to occupy the vacant managing editor's chair, popularly known as the 'Hot Seat', and used his mature judgement to improve the quality of its stories.

At the the same time, INDIA TODAY found itself becoming something of a journalistic hothouse where latent talent flowered and flourished. Chander Uday Singh took on Bombay's business titans for his three year tenure; while Chaitanya Kalbagh won an award for his sensitive writings on civil liberties issues. Cartoonist Ajit Ninan, cartographer B.K.Sharma and sub-editors-turned correspondents Jagannath Dubashi and Sreekant Khandekar (who won an award for his rural reporting) were other prime examples as was Prabhu Chawla, a former economics lecturer at Delhi University whose network of contacts is a source of constant amazement to his colleagues and an unending flow of stories. Raj Chengappa, Farzand Ahmed and Ramesh Menon have specialised in INDIA TODAY's pioneering social trend and human condition stories.

The masthead grew longer with the addition of the goateed T.N. Ninan from the *Business Standard* as business editor. After getting over his initial shock at the informal, argumentative atmosphere at the magazine, Ninan turned INDIA TODAY's business section into one of the most informative and readable on the market and won the first Sachin Chaudhuri award for his reports before moving on to higher things as senior editor. In the last three years the staff has grown and correspondents now staff most of the larger state capitals, coordinated by Radhika Roy.

All along, the magazine's main strength lay in giving its staff a free hand, in its cooperative approach with numerous stories being written not so much by individual writers as teams of writers and editors. If story writing in the early days resembled a production line, this changed in time to making team work very much part of its basic approach. If egos clashed, well there was always the editor's indelible blue pencil. An openness to ideas, an encouragement to initiative, to innovation and to go for the exclusive stories—these quickly introduced an element of creative tension which prompted journalists to go out and put in their best fitted. Nothing symbolised the magazine's collective style of operation as its fortnightly newsmeetings where story ideas were chewed over, tossed about and finally accepted or rejected usually after heated debate.

But no expense was spared in the pursuit of news. Thus, Suman Dubey caught the first plane to London when ethnic riots erupted there involving the expatriate Indian community. Dilip Bobb was one of the first journalists to enter Afghanistan and contact the rebels in the wake of the Soviet troops, and over a score of staffers spanned out into the remotest parts of the country for election coverage of the sort that newspapers would not attempt.

There were risks, too: S. Venkat Narayan and Shekhar Gupta were both arrested by the Sri Lankan authorities for nosing around for news of Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. There were other kinds of risks: To Sumit Mitra fell the unenviable lot of bearing the brunt of Mrs Gandhi's ire when, after identifying himself at a crowded press conference, he asked her for an assessment of son Rajiv, only to be angrily told "Why should I reply. You work for an anti-national magazine."

The real test of the magazine, of course, has been to present readers with its fortnightly fare of news swiftly, accurately, attractively. And there have been moments when it succeeded with considerable effort. When Sanjay Gandhi crashed his Pitts stunt plane on the morning of June 23, 1980, not only did that have to be covered in just three days, some 60 per cent of the issue under preparation had to be spiked because it was suddenly dated. His widow Menaka's sudden departure from 1 Safdarjang Road on the night of March 29-30, 1982, meant reprinting a part of the cover story, yet the magazine that hit the newsstands a day later turned out to be up to date with the newspapers.

The real test of the magazine has been to present readers with its fortnightly fare of news swiftly, accurately, attractively. And there have been moments when it succeeded with considerable effort.

AT TIMES, coincidence has played a part in helping the magazine get the news. Sumit Mitra was in Bangladesh investigating its territorial differences with India when President Zia-ur-Rehman was assassinated. INDIA TODAY had the first on-the-spot report. Perseverance too has paid off. Shekhar Gupta decided to hole up in Amritsar on June 3, 1984, when foreign correspondents and Indians working for foreign agencies were shunted out by the authorities. He was one of two journalists who managed to get a first-hand account of Operation Bluestar. But at other times, the flow of news defeated the magazine's fortnightly cycle. As when Mrs Gandhi was assassinated. The magazine was to hit the stands on November 1, and the latest issue had already been despatched when the teleprinters in the office clattered out their tragic news. "Couldn't you have held it back, or put in the news?" we were asked. That wasn't, of course, possible but the magazine was able to then devote its entire next issue to Mrs Gandhi which became, at 4,00,000 copies, its biggest ever and a complete sell-out.

As the circulation curve has climbed continuously over the last decade, abuse, praise, criticism, and bouquets have all come INDIA TODAY's way. Now, on its tenth birthday, the magazine can look back with pride and satisfaction at its myriad achievements and the long road it has travelled from that cramped corridor in Connaught Circus. And yet, in some strange way, there still exists the collective feeling—and eager anticipation—that the INDIA TODAY story is just starting.

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IMAGES

"I, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, do by this proclamation declare that a grave emergency exists, whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbance."
The President of India on June 26, 1975

It was a decade of continuous contrasts. A period of portent and promise, triumph and tragedy, darkness and light. The grim ghosts of the Emergency giving way to the brilliant burst of freedom and the victory of democracy. The bitter betrayal of a people's trust restoring a once discredited leader to the

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RAGHU RAI

1975-1985

pedestal. New uncertainties in a plane crash, in the finality of an assassin's bullet. Then finally the birth of a new hope. But above all, the timeless images that spell out India. Divided and yet one. Powerful and yet weak. Follower and yet leader. Ten years that shook India and left it stronger.

"We have watched these developments with utmost patience for long. How can any government worth the name stand by and allow the country's stability to be imperilled."

INDIRA GANDHI
on June 26, 1975

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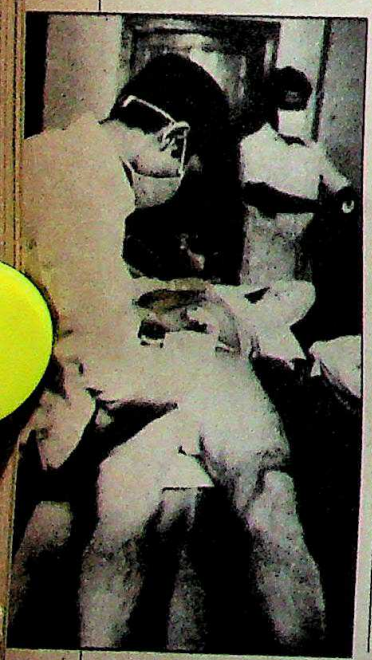
"The Youth Congress has stolen our thunder."
INDIRA GANDHI
at the December 1976 AICC session in Guwahati

"They demanded a lakh of rupees or 25 cases for sterilisation and when I was unable to give them either, our house was pulled down."
RUKAYA BEGUM
a widow with eight children
India Today, May 1977



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"The chains we bear before you today, are symbols of the entire nation which has been chained and fettered by a dictatorship which has established itself in our country."
GEORGE FERNANDES
in a statement during the Baroda Dynamite case trial in September 1976

"D'Ocracy-
D.E.M. Beloved husband of T. Ruth, loving father of L.I. Bertie, brother of Faith, Hope, Justicia, expired on 26th June."
Deaths column of Times of India on June 28, 1975

THE STATESMAN
SPECIAL EDITION
Emergency Due To Intern
CONSPIRACY TO END DEMOCRACY
Special Powers For Preventive Steps
CENSORSHIP OF NEWS
Steps To Help The Poor Soon, Says Mrs. Gandhi
India-China

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"We Indians can hold our heads a little higher today because after 20 months of an authoritarian rule, the electorate, largely unlettered but by no means ill-informed, has said that once aroused it is no respector of persons as shown, by Mrs Gandhi's shock defeat, as also her son's."

THE STATESMAN in its editorial on the general elections in March 1977

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RAGHU RAI

"I should like to make it clear that as one who led the Government, I unreservedly own full responsibility for this defeat. I am not interested in finding alibis or excuses for myself, nor am I interested in shielding anyone."

INDIRA GANDHI
in a letter to Congress Party President Dev Kant Barooah in April 1977

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Finishing Touches

When you have time to yourself in a Parryware bathroom, you can celebrate personal victories.

Wasn't it just yesterday that the zillionth person told your husband he had a charming wife?

Remember how you proved to the world that you would build that beautiful house of your dreams.

Why, you're probably the only person who can get back into the cholis you wore at 18, in spite of 2 children.

Parryware bathrooms let you relive moments of pride.

They have a modernity to make you feel young.

A heritage to be proud of.

A finish that says you've got style.

Colours to complement your sophistication.

And a beauty that inspires you to get the very best out of your life.

Parryware VITREOUS

Manufactured and marketed by EID Parry (India) Limited Ceramics Division, Dare House, P B No 12, N.S.C. Bose Road, Madras 600 001

BD-1797

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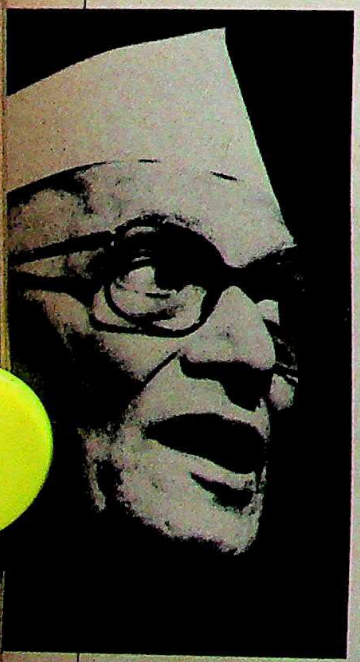
"My world lies in shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my lifetime. Maybe my nephews and nieces will see that. Maybe."
JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN
in his Prison Diary,
on July 21, 1975

"Every time the prime minister opens his mouth, the Janata Party loses half a million votes."
RAM JETHMALANI
on Morarji Desai
in India Today, June 1978



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RAGHU RAI

"The only truthful action of the Janata Government so far has been to prematurely announce his (Jayaprakash Narayan's) death. They killed his promises and now they are bent on killing him."
ARUN SHOURIE
Indian Express,
March 1979

"Charan Singh literally licked the boots of Congress(I) chief Indira Gandhi to become prime minister."
JAGJIVAN RAM
India Today,
August 1979

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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"Where are the handcuffs? I am not going without handcuffs."
INDIRA GANDHI
when police came to arrest her, October 1977

"If this country is to be rendered safe for future generations, the people owe it to themselves to ensure that an irresponsible and unconstitutional centre of power like the one which revolved around Shri Sanjay Gandhi during the emergency is not allowed to come up ever again in any form or shape or under any guise."
Extract from Shah Commission Report, August 1978

"This is your political rebirth. Do not worry and be brave."
INDIRA GANDHI
to Sanjay after his conviction in the Kissa Kursi Ka case in 1978

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RAGHU RAI

"There was an inevitability about the Congress split. A mixed bag of Congressmen threw in their lot with Mrs Gandhi who herself projected a new mood of defiance and open revolt."
INDIA TODAY
on the convention which led to the Congress split in January 1978

"We've done our best to hold the party together. But it was her and her caucus that smashed it."
K. B. REDDI,
Congress President,
on the party split in January, 1978

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"I grew up with Gopi."

"Four years ago my mother tempted me to enter the kitchen, with a Gopi.

Yet today, I'm an expert cook... thanks to the super helpmate I have in Gopi."

"Gopi is all the help I need in my kitchen.

And do you know why?

Gopi offers me the latest technology and three jars with the basic machine — not just one. All at no extra cost.

So only Gopi lets me switch from blending... to dry grinding... to wet grinding to whatever... in seconds. With no hassles, such as fiddling with sharp blades.

Gopi also gives me the widest choice of optional attachments for special jobs. Each self-enclosed.

Come to think of it, Gopi does the work of a food processor, blender, juicer and grinder. Imagine the money I save by not having to buy them individually!

What's more, Gopi's heavy duty motor makes it the best machine for Indian conditions. In fact, I run it as long as I want. And the operating instructions are so easy to follow.

The Gopi machine is so good, you get lifetime free service.

What more could any woman want?

No wonder, with Gopi around I almost feel like a superwoman in the kitchen!"

GOPI

Kitchen Machine

The better looking, better designed kitchen machine with a lifetime free service.

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Insist on Gopi by name — buy from authorised dealers only.

Optional attachments

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Where hospitality is a way of life...

Of Sporty Times And Snowy Charms

Experience the sheer spectacle of snow in Shimla, skii in Manali, Narkanda or Kufri. Partake of the fun and frolic of the winter carnivals. Revel in each moment of winters in Himachal.

Skiing courses (elementary, basic and advance) commence from January '86 upto May '86. Choose between Manali (organised by the Mountaineering Institute Manali) and Narkanda (organised by the H.P.T.D.C.) For those who want to watch there is an off season discount in most hotels. Ofcourse participating is equally economical with the rates being merely Rs. 300/- and upwards.

And now to the fun times and bonfire nights of winter carnivals at Manali between 10th - 13th February ... with cultural activities, Ski competitions and folk songs. Also H.P.T.D.C. will be organising a winter festival at Narkanda.

So come now. Come to Himachal... where sporty times await you and snowy charms beckon you...

For more information Contact Director Mountaineering Institute. or the Commissioner Tourism, Himachal Pradesh, Daizy Bank Estate, Shimla-171001 Tel: 2028, 3136 or H.P. Tourist offices at: Delhi: Chanderok building, Janpath, New Delhi-110001. Tel: 345320 **Bombay:** 36, World Trade Centre, Cuffee Parade, Bombay-400005. Tel: 219191/284. **Calcutta:** 25, Camac Street, Calcutta. Tel: 446847. **Madras:** 28 C-in-C, Madras-600015. Tel: 472966. **Chandigarh:** S.C.O. 1048-49, Sector 22B. Tel: 26494.

HIMACHAL TOURISM

ASTIKA H.T. 150

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The artist paints a world, on canvas.

While the viewer looks at colour, the artist looks beyond colour.

He peeps into an expanse, an entire new universe, and brings you glimpses of that magnificent beyond on canvas.

The artist's vision is the supreme vision in the world of colour.

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RAGHU RAI

"Deaths: 20,000 to 30,000. Estimated loss: Between Rs 2,000 and 3,000 crores."

INDIA TODAY
on the Andhra cyclone in December 1977

"The Morvi disaster was as much the result of freak rainfall as of total administrative failure to either predict or cope with the catastrophe when it occurred."

INDIA TODAY
on the Morvi dam burst which claimed an estimated 4000 lives in August 1979.

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"The Janata Party betrayed the trust reposed in it. Morarji Desai was a relic from a bygone age. In his lust for the office of Prime Minister, Charan Singh exposed it to ridicule. India is back to one-party dominance with a vengeance."

GIRILAL JAIN
in The Times of India
January 9, 1980, on Mrs Gandhi's election victory.

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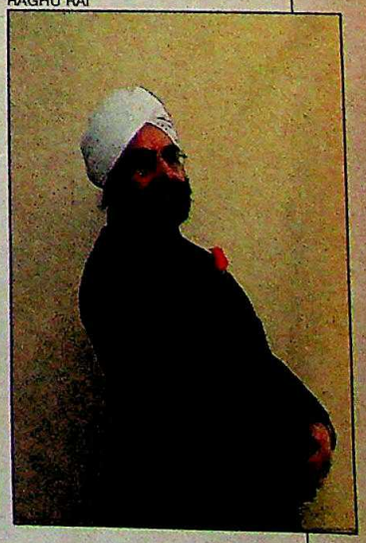
RAGHU RAI

"If my leader had said I should pick up a broom and be a sweeper, I would have done that. She chose me to be President."
ZAIL SINGH
on becoming President of India on July 25, 1982

RAGHU RAI



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Good Evening,

beautiful world!

From Sweet Memories.
The Designer Dress Material Series by Vimal.

Sweet Memories
The Designer
Dress Material
Series

VIMAL

Your beautiful evenings have just begun.

Zero-defect creations of new Water Jet technology. Palace. Jet Palace. De Chine. Palace De Chine. Crepe De Chine. Nashiji. Jacquard De Chine. Dobby De Chine. Dobby Palace. China Silk. China Yoryu. Fuji Silk. Dobby Yoryu. Jacquard Yoryu. Nep Palace. Nep De Chine... A rich variation in textures. And 250 shades every month.

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MUDRA B. RTI 2426

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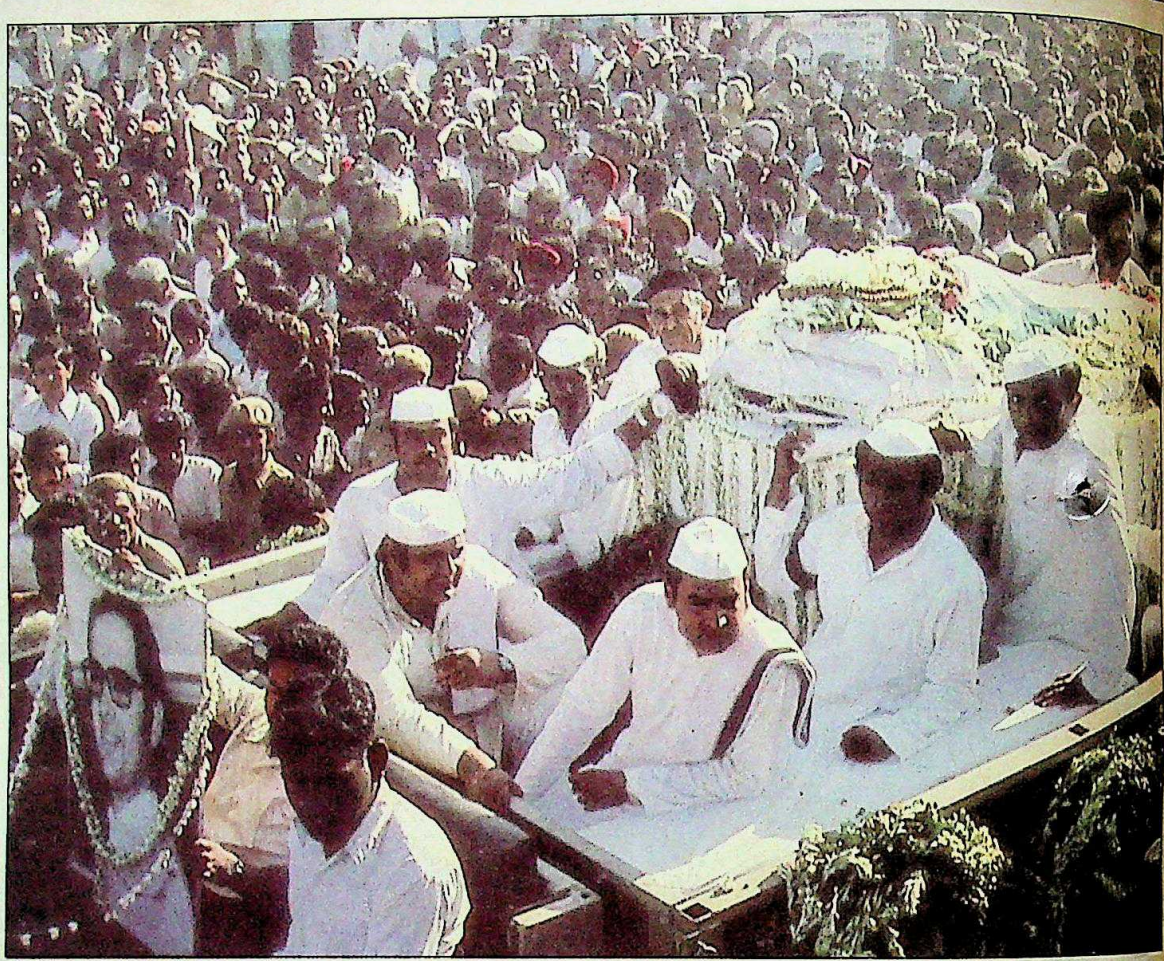
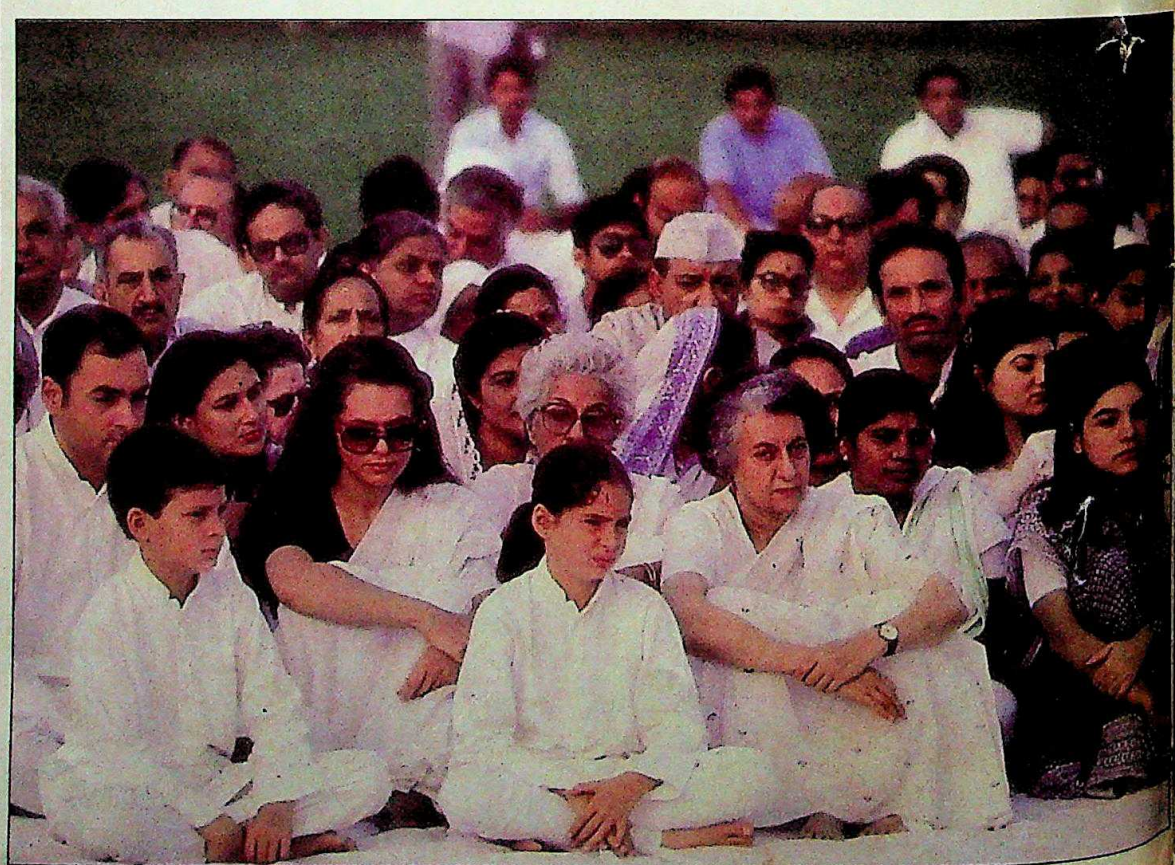
"He was a phenomenon, a one-man political industry bent on transforming the entire perspective of the country. His untimely death has not only left his young herd bewildered but has knocked the needle out of India's political compass. New bearings have to be sought and old perceptions discarded."

INDIA TODAY
on Sanjay's death
in June 1980





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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"A mother's sorrow grows every year. It is a deep and private thing. I brought up Sanjay as a symbol of daring, dynamism and endurance."
INDIRA GANDHI
one year after
Sanjay Gandhi's death

"She had a lot of support from Sanjay.... I can't really give her the sort of support he was giving her."
RAJIV GANDHI
to India Today August, 1980

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RAGHU RAI

"Will the cap fit?"

Headline INDIA TODAY
May 1981

"The entire style of functioning within the Congress(I) has generated not an awareness of the need for urgency on the question of succession but an avalanche of sycophancy."

Editorial in Mainstream,
April 1982

RAGHU RAI

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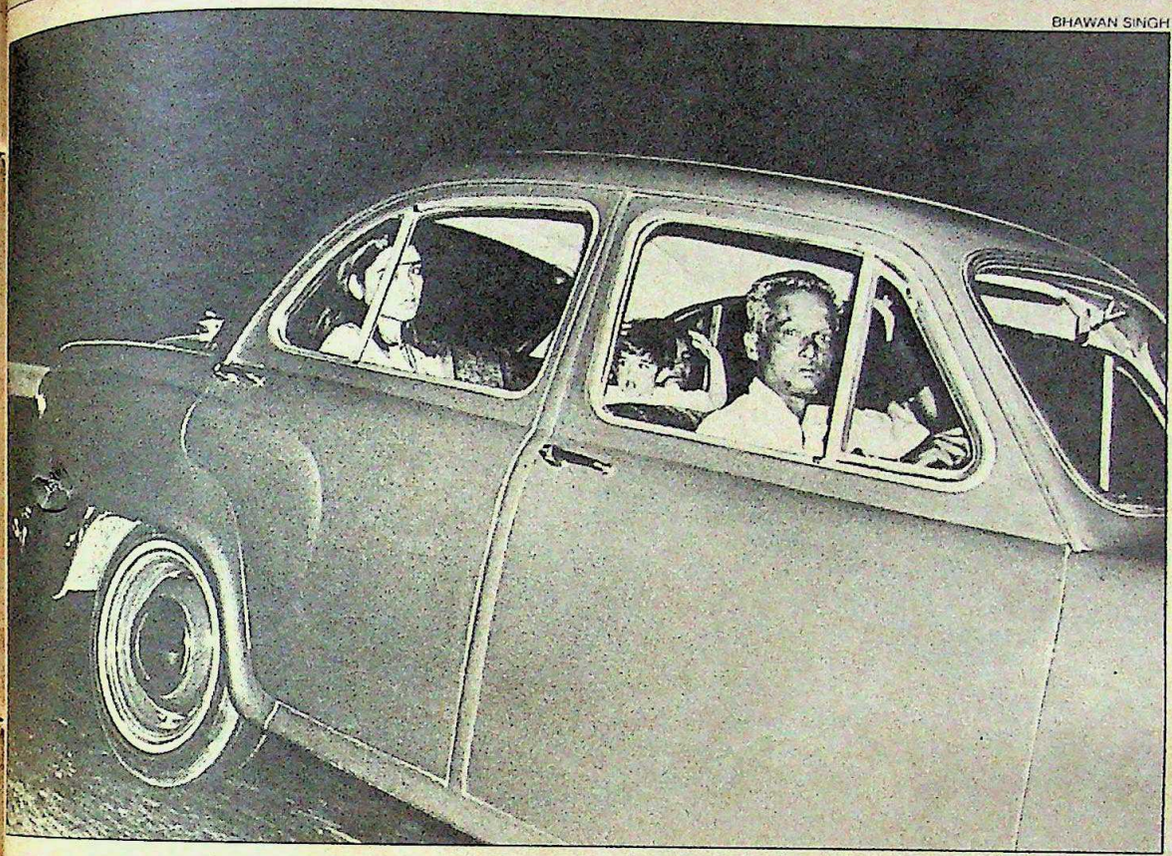
BHAWAN SINGH



"The marriage of Sanjay with Maneka was the result of a conspiracy of certain forces who wanted to infiltrate into my home."
MRS GANDHI
June 1983

BHAWAN SINGH

"The entire affair is still a family drama: last year Maneka was the beleaguered widow booted out by an impervious mother-in-law. This year, she's playing the spirited daughter-in-law fighting back. Only the setting has changed from the domestic disharmony of 1 Safdarjung Road to the ground-level dust of national politics"
INDIA TODAY
on RSM launching
April 1983

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RAGHU RAI

"I began shivering with fear because I knew I was next. Acid was forced into my eyes. Now I am completely blind."
RAMAN BIND
a victim of Bhagalpur blindings in December 1980

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PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"She was neither nebulous nor nubile, as countless reporters had portrayed her to be. Instead, the "black beauty of the bandit world" turned out to be a drab, petulant, neurotic, foul mouthed victim of life."

INDIA TODAY on Phoolan Devi's surrender February 1983

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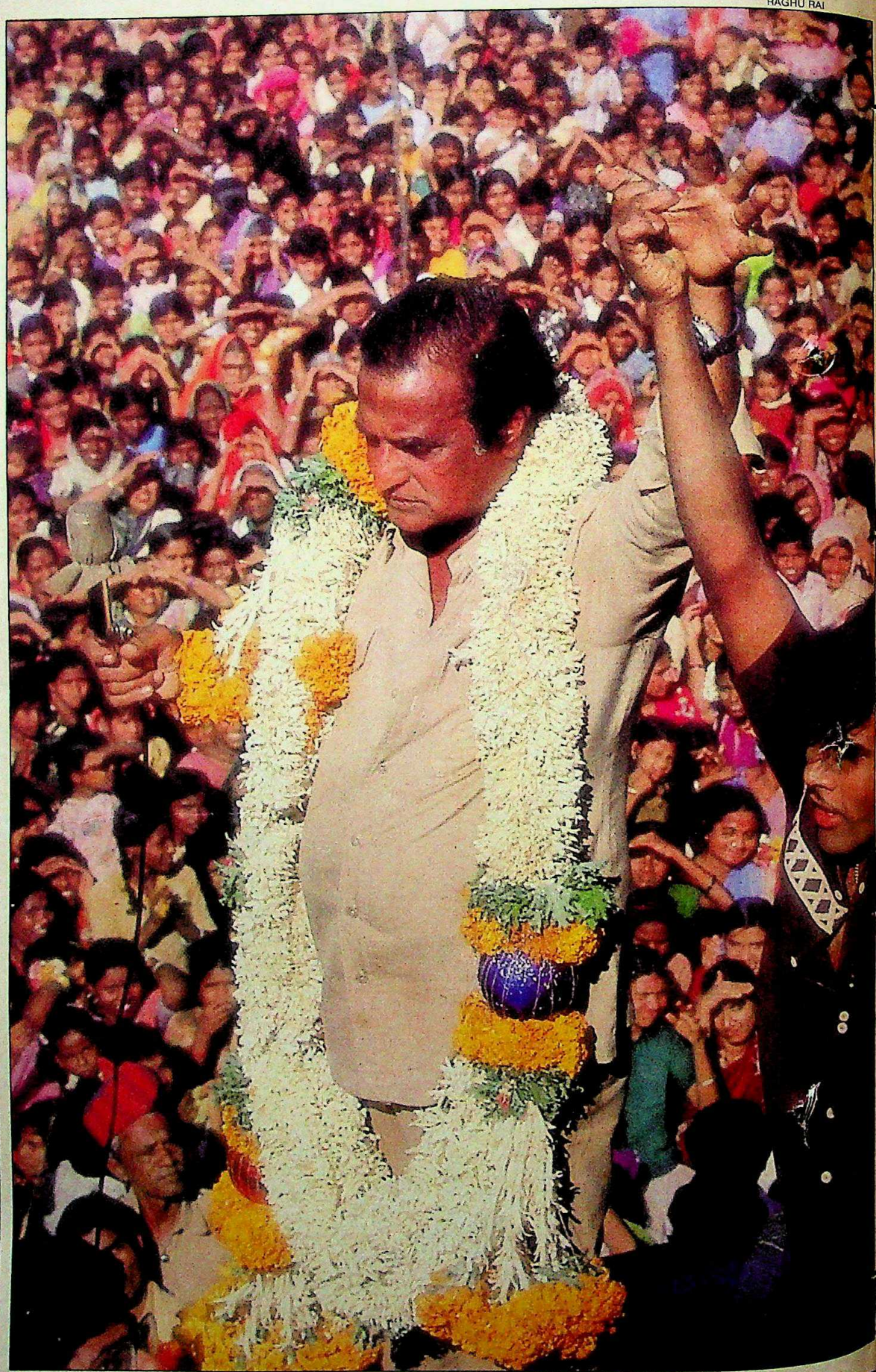
RAGHU RAI

"It is our fault that we allowed the regional parties to come up by giving up the Governments."
RAJIV GANDHI
INDIA TODAY
December 1983



"The Telugu Messiah, who presented himself as a genuine, home-grown, Telugu-spirited alternative, decisively turned Mrs Gandhi's dwindling popularity into a rich electoral harvest."
INDIA TODAY
on N.T. Rama Rao's victory in the Andhra Pradesh elections in December 1982

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BHAWAN SINGH

"Why should not the Congress(I) high command tolerate a few non-Congress(I) governments? Is it a Mughal empire in which nobody should have a small kingdom?"
R.K. HEGDE
INDIA TODAY
December 1983

BHAWAN SINGH

"The day certainly belonged to Farooq who convincingly proved the strength of continuity in the politics of the Kashmir Valley."
INDIA TODAY
on Farooq Abdullah's victory in the Assembly elections, June 1983

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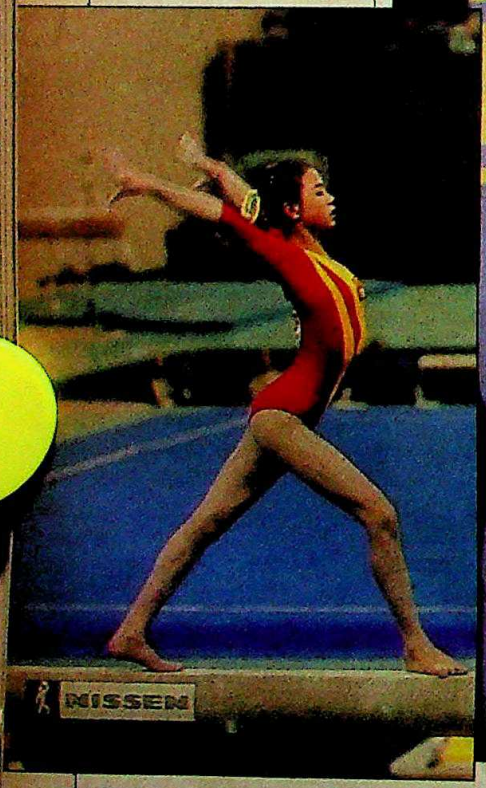
"It was a champagne summer for Indian cricket."

A report in India Today on the World Cup victory in Australia in March 1985

"China's medal-hungry athletes created history by toppling Japan while the Indian contingent wound up with the largest number of medals ever won by the country in the Asian Games."

INDIA TODAY on Asiad, November 1982



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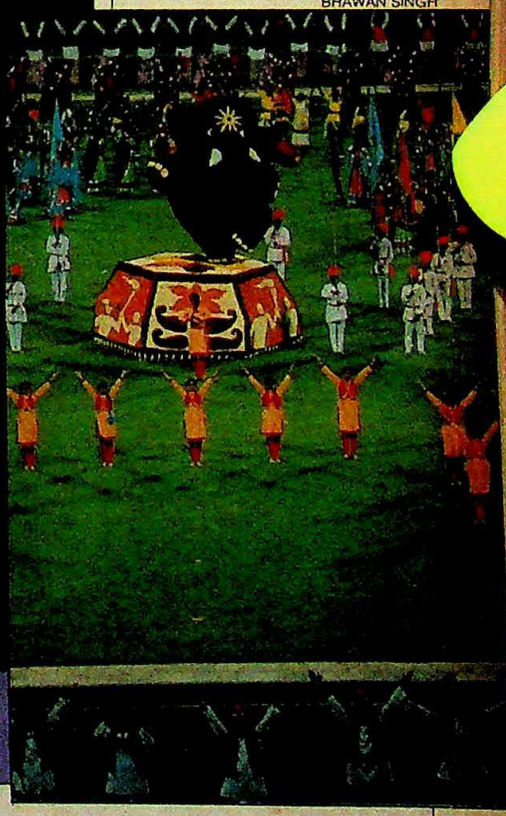
"Right from the lowest sweeper to the highest official, there was a total commitment to ensure that the games were a success."
BUTA SINGH
chairman AGSOC in December 1982

BHAWAN SINGH



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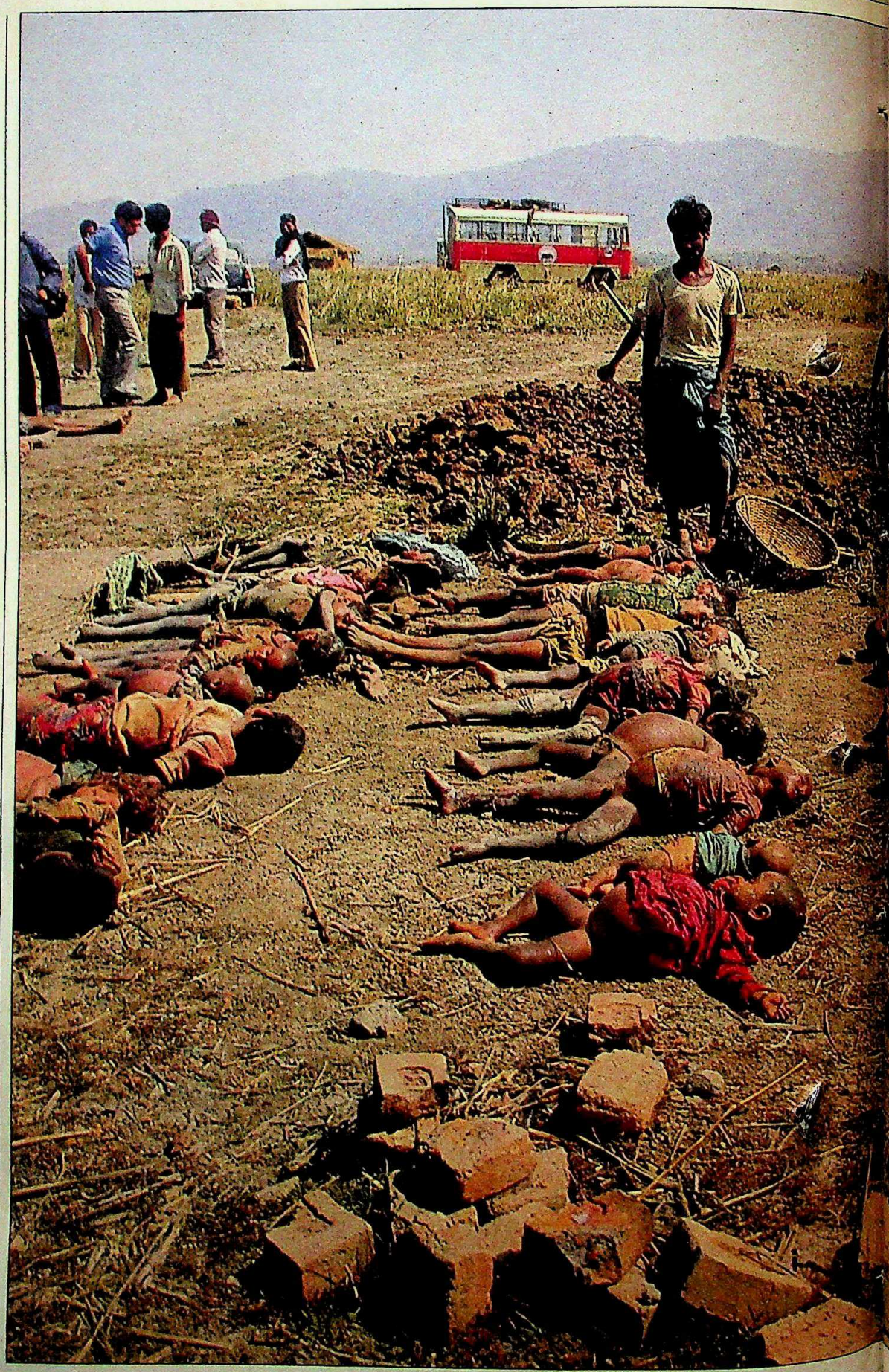
"It looks as if the attackers wanted to make sure of getting rid of the entire new generation and also to ensure that no new births took place."
TAHERMUDDIN THAKUR
a survivor of the Nellie massacre, February 1983

"If you have selected me as the locomotive to pull the non-aligned train along, I will ensure that it does not go off the rails."
INDIRA GANDHI
March 1983

"India has a genius for arranging monster tamashas overnight. When Iraq became unsuitable as a summit venue India rose to the challenge. God took six days to create the world. India would have done it in five."
TREVOR FISHLOCK
in the London Times, March 1983



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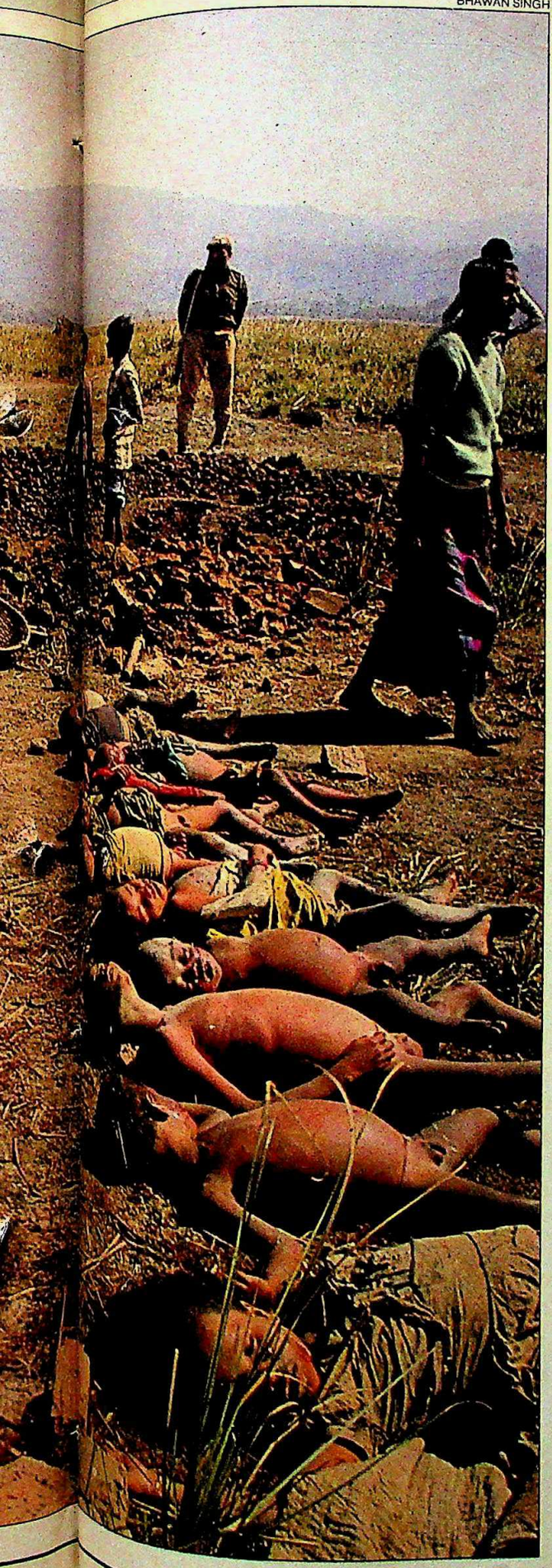
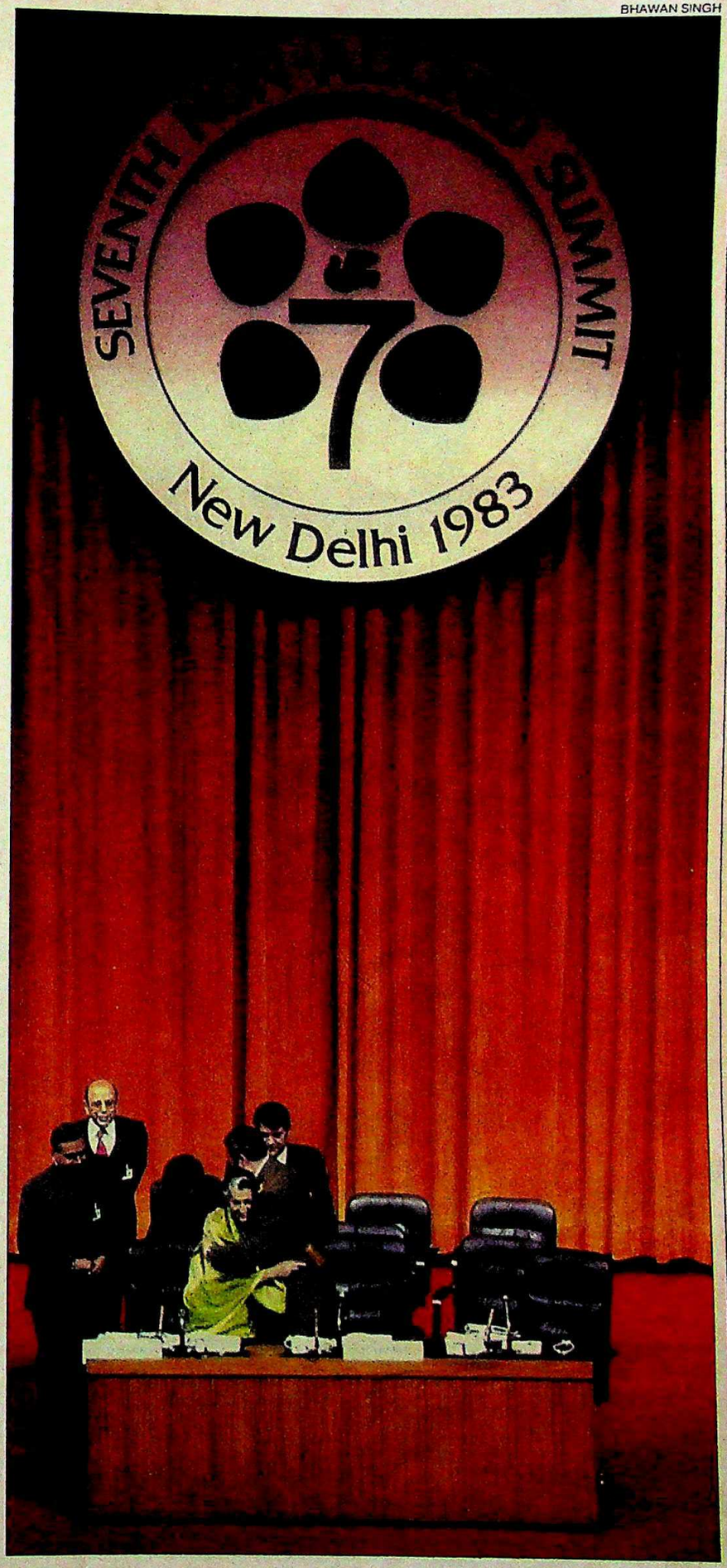
BHAWAN SINGH



BHAWAN SINGH



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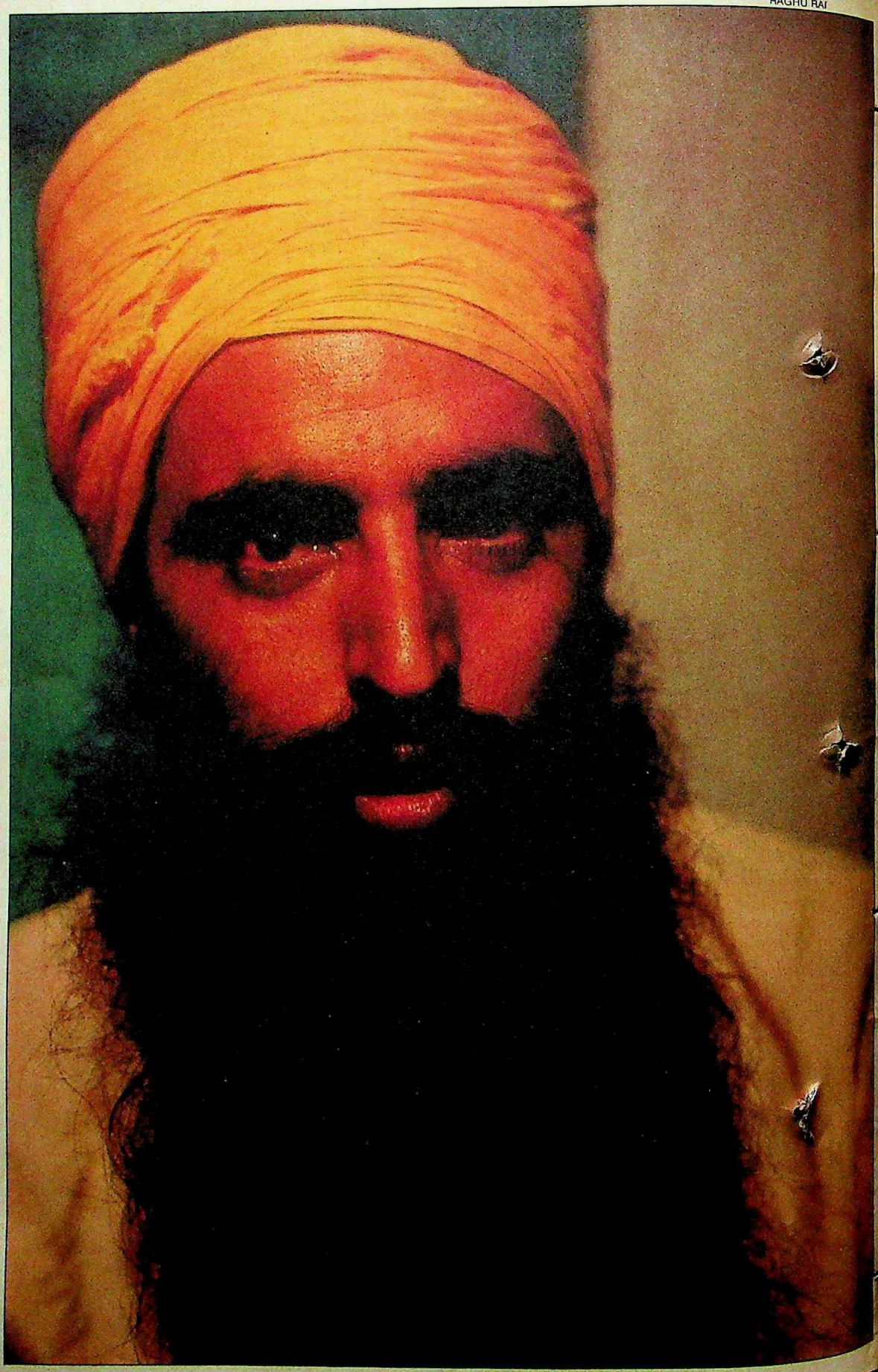
RAGHU RAI

"We Sikhs know how to sacrifice our lives. At the same time, we know how to cut others into pieces."
J.S. BHINDRANWALE
August 1983



"As long as Bhindranwale continues to have his way, Punjab will continue to burn."
VIRENDRA
editor, *Pratap* of Jalandhar
April 1983

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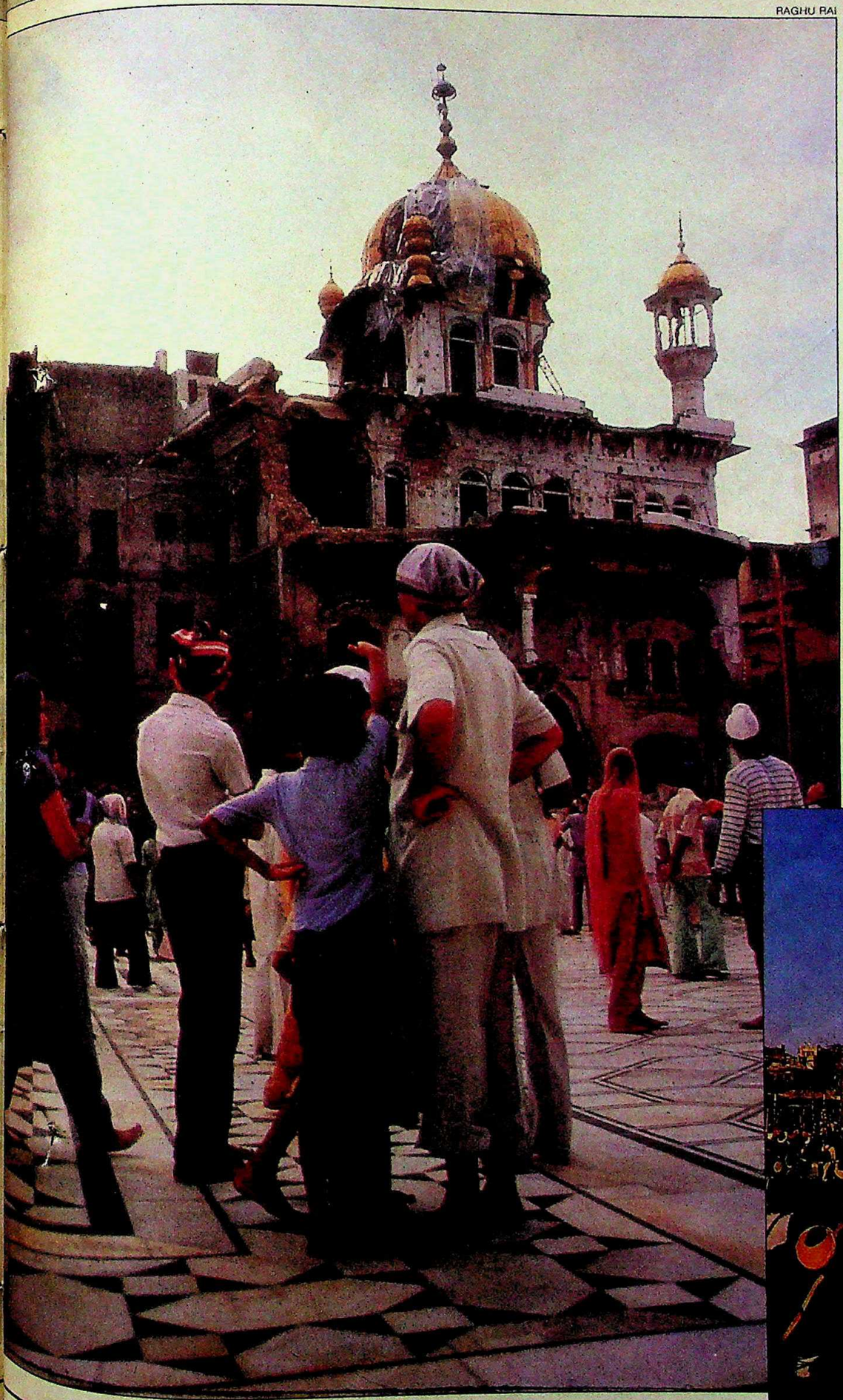
RAGHU RAI



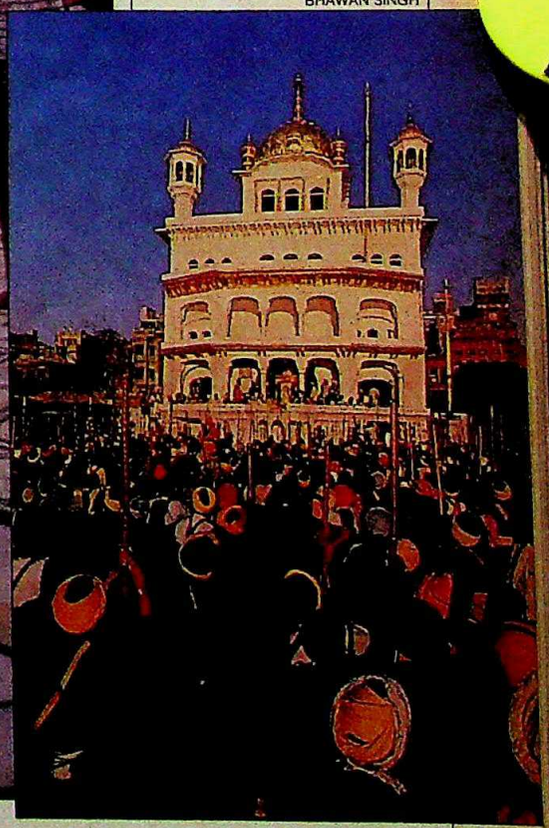
"We went inside with humility in our hearts and prayers on our lips."

Lt-Gen. K. SUNDARJI
GOC Western Command in June 1984

"It is entirely their business. If the SGPC want to build 24 storeys they are welcome to do it, provided the municipal laws permit it."

RAJIV GANDHI
on the proposal to reconstruct the Akal Takht in March 1985

BHAWAN SINGH



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"Every drop of my blood, I'm sure will contribute to the growth of the nation."
INDIRA GANDHI
October 30, 1984
the day before she was assassinated

"The India that Mrs Gandhi left behind is at the moment in a critical condition: fragmented by fratricidal conflict, governed by a fractured party. She had a hard enough time governing it but Rajiv is faced with a Herculean task."
INDIA TODAY
on Mrs Gandhi's death, November 1984

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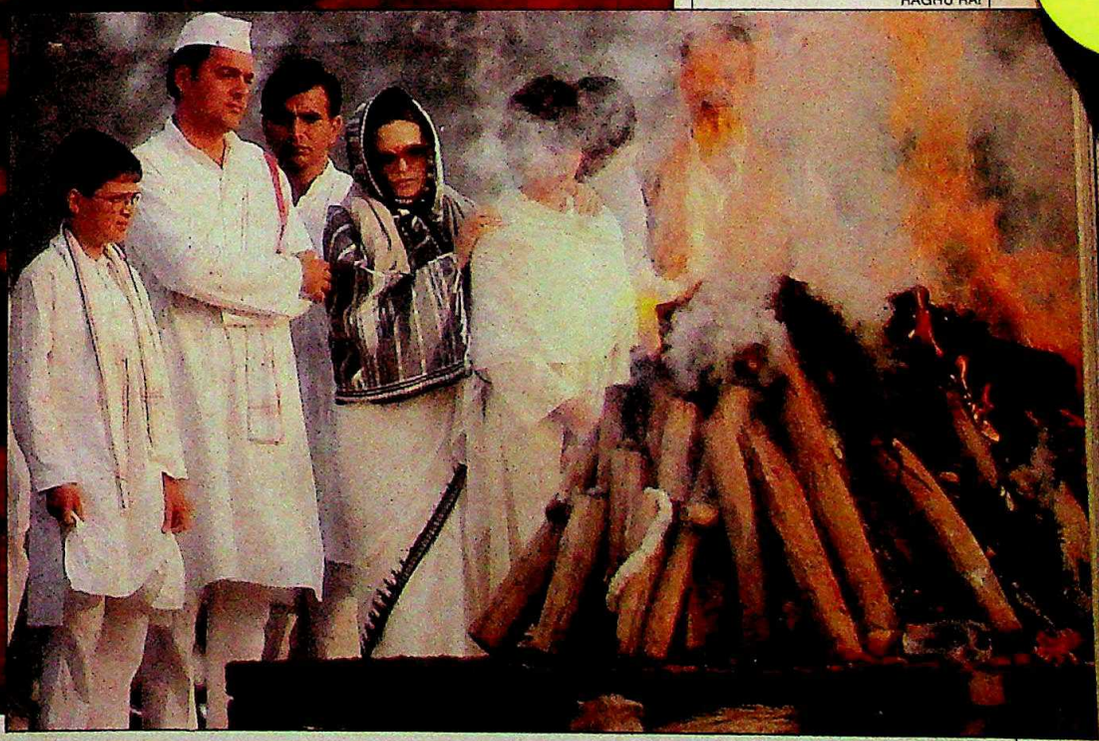
RAGHU RAI

"Most poignant of all, a grim-visaged son, wreathed in smoke from the funeral pyre, like some ghostly benediction from the grave."
INDIA TODAY
November 1984

RAGHU RAI



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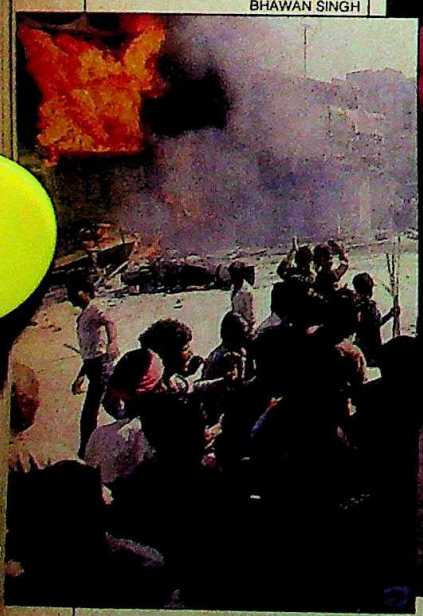
RAGHU RAI

"Three days of violence and loot and murder left the national capital dazed, reeling from an unprecedented holocaust. The pattern was nauseatingly repeated everywhere: spontaneous arson and destruction at first taken over by criminally led hoodlums who killed Sikhs, looted or burnt their homes and properties while the police twiddled their thumbs."

INDIA TODAY
November 1984

BHAWAN SINGH



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RAGHU RAI

"A Monday of macabre death, a killer cloud of gas that silently settled on an unsuspecting city and converted a mild winter's night into a nightmare of misery, panic, sickness and for at least 2,500 people, babies and children, fathers and mothers, a slow, painful, unneccessary snuffing out of life.

INDIA TODAY
on the Bhopal gas tragedy
December 1984

RAGHU RAI

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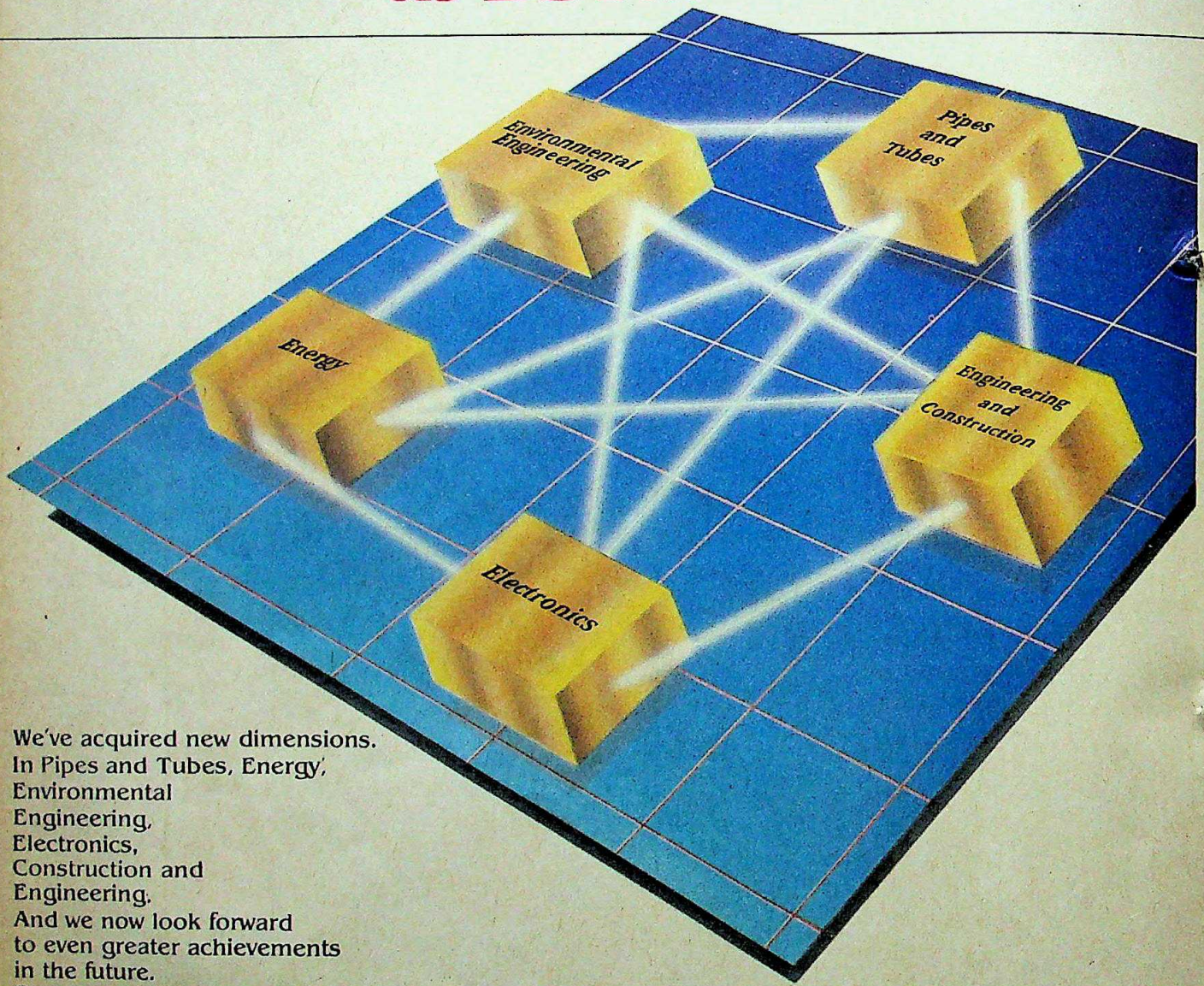

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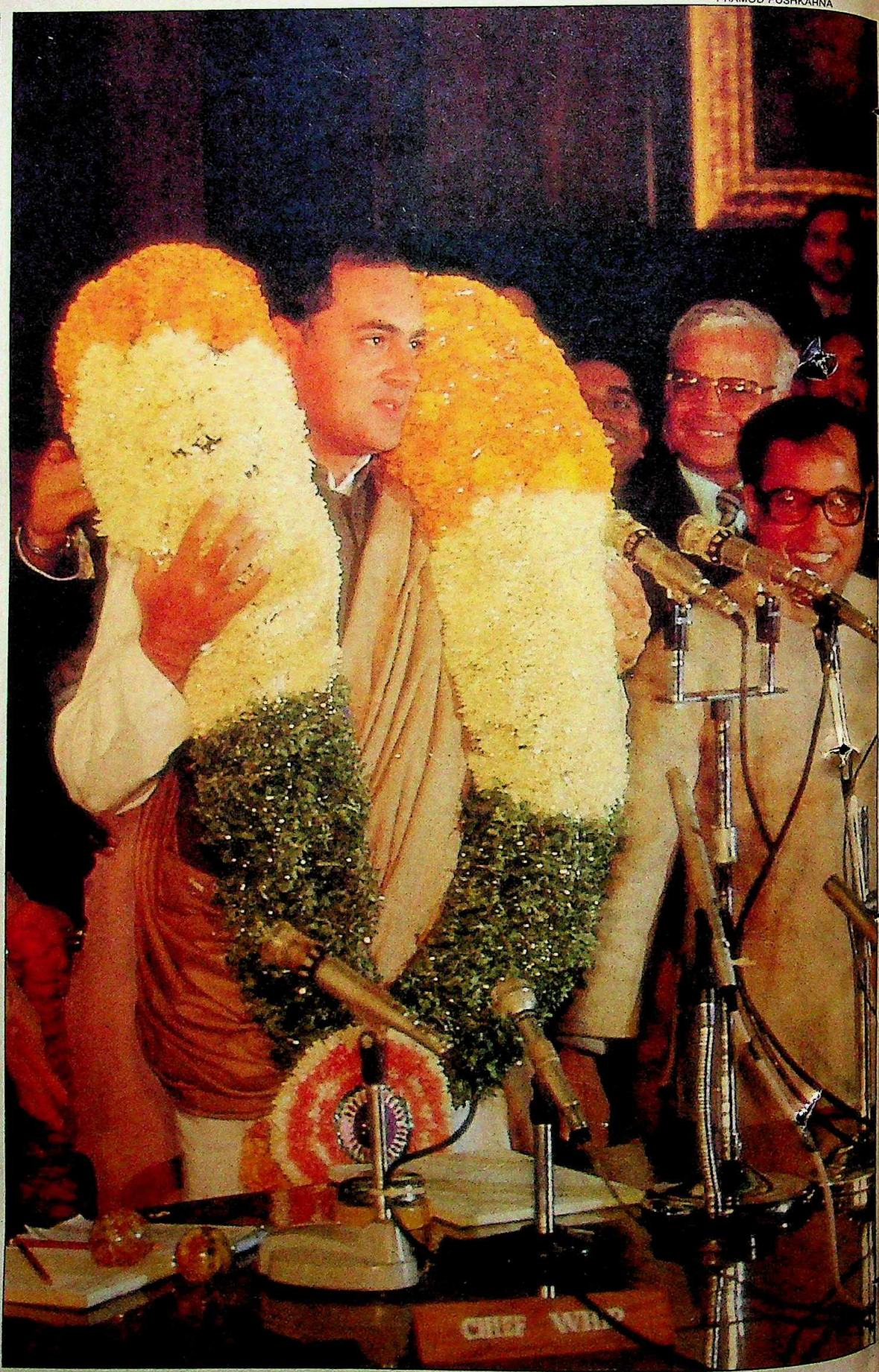
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"It was Rajiv's election. Rajiv was the campaigner, Rajiv the candidate and Rajiv was elected."
V.P. SINGH
January 1985



"People's expectations are scary."
RAJIV GANDHI
India Today
February 1985

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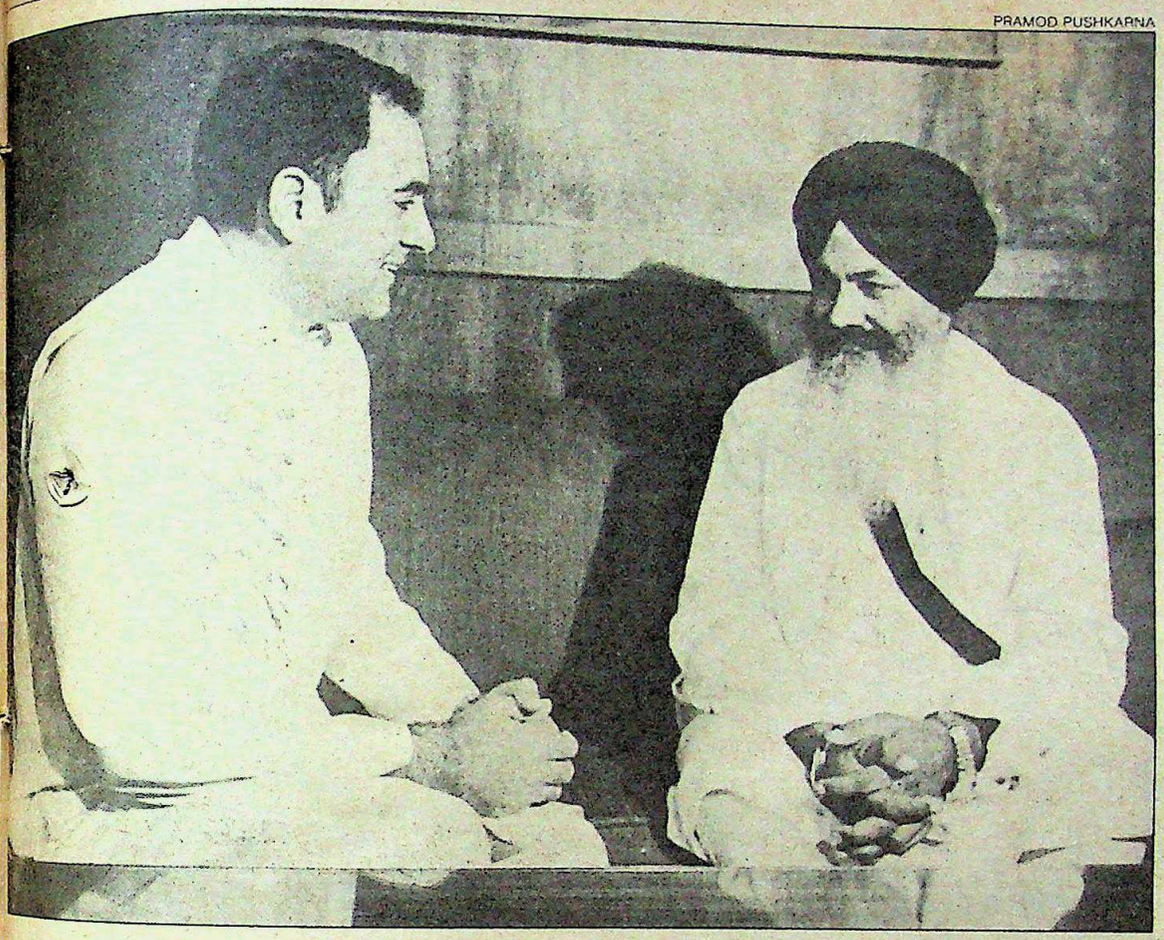
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"It wasn't such a difficult decision after all. I just followed the order of my guru."
SANT LONGOWAL
on the Punjab accord
India Today
August 1985

"We have had to make compromises but we have won a victory."
PRAFULLA MAHANTA
on the Assam accord
India Today
September 1985

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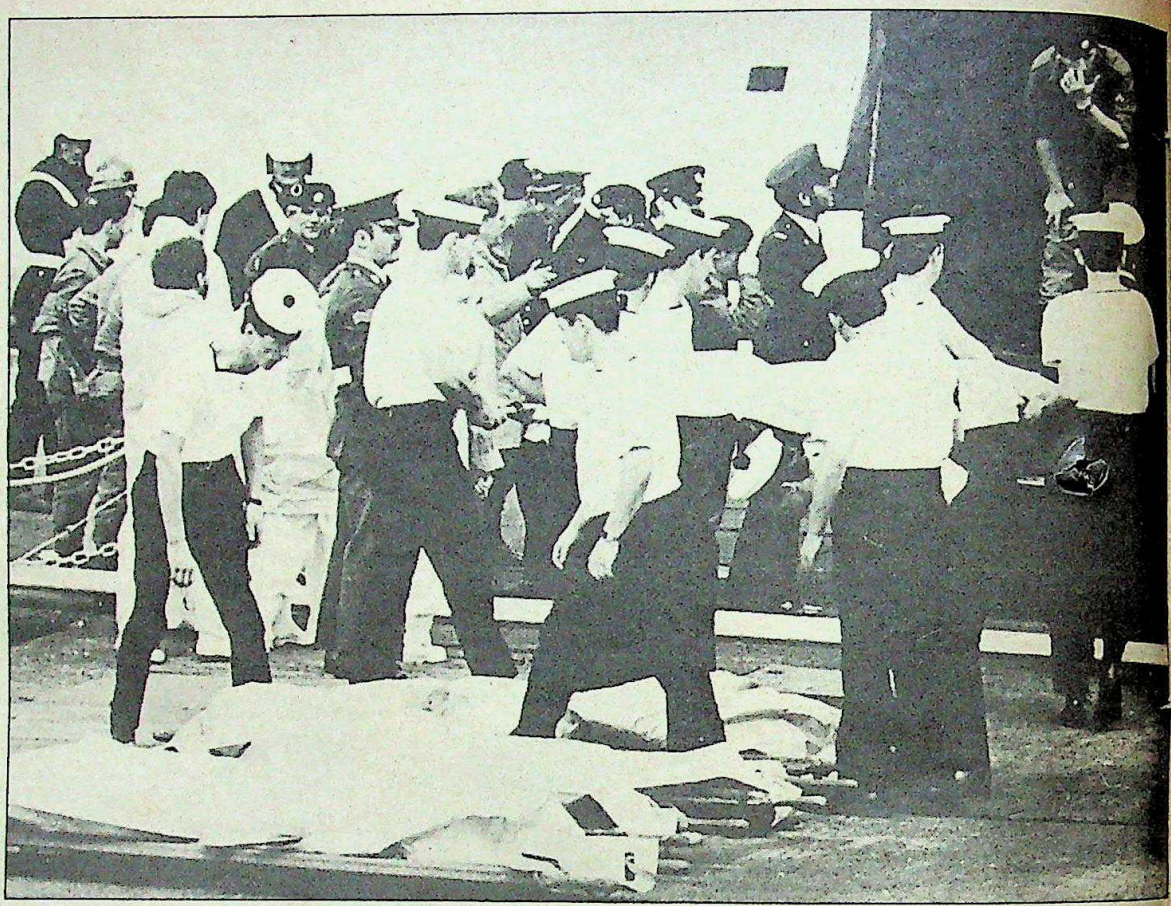
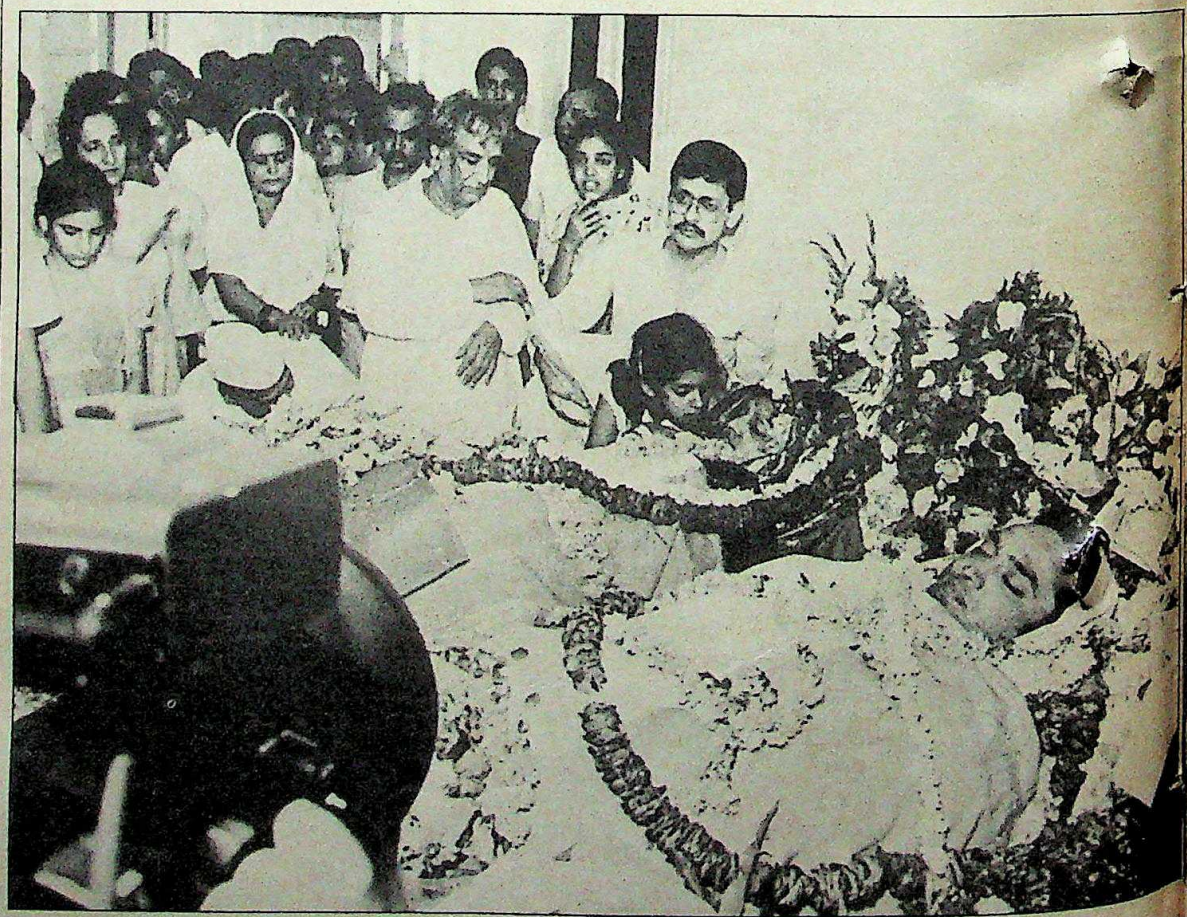
"The sorrow and despair were soon replaced by outrage at the depraved choice of the target—a Jumbo airliner with 329 innocent men, women and children on board."

India Today on the Air India explosion in June 1985



"Once the symbol of protest was a flag and its voice was a hoarse slogan. Today, the symbol is a bullet, spinning out blindly, and its voice is the impersonal staccato rataratarataratat of a beserk Sten gun."

M.J. AKBAR in The Telegraph on the killing of Lalit Maken, August 1985



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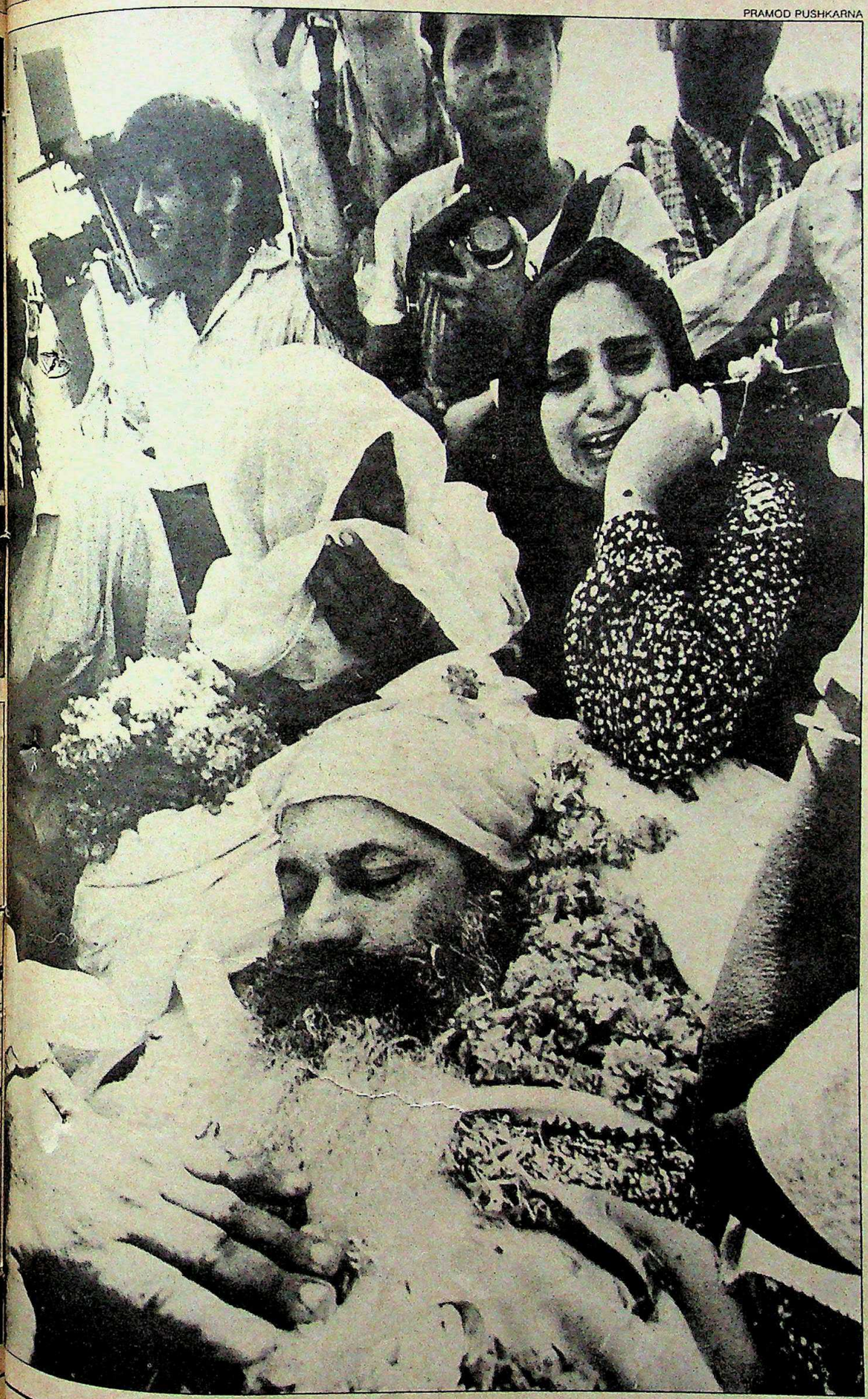
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"No one can browbeat me nor bullets deter me. My death will be a small price to pay for bringing amity to my brothers and sisters in Punjab."

SANT LONGOWAL
in India Today,
September 1985

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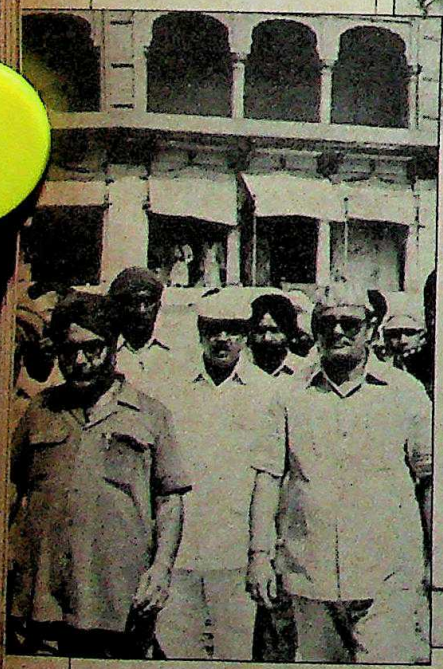
RAGHU RAI

"It was a decisive vote against extremism, a vote for peace in a troubled state."
INDIA TODAY
on the Punjab Assembly elections, September 1985

"For us he is now Sardar Arjun Singh."
SANT LONGOWAL
after the signing of the Punjab accord, July 1985



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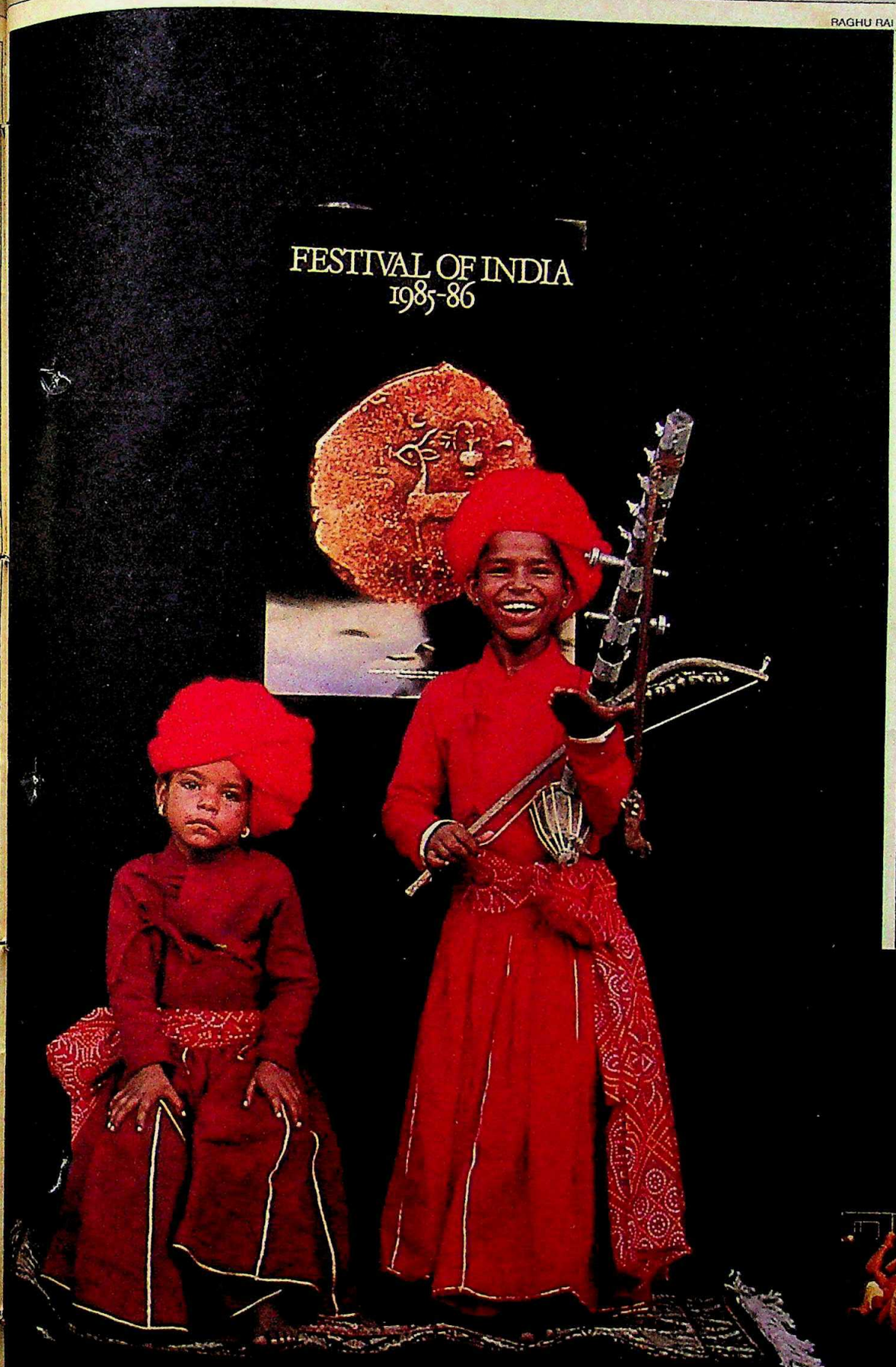
RAGHU RAI



"For the first time we are facing the West in complete equality. Our generation, the older generation, is passing away. This festival is about how the young eyes of India see tradition."

PUPUL JAYAKAR
chairperson
Advisory Committee
for Festival of India
June 1985

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"We must all look ahead and prepare India for the 21st century into which we will soon be stepping."
RAJIV GANDHI
in The Times of India, January 1985

"What the country needs is not computers, television sets or electronics but jobs for the unemployed, drinking water for the villages and bread for the hungry."
Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar, in The Times of India, May 1985

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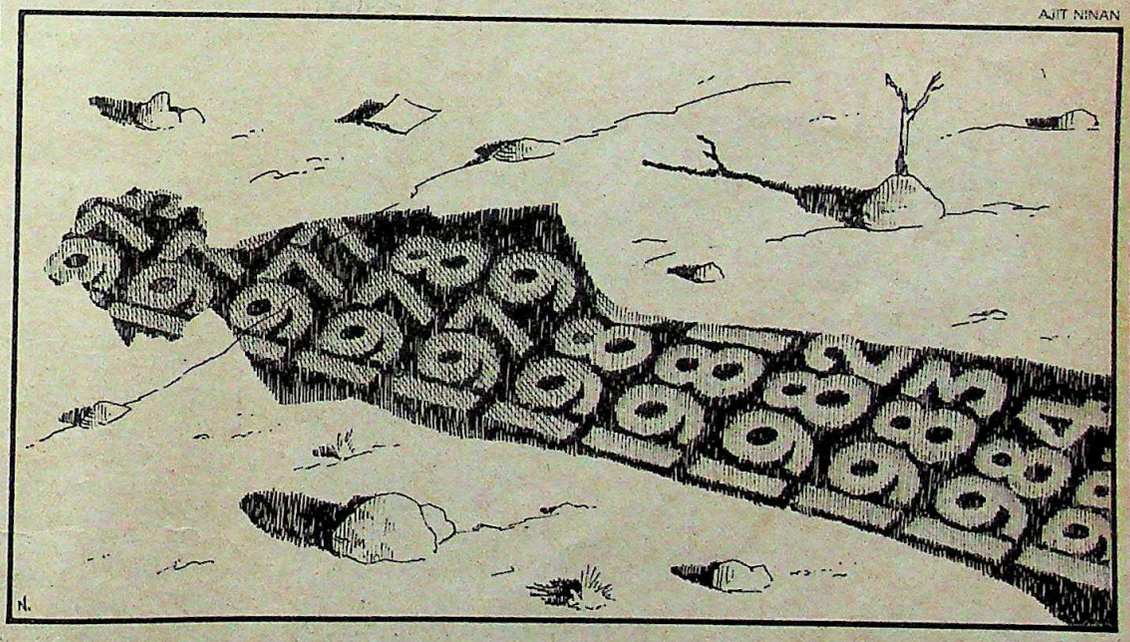
CHANGING POLITICAL CULTURE

It was a decade that revolved around the personality of one person, Indira Gandhi whether she was in power or out of it. She shaped the darkness of the Emergency at its start, moulded her party, cast a long shadow over the Janata regime, chose her sons as political heirs and, in the cataclysm of her assassination, enabled power to pass to a younger generation.

AJIT NINAN



At the start of the decade India was caught in the biggest political cleavage in its modern political history. Today it stands on the threshold of a new political consensus.

EVERY generation believes it lives through momentous times. And at the pace at which India has changed these past 40 years, who is to dispute that? Each decade has had its own distinctive political temper. The back-breaking struggle and cathartic exhilaration of the decade of independence. The surge of self confidence and the challenge of nation-making in the 1950s. The wars, famines and rising uncertainties of the 1960s followed by a flash of brilliance in the early 1970s to yield only too quickly to turmoil and confusion. Yet, in spite of it all, there hasn't been anything quite like the last decade.

Hold an imaginary kaleidoscope to the eye and the slightest flick of the hand produces political patterns never before beheld in India:

A prime minister held guilty of corrupt electoral practices. Mrs Indira Gandhi's unique and arrogant answer to that: the suspension of democracy, and the jailing of political opponents. The enactment of vicious laws, of self-serving legislation retroactively implemented to protect the prime minister. The build-up of a personality cult. Harsh measures to curb population growth and clean up cities. Swift retribution as a sitting prime minister and her government are defeated for the first time. The first non-Congress government in power and the first premature collapse of a

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government in office.

There was Nellie, arguably the result of political malfunction, the worst large-scale killing since Independence. There's Khalistan, after Nagaland the most serious secessionist threat to be encountered. There have been many army actions but none quite like Operation Bluestar. The assassination of Mrs Gandhi, more portentous than the killing of Mahatma Gandhi, whose work was by and large done, 37 years earlier.

The most remarkable thing is that it happened at all, that events without precedent and forces without parallel could have been unleashed and contained, that the political system not only survived these last 10 years, it came out triumphant.

Trial by fire. No other expression can better sum up the decade that has just passed into history. And, between the two cataclysmic events that encompass it, the declaration of the Emergency and the assassination of a prime minister, it is the lone, embattled, lofty person of Mrs Gandhi that determined how the years would shape. Politics revolved around this one central figure, revered by millions yet disliked by other millions, providing the thread that stitched together the seemingly disparate weaves that made up this fascinating tapestry. Ten years ago, if someone had made a soap opera anticipating all that was about to happen, no one would have believed such events could transpire; that a leader of so many hundred millions would become the *raison d'etre* for the existence of her own party and most of the Opposition, caught in a love-hate relationship not just with politicians but with India's multitudes; that filial fidelities would matter so much to the future of the world's largest democracy.

Politics revolved around Mrs Gandhi, revered by millions yet disliked by others, providing the thread that stitched together the seemingly disparate weaves that made up a fascinating tapestry.

RAGU RAI

INDIRA GANDHI: PREMIUM ON LOYALTY

Incredibly, matter they did, and what occurred as a result reoriented the history of India. Ten years ago, when INDIA TODAY was born, India was caught in the biggest political cleavage in its brief modern political history, torn by the Emergency, eminent politicians in jail, a censored press, usurped political power. Today, it stands on the threshold of a new political consensus. In 1975, the Congress Party—still without the suffix 'I'—was a conglomeration of middle-of-the-road politicians held together by the lure of power or their loyalty to Mrs Gandhi. Today, it is making its first serious attempt to acquire a modern organisation and to function in a modern idiom, rather than remain like the sloughed-off skin of some 100-year-old organism.

A decade ago, the political threat to the ruling party came from within itself, and from opposition parties who reached across state borders and regarded themselves as national. Today, the internal threat is contained at least for the time being, and the main threat is from parties that proclaim themselves to be regional or 'national' parties reduced to regional bases. Ten years ago, there was talk of a national alternative; today politicians are relieved that the Opposition even survives.

If today's buzzword is 'change', it is only a natural corollary to what's been happening to the country's political culture these past years. At one level it remains combative, with political parties and politicians giving as good as they get, yielding no quarter in forums where public stance is important, in Parliament and on election platforms, for instance. If elections were marked by acrimony in 1977 and 1980, Rajiv Gandhi's rhetoric in December 1984 was no psalm to moderation. He went hammer and tongs at the opposition parties, particularly the Akalis with whom he was to negotiate a settlement only seven months later, accusing them of being all but anti-national.

But at a deeper level, politics has turned away from its daggers-drawn attitude of the past. True, one of Mrs Gandhi's first utterances on resuming office in January 1980 was conciliatory. "Come, let us work together," she told the nation. But hers was a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose attitude. There was no togetherness, mainly a contemptuous dismissal of her opponents. Today as the Bharatiya Janata Party's L.K. Advani says: "When you speak to him (the prime minister) privately, he comes out as a sincere and interested person who is keen to shed the confrontationist attitude of his mother."

That attitude infected son Sanjay who in turn let loose a virtual epidemic. Smarting at the drubbing he received over his Maruti project at the hands of the opposition parties in Parliament in the early 1970s, Sanjay's whole attitude was combative. When his new phalanx of MP's rose noisily to

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drown the much-diminished Opposition in Parliament, shouting and heckling day in and day out, he told an interviewer: "The younger members of Parliament are giving them a taste of their medicine. The younger group is more vocal and won't be bullied." Anger and fear were in the air.

Today's images are different. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presiding over a meeting with opposition leaders, denuded of power in the last Lok Sabha poll but still given their head by a young man who feels he can cope with their political challenge. The meeting is not a symbolic one-time affair, as was usual in earlier times. It takes place twice, three times, oftener, and an opposition politician recalls that the dialogue led to an amendment in the anti-defection bill. "He's pulled the rug from under our feet," confesses a Telugu Desam functionary.

The images of conciliation juxtapose swiftly: Awan Longowal sitting self-consciously in the prime minister's parliament office to sign the Punjab accord. Another signing, this one only a few hours before dawn on Independence Day, to settle the Assam agitation. And an uncompromising figure of the prime minister, rising in the Lok Sabha to declare unequivocally that as far as he is concerned with the Sri Lankan Tamil problem, the ball is now in the Tamil court.

With consensus has came credibility. When Mrs Gandhi declared in Parliament that she had no idea of what governor Ram Lal had been up to when he gave the chief ministership to the defecting N. Bhaskara Rao, it wasn't only the opposition parties that railed against her; she simply wasn't believed. There had been too much skulduggery before, whether it was Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal walking his entire cabinet—the 'Bhajan mandali' as Arun Shourie christened it—into Mrs Gandhi's waiting arms in 1980, or governor Ganpatrao Devji Tapase refusing to accept Lok Dal leader Devi Lal's claim to form the Haryana government in 1982, or the toppling of Farooq Abdullah in J&K and Nar Bahadur Bhandari in Sikkim. The assault on Karnataka's Janata Government in 1983 backfired with the messy Moily tapes episode, leading an irate Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde to declare: "Why should not the Congress(I) tolerate a few non-Congress(I) governments? Is it a Mughal empire in which nobody (else) should have a small kingdom?" And the dictum of power by any means would have continued to reign had Andhra Pradesh and N.T.Rama Rao not proved a jaw-cracking mouthful even for the ravenous Congress(I).

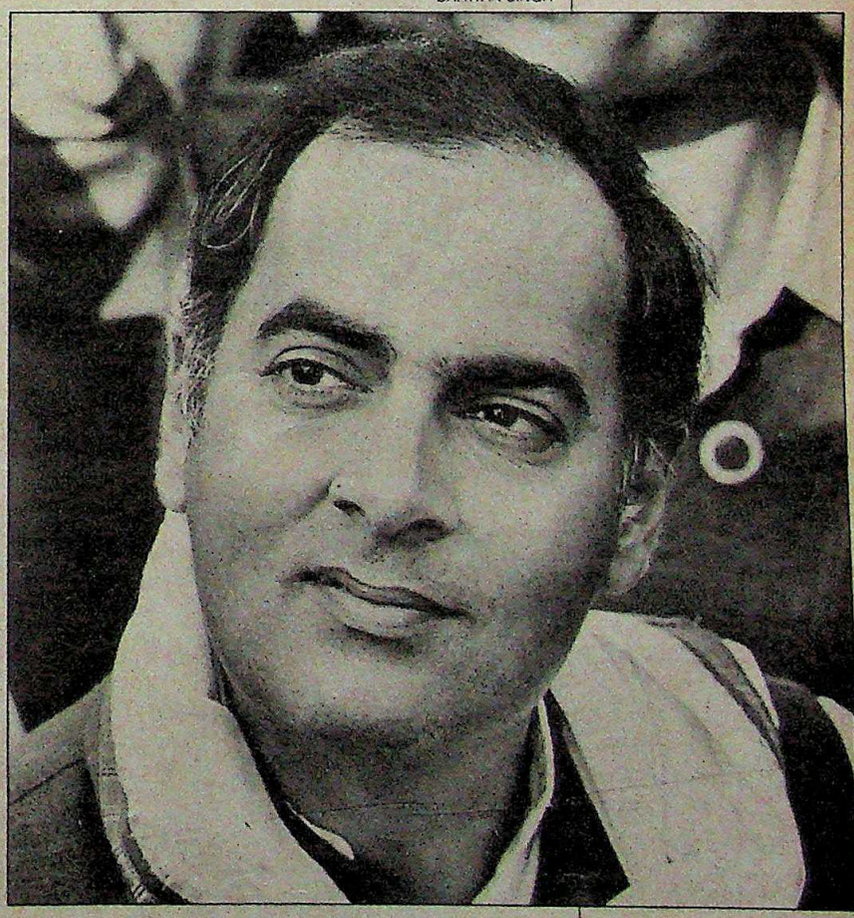
It was a chicken and egg conundrum: which came first, the drift or the loss of credibility. Three years ago, the answer to Assam was a disastrous, violence-ridden and farcical election. Next fortnight, a new election should wipe out at least the political damage of the last, coming as it does on the shoulders of an accord. For two years and more, Punjab burned, hundreds died in the army action, a prime minister was assassinated and countless others perished in the violent aftermath of that bit of insane violence; today there are terrorist killings, but there's a legitimate Akali government, and for the first time in four years Punjab has a chance of peace. For long months, Tamil extremists from Sri Lanka found a rich haven in Tamil Nadu, easy access and sanctuary from attack; they're still in Tamil Nadu, but the heat's been turned on them and they aren't as free to come and go.

More long-overdue decisions have helped cement a new credibility into place. A bill to permit political donations. Another banning defections. An enhancement in permitted election expenses. Moves that came as belated recognition of the facts of political life, and made for a sea-change in the popular mood, that here at last was a government that may not have had all the answers but did seem to mean what it said.

If the political stage belonged to Mrs Gandhi, she won it by her unmatched political skills and in her unique contributions of holding the country together through crisis after crisis and giving it a voice in the world. Through all the years of turmoil she gave the country the one thing it badly needed to emerge from economic backwardness to some sort of forward momentum: time. Towards the end, she may have lost her touch but she saw India through some of the worst tensions that ever wracked a modern nation. And when things began to go wrong, her instinctive reaction was to turn for help to the only people she felt she could trust: her

Long-overdue decisions have helped cement a new credibility and a sea-change in the popular mood, that here at last is a government that may not have all the answers but does seem to mean what it says.

BHAWAN SINGH



RAJIV GANDHI: A NEW CONCILIATION

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sons. Where the first failure would have drained the vitality of any other leader, she presided over two attempts at nurturing a political heir. Somehow she found the strength to cope with Sanjay's death; and in her death she made it possible for Rajiv to succeed her.

Mrs Gandhi's Congress Party was shaped, indeed made by her personality; if it was sustained by her strength as a vote-catcher, it was debilitated by her suspicions of her fellow politicians. Both were understandable: she is first seen under the spotlight in 1966 as a creature of the Old Guard, put on stage merely to utter the lines these aging leaders of the Syndicate prompt her to say from behind the curtains. But the lines catch in her throat, and she rewrites the script. She snaps their bonds by speaking over their heads directly to her audience, the electorate. The lesson she learnt stood her in good stead all but once: that as long as she could capture the popular imagination, she didn't need to rely on anybody else. The other side of the coin was that those who didn't stand by her in her adversity were dispensable.

The result: her party hinged on loyalty and in split after split was denuded of competence. The quintessential Congressman of this troubled period is Giani Zail Singh, captured for posterity by a camera lens at precisely the right moment, preening before a life-size portrait of his leader. What can better express the Congressman's obsequience than the Giani's remark when he was nominated to be President. Said he: "If my leader had said I should pick up a broom and be a sweeper, I would have done that. She chose me to be President."

Sanjay and his men received their political baptism under prosecution during the Janata phase and soon began to rely on political muscle. They were more comfortable raising cain than performance.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

SANJAY GANDHI: COMBATIVE STANCE

It was not an auspicious forum in which to launch a brash young man with little respect for a system he believed had merely nurtured ideologues and bumbling amateurs. Yet, to Sanjay belongs the credit for the first attempt at rejuvenating the party, crystallised by Mrs Gandhi's widely broadcast view at Guwahati in 1976 that: "The Youth Congress has stolen our thunder." That was no unrehearsed one-liner, but as it turned out the operative word was 'thunder'. Sanjay and his men received their political baptism under prosecution during the Janata phase and soon began to rely on political muscle. They were more comfortable raising cain than performance, and the enduring image is a photograph of Sanjay confronting police lathis on Janpath, one of the capital's busiest streets. Sanjay's young guard was, like in his mother's time, a reflection of his personality: impatient, impetuous, given to cutting corners.

After their triumphant resurrection in January 1980, mother and son made a neat division of responsibility. Mrs Gandhi pursued her loftier interests: policy-making and running the Government. Sanjay had a free hand in the party. He inducted some 50 greenhorns into Parliament and brought down the average age of the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party to just about 45, the lowest ever. As H. N. Bahuguna said shortly afterwards: "When I was invited by Mrs Gandhi to rejoin her in 1979, it took me just a couple of days to realise that the Congress as we knew it had been metamorphosed into something different. It was 'Indira Congress' in name but Sanjay Congress in reality."

Perhaps the change would have come about, had Sanjay not tried that June morning in 1980 to put his stunt plane through its paces. But with his death the whole superstructure came crumbling down. With rare exceptions, such as V.P. Singh and Arjun Singh, Jagdish Tytler and Madhavrao Scindia, Sanjay's nominees fell by the wayside, their fate exemplified by his widow, Menaka. Without the man responsible for its latest incarnation, the Congress(I) began to go to pieces, more or less out of control, battered by the alleged corruption of an Antulay, the electoral defeat of a Gundu Rao, the inept handling of an Anjaiah or the factional politics of literally every state of the Union. Even a sympathetic commentator like Girilal Jain was obliged to write: "In plain terms, if either Mrs Gandhi does not try and reshape the Congress(I) to give it coherent organisational structure or she fails in her effort, the country will face chaos."

Living through all this was Rajiv's political inheritance. With such a heritage, it isn't surprising that change should come slowly, or that it

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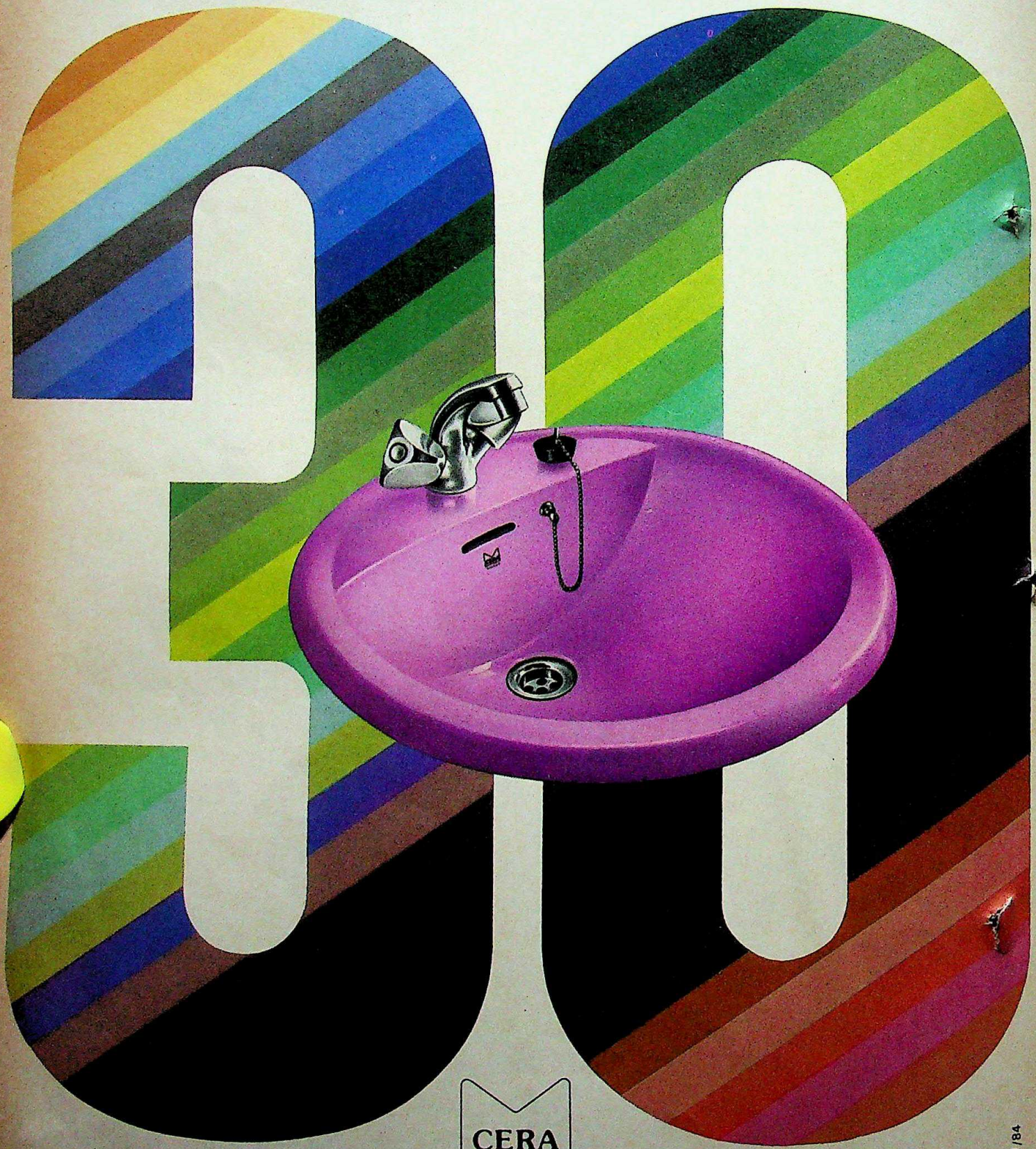

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After Sanjay's death the Congress(I) began to go to pieces, more or less out of control, battered by the alleged corruption of an Antulay, the electoral defeat of a Gundu Rao, the inept handling of an Anjaiah or the factional politics of literally every state of the Union.

should be of the two-steps-forward-one-step-back variety. Or even that there should be undisguised sniggers at the advent of the 'manager politician' and 'computerji'. But there's a lot more. Fewer political fixers, for instance. There are politicians in power who have a questionable reputation, but the Congress Party is being buffeted by an unfamiliar wind. Training camps and training sessions are usually identified with the corporate culture; the Congress (I) is holding them. In politics, information came from the trusted few, up the grapevine by word of mouth, whispered confidentially. Now there seems to be a new breed of coordinators and investigators. It is no coincidence that at the last assembly elections, as former general secretary Srikant Verma writes, "Of 2,500 sitting Congress MLA's, he dropped 1,000, either on charges of corruption or because they had become dead wood. Some 70 state government ministers were denied tickets." A full one-third of the Congress(I)'s 1984 MP's were new faces, and as many as 88 of them first-time legislators who, in the words of one, had "never even seen the inside of a panchayat".

It is still early days, and there is plenty of cynicism within the party, that these changes may turn out to be cosmetic. For the first time, the Congress(I) is trying to bring people from diverse fields into politics, sportsmen, so-called intellectuals, entertainers, professionals, others who are a far cry from the agriculturists, lawyers and professional politicians who dominated politics for so long. Their character has begun to rub off on their political organisation. Party members aren't as obtrusive as before, they're more work-oriented, goal and performance targeted. As the country's youngest MP, Mukul Wasnik told INDIA TODAY recently: "We are not here to represent any lobby, we are here to solve problems."

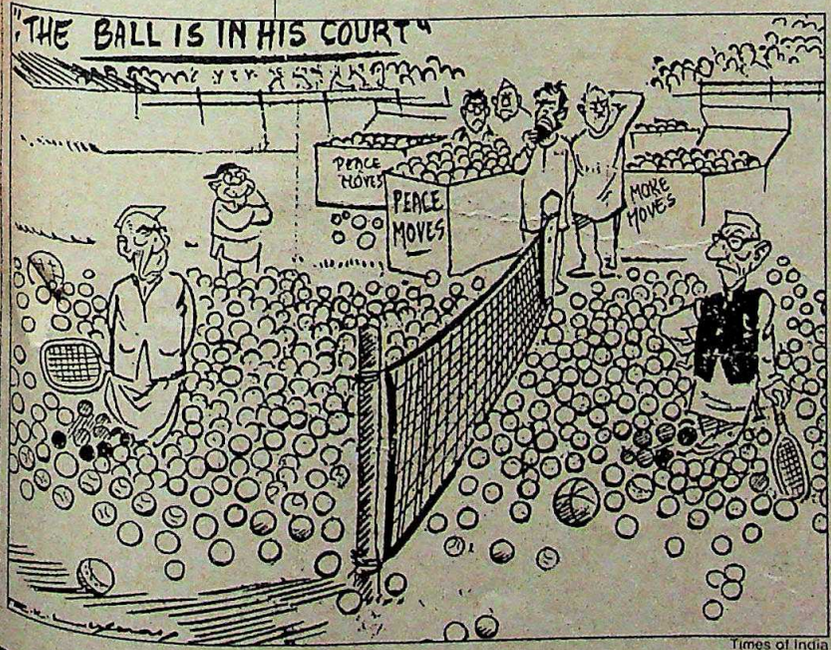
To that task, the new vanguard brings a new ideology. Fifteen years ago, Mrs Gandhi triumphed promising to eradicate poverty. She caught the popular imagination by nationalising key industries, winning a war with Pakistan and in the process dividing it into two, and moving decisively on a populist tack. It is no coincidence that her decline started when she failed to produce rabbits out of her hat. Banishing poverty proved to be more than a matter of passing an edict. Indeed, out of the wreck of foodgrain nationalisation and the inflation that followed in 1972-73 came the slow pull-back, legitimised in later years by Sanjay who was impatient with 'isms', refused to accept the traditional labels of 'left' and 'right', and reversed the direction of the previous 10 years. Even the Janata Party, which thanks to George Fernandes banished IBM and Coca Cola, found itself a laughing stock when it seriously discussed nationalising TISCO.

Since then the political rhetoric has changed. *Garibi Hatao* gave way long ago to a more practical slogan: 'Elect a government that works'. Today, the slogan has marched on, to 'Elect a government that works *faster*', and it is the 21st century that has caught the imagination of the burgeoning middle class of some 100 million which has in the last 10 years evolved into the dominant political force. Populism is on the wane, yielding to pragmatism. Tax rates are down, big is no longer bad, strikes are out, investment is encouraged, multinationals aren't discredited by Bhopal, and both the stock-market and entrepreneurship are blossoming. The new buzzwords are solution-oriented: productivity, production, progress. The socialist lexicon has been put back on its shelf.

If Mrs Gandhi bequeathed Rajiv a party which bore the stamp of her personality, she bequeathed the nation an opposition paralysed by its obsession of her. For the middle-of-road opposition, politics was opposing Mrs Gandhi. The bullets of Beant Singh and Satwant Singh not only snatched away her life, they destroyed the Opposition's one-point campaign.

The so-called National alternative had only itself to blame for its inability to impress. No party could have asked for a better start than the Janata in 1977, a head start not just in its sweeping victory but in the near total collapse of the Congress morale. The dream of that old crusader, Jayaprakash Narayan, come true. But the sense of hope was shortlived. If the astrologers peered slightly further into the future and saw what was to be, they kept their counsel. Soon, it was no longer a party of seasoned politicians, it had become a chorus of snarling alley cats.

Remember the lines? They had usually to do with Mrs Gandhi. Charan Singh: "Perhaps those who differ with me do not realise sufficiently the intensity of the feelings among the people of our country on the Government's failure to put the former prime minister behind bars....They think that we in government are a pack of impotent people who cannot govern the country." Recall



Times of India

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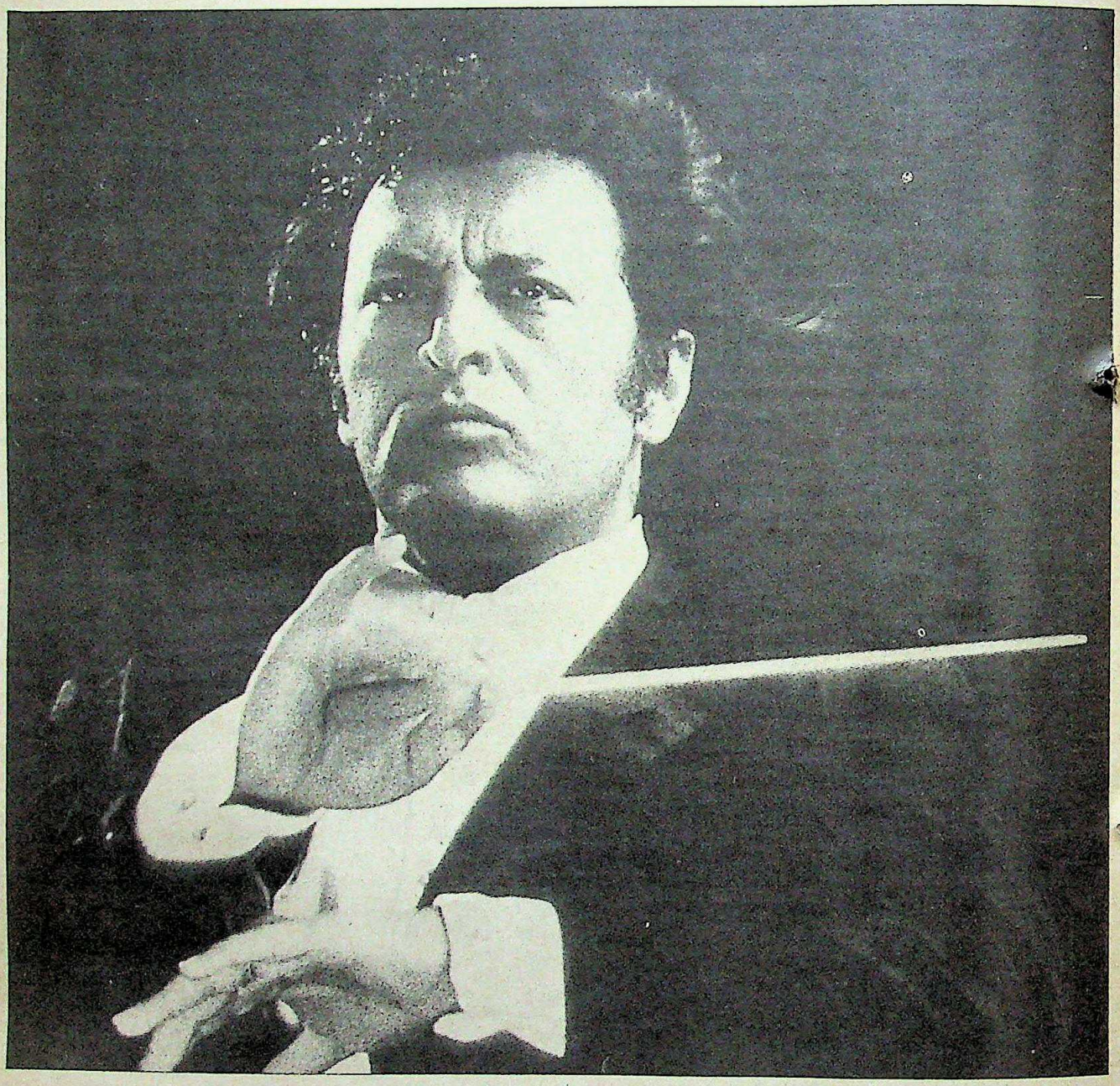
10 DECISIVE YEARS
Dec. 1975—Dec. 1985



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THE BEST WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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the farce: Mrs Gandhi under arrest, squatting on a culvert late at night on Delhi's border, refusing to be taken to Surajkund because it was in Haryana, a night of drama that robbed the Shah Commission of its relevance. Think of the absurdities: Health Minister Raj Narain, lying in a state of near-complete undress getting his morning massage while a group of women tried to interest him in their voluntary health programmes. And the ignominy: Speaker K.S. Hegde rising in the Lok Sabha one March afternoon in 1979 to break the premature news of the 'death' of JP. Even the quips had become personal: "Every time the PM opens his mouth, the Janata Party loses half a million votes," said Ram Jethmalani.

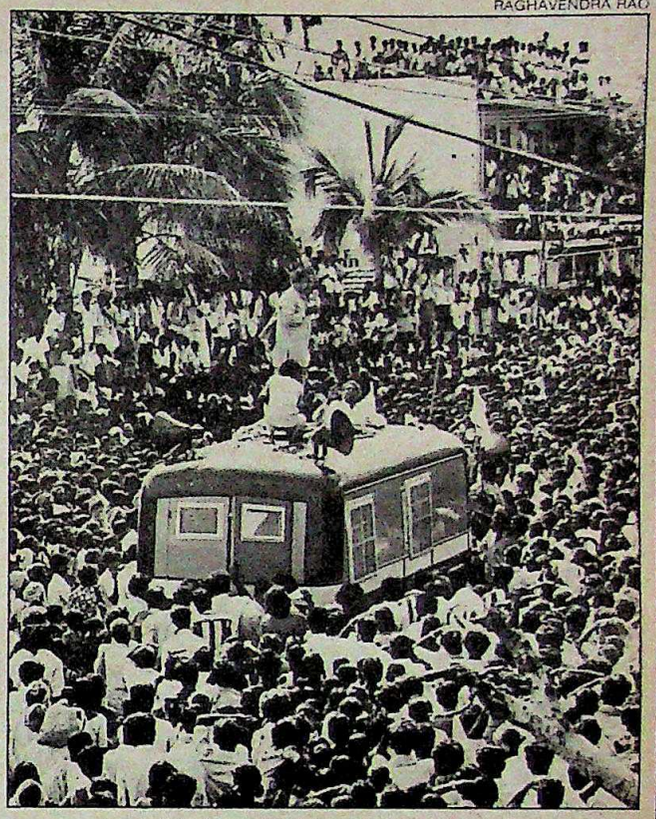
Then the denouement. Charan Singh, prime minister at last—but only because Mrs Gandhi supported him—standing somewhat awkwardly with his wife, posing for pictures in one corner of his ample Tughlak Road lawn. "Chowdhury sahib, have you achieved your life's ambition," he's asked. "It wasn't my ambition," he replies coyly, recolouring in one sentence the confused and cantankerous story of the previous 30 months. With Mrs Gandhi pulling the rug from under his feet, Charan Singh becomes the shortest-lived prime minister ever. And, so, as one commentator said: "The Janata Party is dead. It was not killed, it committed suicide." When President Sanjiva Reddy dissolved the house, it wasn't just the Janata Party that died; it took the National alternative with it.

Yet the lessons weren't learnt, and in spite of the efforts of several midwives since then, the idea hasn't been reborn. The closest it came to being conceived again was at Vijayawada two years ago, but there were too many would-be fathers: 24 leaders turned up representing 14 opposition groups. The obsession with Mrs Gandhi out of power became even stronger with her in power. The intervening months are peppered with views that reflect this neurosis. Sharad Pawar: "We have realised that if we don't come together, Mrs Gandhi will continue to hit us individually." Charan Singh: "We must unite to form a common front against this lady." Chandra Shekhar: "Our object is to replace her. If I don't try to unite the Opposition, it will amount to helping Mrs Gandhi directly." There were few takers for Advani's view: "We must forge issues and programmes based on unity."

No surprise, then, that the voter should have given most of these parties the go-by and joined hands, wherever possible, with regional groupings. As Shyam Nandan Mishra once conceded: "People are looking for an alternative. If they cannot find one at the national level, they choose the regional ones."

Ten years ago, only the two Kazhagams in Tamil Nadu and the National Conference in Jammu & Kashmir—the latter by arrangement and not electoral victory to begin with—and the Akali Dal in coalition had tasted political power. Today, regional parties seem to have become a fixture, and they have more political clout than the national opposition parties combined.

RAGHAVENDRA RAO



N.T. RAMA RAO: RISE OF REGIONALISM

Indeed, in terms of state governments, the Congress(I) has become a party of the Hindi heartland. It's ill-advised jousting in J&K has given that state a truncated National Conference Government while the Akalis convincingly trounced it in Punjab three months ago. It is years away from being able to dislodge either of the two Kazhagams in Tamil Nadu from their present pre-eminence, and has to be content with hanging to the coat-tails of one or other. The Telugu Desam shows only limited signs of flagging after NTR's second lease of life in 1984. The Asom Gana Parishad may well win the coming Assam election. Kerala is ruled by a Congress(I) chief minister only because he is able to hold a coalition together, and the party has just 34 MLA's of 141 assembly seats.

Is it a coincidence that those national parties who have formed state governments now tend to behave like regional parties? Probably not. Apart from the Janata's complete lack of electoral success anywhere except in Karnataka, Hegde is widely perceived as a Karnataka leader, and his state unit doesn't pretend to have national compulsions. The CPI(M) in West Bengal and Tripura thrives on regional, not national issues, and if anything the party has been stagnant in most states except its strongholds and, oddly enough, Himachal Pra-

"People are looking for an alternative. If they cannot find one at the national level, they choose the regional ones."
SHYAM NANDAN MISHRA

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desh. Elsewhere in the Hindi-speaking states, its presence is minimal, and it isn't threatening to change very swiftly either.

As Farooq Abdullah said at the time of the southern conclave: "The harsh fact is that the Centre does not appreciate or even understand the hopes and aspirations of the states. This is the basic cause of difficulties between the Centre and the states."

The most durable change is probably the one that takes place imperceptibly, and there is a long way to go. Money power, corruption, the personality cult, legislation that isn't effective, inertia and cynicism—to a greater or lesser degree they continue. Institutions remain unreformed, and if the courts are clogged up, Parliament could give a better account of itself sometimes (in one foreign affairs debate last fortnight, the minister addressed a House of 29 members).

But there's one change that now stares unblinkingly in the face: that no politician can any longer take for granted the main agent of change, the voter. All the trends of the past are far from reversed, but each passing day makes it clearer that somehow, uncannily, it is the ubiquitous voter whose silent, wordless command issued once every now and then is directing politics, making it cleaner, less acrimonious, more positive. And, ultimately, serve the interest not of the man in power but the one who put him there.

Karnataka voted the Congress(I) strongly to the Lok Sabha in December last year; in March it gave extraordinary strength to Hegde's Janata regime, and there was no way the voter would have put up with any crude attempt to dislodge the administration in between. The Punjab electorate couldn't have returned a result better suited to the interests of the state than giving the Akali Dal a solid chunk of the Assembly. It's now beginning to happen almost each time. Millions of random minds at work, somehow over the years evolving an instinctive consensus that directs them unfailingly each time to the right decision.

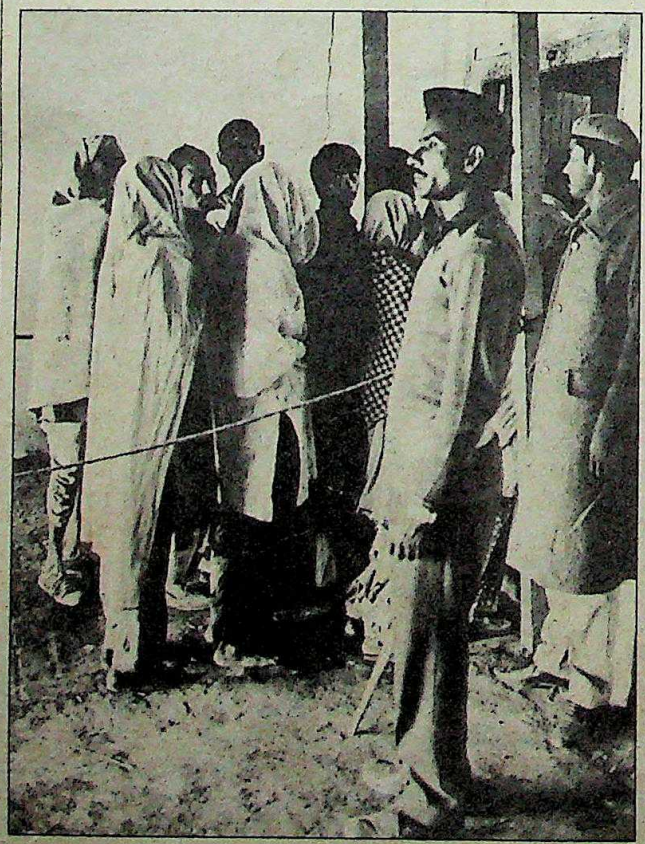
Why? Because each vote is a vote for change and nobody knows better than the average voter what is good for him. In 1971, Mrs Gandhi's *garibi hatao* caught the imagination of the voter. Offering the prospect of a new beginning, she trooped 352 members into the Lok Sabha. If the Janata's victory in 1977 was an unmistakable rejection of the Emergency, the Congress(I)'s rebirth in 1980 was an equally unmistakable thumbs down to the crude power games and sheer ineptitude of the Janata. And 1984 was no less of a vote for change, only this time ironically enough the agent for change happened to be a new face within the Congress(I).

Politicians who misread this message are destined for failure. As Mrs Gandhi did in the early 1970s, as did the Janata Party in 1979 to provide democracy and self-respect, as Mrs Gandhi did, once again, to provide a government that worked. Today's political culture is changing because it is being impelled by precisely this momentum, when the gut instincts of a leader coincide with the aspirations of the electorate that put him there. It's when the two diverge or the leader can't deliver the goods that there's trouble. Today, the Congress(I) has a solid majority in the Lok Sabha and a leader who radiates confidence. What if things change, if policies don't work well enough, if the party is pushed to the wall as it has been so often in the past? Will the new political culture remain? Or will there be unbearable pressure to once again take short cuts?

If the elected and electorate diverge again, it isn't hard to see what will happen. A toothless woman long past 50, working a field not far from Lalgunj in northern Bihar, saw it in December last year as the election campaign was heating up. Looking up from a furrow she had just ploughed, she smiled: "Yes, I know all about these *badmash log* who come and take our votes," she said in a loud, assertive and confident voice that caused everyone else to gather around. "Yes, I will vote for Indira's son and if he isn't good for us, we'll shoo him away like we shooed away all the others before." The others didn't just nod, they cracked up laughing. Better than anyone else, they know the score.

—SUMAN DUBEY

POLLING BOOTH: MANDATES FOR CHANGE



It is the ubiquitous voter whose silent, wordless command issued once every now and then directing politics, making it cleaner, less acrimonious, more positive.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In the Indian context, ten years is but the blink of an eyelid, so slow has been the pace—and faces—of change. But the decade still had its fair share of yesterday's people, men and women who dominated centre-stage at some point or the other in their respective fields before fading out. India Today tracked down some of the most prominent to discover where they are now.

R.K. DHAWAN

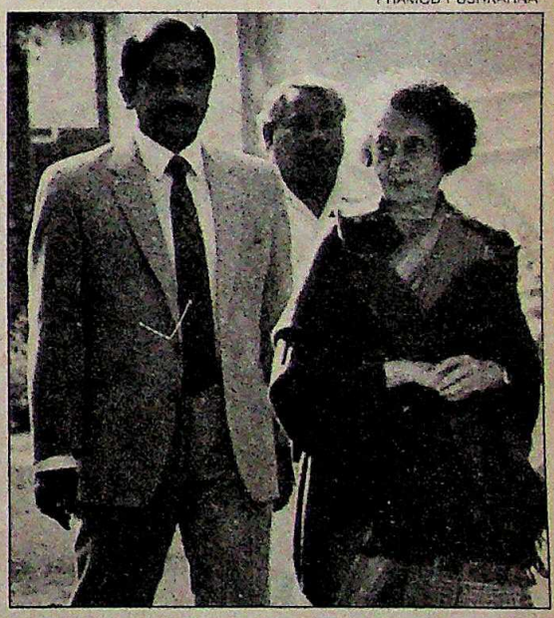
◆ No one brings R.K. Dhawan Dunhill cigarettes anymore. December 31,1984, Rajender Kumar Dhawan, 47, stood by the new prime minister for the announcement of his secretariat. Dhawan's name did not appear. For the last time that evening he drove back with Rajiv Gandhi and then left 1, Safdarjang Road forever.

It has not been a happy new year for R.K. Dhawan, Mrs Gandhi's special assistant who trailed her like a shadow—from 7 a.m. till midnight—for 22 long years. Picked up as a stenographer when he was only 25 years old, Dhawan was trusted with the late prime minister's deepest confidences and he in turn fiercely guarded access to her, becoming in the process one of the most powerful men in the country. No rise could have been as spectacular, no fall as dramatic. With madam gone, the shadow leads an especially empty life. "I believe in God, not human beings. What has to happen will happen, why worry?"

And there are no worry lines on the face that had become almost as familiar as the famous employer's. As he sits in his neat little Golf Links house in New Delhi, Dhawan confesses that for the first time he has time—to devote to his pooja, to read the biographies that he is so fond of and to meet his five sisters and two brothers. "And I'm also pasting my old photos into an album," he says showing memories of his 22 years with Mrs Gandhi. Beneath the last picture of her dead body, he has written, in an uneven hand: "The saddest day of my life."

"I believe in God, not human beings. What has to happen will happen, why worry?"
R.K. DHAWAN

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



DHAWAN WITH MRS GANDHI: IN THE SHADOWS

A.R. ANTULAY

◆ The only ones who bother about him anymore are the stewardesses aboard the Bombay-Delhi airbus as Abdul Rehman Antulay, 57, shuttles between the two cities trying to get his notorious cases settled for once and for all. Interest in the mega-scandal of the '80s—that had kept the one-time Sultan of Bombay and his dubious Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan pasted firmly on the front page of national dailies—has dwindled to mere academic curiosity. "By God's grace I shall

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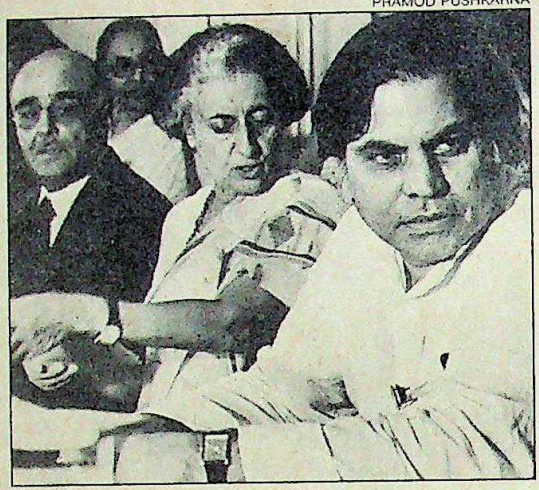
Antulay—who could conjure money at the wave of his hand—has been let halfway off the hook, he is happy, relaxed and all but forgotten.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



ANTULAY: CONTENTED ANONYMITY

win the case and prove that I am the cleanest politician to take on Mr Clean," the former chief minister of Maharashtra had blustered last year even as he lay propped up against hospital pillows recovering from a cardiac arrest, a lonely political outcast with the country's ace criminal lawyer Ram Jethmalani hot on his heels.

Now as the case has moved into the Supreme Court and Antulay *pasha*—who could conjure money at the wave of his hand—has been let halfway off the hook, he is happy, relaxed—and all but forgotten. "I scrupulously avoid meeting people, I'm kept busy making notes about the case," he admits flashing that old toothy grin after a three-and-a-half year period that had almost short-circuited his electric personality. "My mind and heart are trained to be neither happy nor unhappy but to do one's duty and leave the results to God." It was the scandal of the century and it may be the anticlimax of the century as well.

HAJI MASTAN

◆ If the mighty have fallen, the fallen have become mighty as well: Haji Mastan, the country's best-known ex-smuggler spends Sunday mornings in his Peddar Road bungalow in Bombay reclining on a four-poster with silver legs. Outside is a queue of people waiting to meet their demi-God. "They come everyday to seek advice," says Mastanbhai, 64, smiling beatifically. "They want to know how they can settle their rents, their land disputes. I am here to listen to them."

But every day is not a Sunday. Monday mornings Haji Mastan is back on the track, doing good deeds for the world through his political party, the Dalit Muslim Suraksha Sangh (DMSS) set up last year. "But that the press prefers to ignore," he snaps good-naturedly. Currently the DMSS is carrying out a vast anti-drug campaign with over 500 people visiting its de-addiction cell at J.J. Hospital every Monday. That apart Mastan, plans to do something even more constructive, in fact get into the construction business itself and hopefully stop the demolitions proposed by the Bombay Municipal Corporation. "The Government must first give alternative accommodation to these people," says their messiah. "Let them give me the money. Mastan Construction is prepared to do it without any profit."

Ever since Haji Mastan publicly renounced smuggling before Jayaprakash Narayan, he has made it a point to stubbornly remain in the limelight even though he does get a little sentimental when he talks about the future. "How much of the future is there?" he says wistfully, "Life is a matter of two breaths and most of it is over." Till then, however, he can always lie back in his easy chair, click on the imported VCR in his room and watch the string of superhit Hindi films based on his life—and savour the sweet flavour of immortality.

S. AURANGABADKAR

MASTAN: RELAXED REFORMATION

The fairy tale of Rukhsana Sultana, the *femme fatale* of the Emergency, has come to an end and she has now moved into the wings to watch the fairy-tale of her daughter begin.

RUKHSANA: MOTHER IN WAITING

RUKHSANA SULTANA

◆ Those outsize dark glasses are still perched upon the aquiline nose but the small lines have begun to creep on to the glamorous face that terrorised the inhabitants of Turkman Gate a certain summer many years ago. Rukhsana Sultana, the *femme fatale* of the Emergency doused herself in perfume, nimbly raised her French chiffon sari and trudged her way through the mire of Jama Masjid—old Delhi's Muslim quarter—

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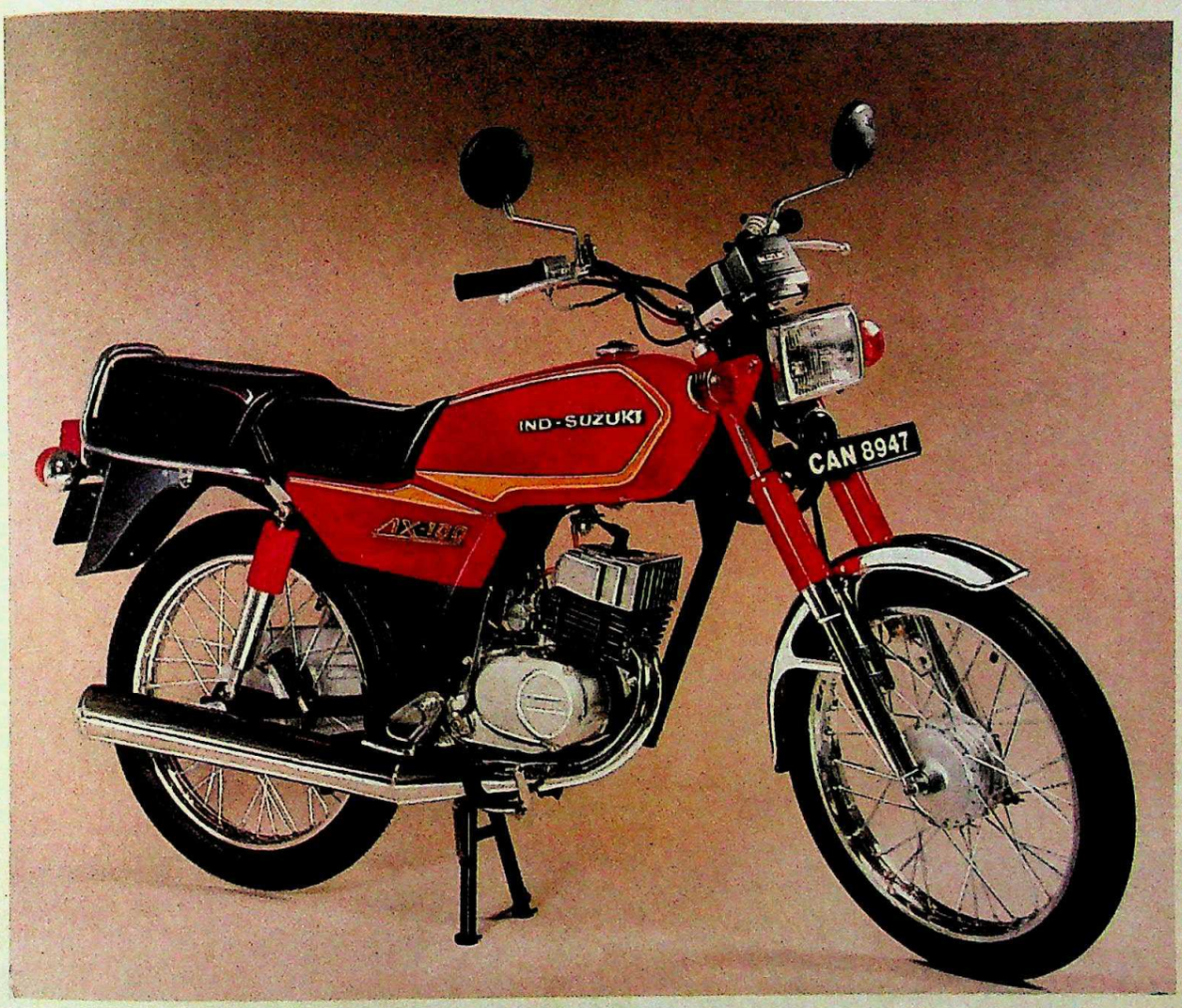
TAKE COUNT



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"I am hardly flooded with movie offers, far from it."
HEMA MALINI

The past lingers in Gayatri Devi's home—all reminiscent of a time when maharajas had not dwindled into ordinary citizens. Obviously the princess still remembers.

teaching the illiterate that too many children were the curse of God, a woman who in less than a year drove 13,000 men to sterility.

Then the Janata struck back and Rukhsana faded away with a wave of her jewelled hand and a "sweetie, I have no life-style left" to reappear some two years ago as Amrita Singh's mother, beloved Dingababa, around whom she has woven all her dreams. All along, the press has not been too kind to Rukhsana, the glamorous 39-year-old divorcee who emerged from air-conditioned comfort and quickly moved into Sanjay Gandhi's charmed circle. Her looks sealed her fate and understandably she recoils from the media even today. "What is there to talk about? I am doing nothing grand, nothing great," she said when cornered at the premiere of *Mard*, Amrita's latest film.

Wrong. Rukhsana has still not returned to her air-conditioned, carpeted splendour. She spends most of her time in Delhi working with the healthy children of lepers. "You never cease to be a somebody as long as you have a concern for people," she said quietly. Nevertheless the fairy-tale—and horror story—of Rukhsana Sultana has come to an end and gracefully she has moved into the wings to watch the fairy-tale of her daughter begin.

GAYATRI DEVI

◆ Summer of '85: the champagne flowed, the chandeliers sparkled and some of America's best-known couples waltzed past Jaipur's Hawa Mahal, a backdrop specially created in New Orleans as part of the Festival of India celebrations in the US. But the one person not drunk with happiness that day was Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur herself. If there's anything the former MP feels most keenly, it is the urban decay of her beloved city. "I used to tie a *patti* around my eyes so that I couldn't see what was happening," the maharani once said and it is on the subject of her city that she gets really excited and her voice rises: "It is disgusting. The growth is totally haphazard and there are encroachments everywhere. I hate what they've done to Jaipur."

Gayatri Devi, carelessly beautiful still, has quit politics—where she had fixed herself firmly for 17 years—for good and she has no regrets that the Janata Party did not offer her a ticket. "Who would I have looked up to in that party?" she says disparagingly. "There has been only one statesman in India since Independence: Rajaji."

But ex-politician though she maybe, she has still to call it a day. When she is not summering abroad, Gayatri Devi is the active chairwoman of two schools, heads the board of trustees of Jaipur's City Palace Museum and runs a stud farm. Last year she started a 20th century *gurukul* where children are taught ancient Indian culture sitting under trees. The past lingers in her modest—by royalty standards—home as well. The drawing-room is dotted with carefully preserved old photographs, tiger skins from the royal hunt and outside her window peacocks strut in the lush gardens—all reminiscent of a time when maharajas had not dwindled into ordinary citizens. Obviously the princess still remembers.

MANDIRA PURIE

GAYATRI DEVI AT HOME: A PRINCESS REMEMBERS

HEMA MALINI

◆ Motherhood sits well on Hema Malini, even if it does sit around her middle. Ever since she delivered her second daughter in July this year, Hema Malini, 37, has moved out of the gossip columns and into her home wearing a 'Do not Disturb' sign on her face. Inside she is busy playing the greatest role of her life—mother to her's and Dharmendra's two daughters Esha and Ahana. "I had become public property, I wanted to slow down," said the actress who has had the longest run at the top, the dream girl who never vanished with the morning.

HEMA, DHARMENDRA WITH OFFSPRING

For the first time now producers are not knocking relentlessly at her door as they have been doing for the last 18 years offering films, fortune and fame. "I am hardly flooded with movie offers, far from it," Hema Malini confessed in an interview recently. Not that it bothers her. She is acting in two unusual films—*Zaamin* and *Ek Chader Maili Si*, an entry into the art world that critics feel will peak at a second career high. And there's her challenging TV serial *13 Panne* where she will metamorphose into thirteen fascinating women from history. "But really dance is my first love," she said recently after a Bharatnatyam performance in Bombay after nearly a year's

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"One thing nobody can ever take away from me is the title of ex-chief minister."
GUNDU RAO

maternity leave from the stage. "I am planning to dances of India." Meanwhile she has already gained an immortality of sorts. They still call her Basanti—the rumbustious, fun-loving *tangewali* from *Sholay*—in the villages.

RAJ NARAIN

◆ Name: Raj Narain
Age: Refuses to disclose.
Occupation: Party-hopping, now with the Socialist Party of India
Dress: Topless, usually. Headgear varies with the fashion, presently red bandana in vogue.
Born and brought up in: Benaras wrestling pits.
Greatest achievement in life: Toppling Mrs Gandhi much to his own wide-mouthed amazement.
Strongest belief: "I am a freedom fighter."
Family life: Married, had four children and renounced marital relations in 1958.
Rises: Before dawn, prays for an hour and rushes under cover again.
Lives: In a flat in Laxmibai Nagar, Delhi, surrounded by pictures of gods and goddesses.
Preserving deity: Hanuman.
Routine: Gives audience to party members, leaning on *gao-takiya* like Cleopatra while masseurs grapple with his pounds of flesh.
Special qualifications: Professional agitator. Jailed over a 100 times.
Special service to nation: Providing comic relief.
Present status: Out of sight, out of mind.

S. PREMI

RAJ NARAIN: WAY OF THE FLESH

"I am a freedom fighter."
RAJ NARAIN

GUNDU RAO

◆ Ramarao Gundu Rao, 48, is still the most talked about politician in Karnataka—even if it's not always in the politest of tones. Ever since the humble bank manager from hilly Kodagu made good in politics, Gundu Rao has steadfastly refused to shift his 98 kg out of the limelight. So the former chief minister of Karnataka moans and groans in print about the low prices that he gets for the tomatoes that he grows on his 20-acre farm near Bangalore, announces a fast to protest against the state Government's decision to hike bus fares and keeps on about how the Congress(I) has fallen in the state and how he is the only leader of any stature in the party. As he says: "One thing nobody can ever take away from me is the title of ex-chief minister."

RAJ CHENGAPPA

GUNDU: ON THE TROT

Like an upward shooting star, Gundu Rao rose—like no other politician in the state before or after him. He remembers his days as a young man when his only ambition was to "get a job, any job". A decade-and-a-half later he got a job he liked: as chief minister. His three years there kept the state rocking with controversies. MLA's were treated like dirt, several ministers found themselves embroiled in scandals. And when rudely bumped out in 1983, Rao blamed everyone but himself. "It is destiny that brought me the chair in 1980," he says philosophically, "and it is destiny that took it away. Destiny may bring it back again."

While he waits for destiny to oblige, Gundu Rao keeps himself busy—with early morning jogs to get those 98 kg bouncing with health, by looking after his tomatoes and onions and by holding durbar for a never-ending stream of visitors. He has lost none of his arrogance as he says: "It's the chief minister or nothing for me." Right now it is nothing.

ARUN SHOURIE

◆ As the sun dips in the evening and the birds chirp their way back to their nests, Arun Shourie gets up from his desk at home. He has been bent over his papers since 9 a.m. and to look at, nothing has changed for the ex-executive editor of the *Indian Express*, who in two short years managed one journalistic coup after another to become the country's most famous newspaperman—a racehorse, who *Indian Express* baron R.N. Goenka feared "would wreck my tonga someday".

But since he came home to stay, things have changed for Shourie. No newsmagazines or popular journals litter his house. "I am staying away from current affairs," he says, looking like the kid who's given away his most precious toy. Instead he sits alone in his study that is lined with heavy books relieved only by his son Aditya's photographs. He is working on two books that he hopes to publish early next year—"I want my work to

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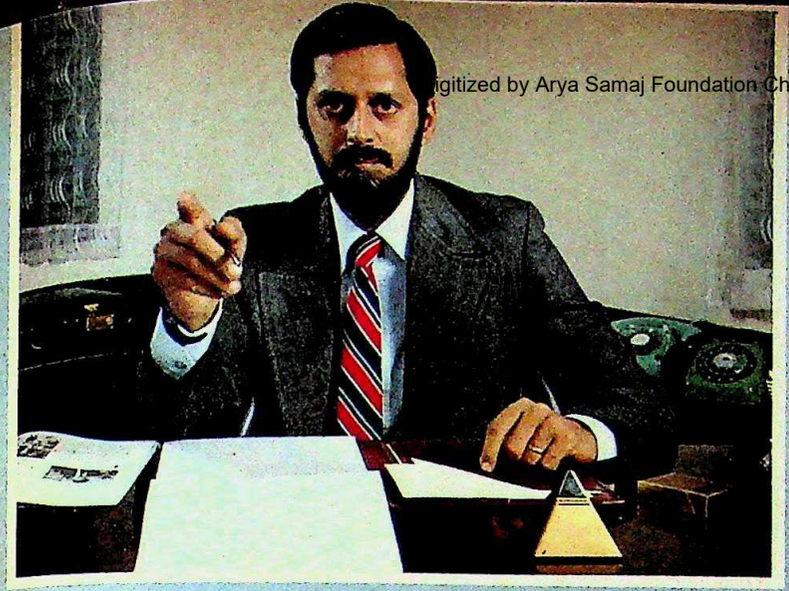

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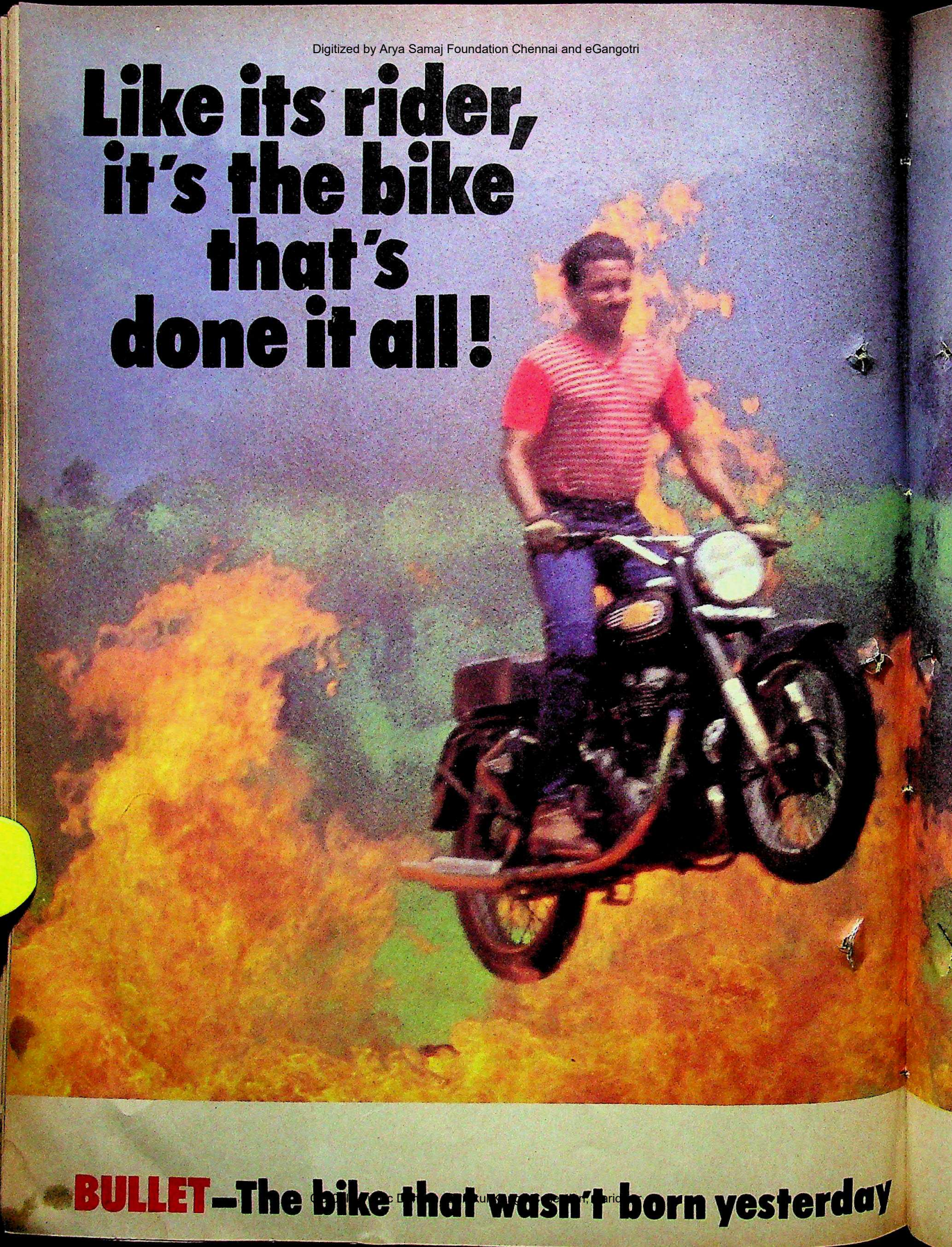

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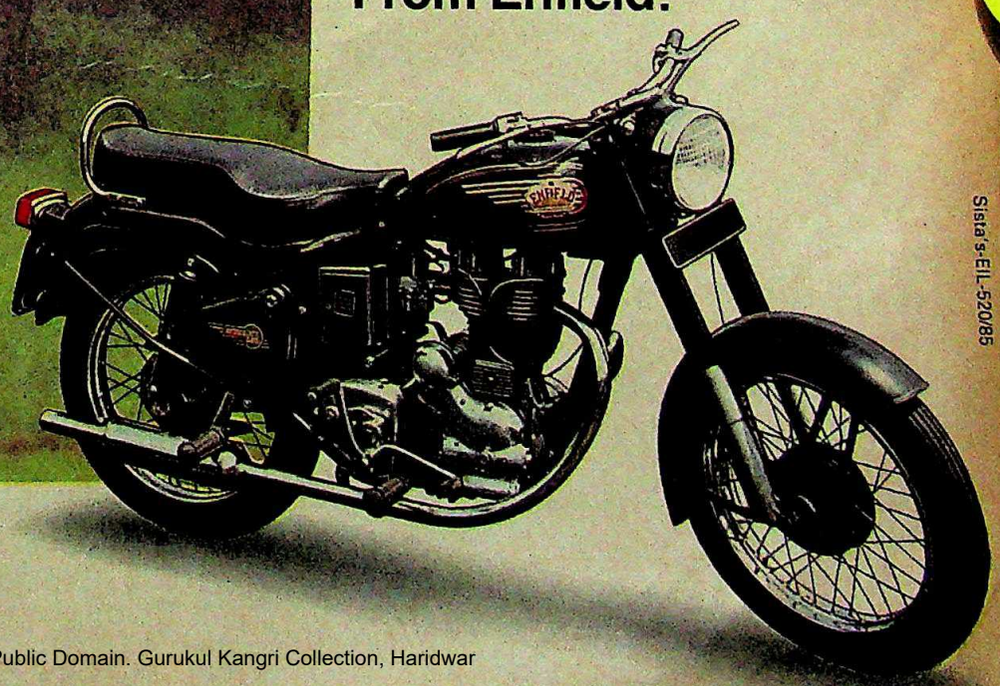

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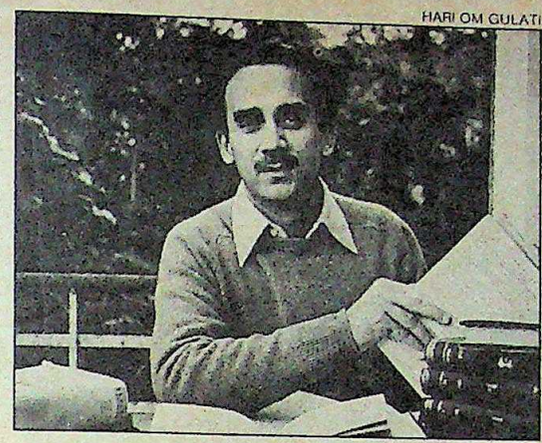
"You know what I miss, I miss the teleprinter network, that's what I miss most."
ARUN SHOURIE


HARI OM GULATI

SHOURIE: BETWEEN THE LINES

have long-term value and be as relevant 10 years later"—as well as the pieces he writes for the *Illustrated Weekly*. "I am extremely fortunate that I have at least one editor who will publish me," says Shourie, the same man who in his peak crusading days had inspired opposition MP Piloo Mody to comment: "Imagine the improved state of the nation if we had 10 Arun Shouries working instead of one."

The racehorse might have dropped out of the sound and fury of politics but he still gallops extensively over the country, as general secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties and as a human rights activist. But his eyes sparkle as he remembers his days at the *Express* and suddenly he smiles boyishly. "You know what I miss, I miss the teleprinter network," he says, "that's what I miss most."

PROTIMA BEDI

◆ Protima Bedi started doing her thing under the Marine Drive flyover in Bombay way back in 1967. That is where she set up Hide-Out, India's first discotheque. What she did between then and now would probably make a book that the censors would never allow to get to the newsstands. So, recently when she appeared wearing a sari with a coy smile, it had to mean something special. It did. Protima Bedi, mistress of the unpredictable, who streaked her way to semi-stardom, the woman who has given scandal sheets much of their fodder, is married again—to a Swiss gentleman, but she is going to keep him firmly under the eiderdown. "I am not going to say a word about him," she says firmly. "He is not meant for general consumption, he is mine, only mine."

But herself she will talk about. She returned last month from an Odissi performance for the UN in Norway. "Protima and the UN, could you ever imagine that the two would have something to do with each other?" she asks. She spends six months in a year training European students to swing eastern style. "It's almost like combat training," she says now preparing to carry on similar battles with Indian students at a school for Odissi that she is setting up in Bangalore. But it's going to be no ordinary school, this one. "At about Rs 2,000 a month, this is not going to be a place for those who want to lose weight," smirks the unorthodox classical dancer.

While she wants to make money, she wants to have fun too. Protima claims she was mobbed for autographs in remote Assam after her bit role in *Khandaan*, and she loved it. Now she wants more of a good thing—a role in B.R. Chopra's under-production TV serial on the *Mahabharata*, no less. "I feel acutely what India is today," says Protima, "it has a soul that is 5,000 years old and a head that is in the 20th century. I am the same." Then she goes overboard. "I tell all my friends that India may live up in the trees but we have Otis elevators to carry us there." Well, there always were two big things about Protima Bedi: her bindi and her mouth.

PROTIMA BEDI: COMBAT TRAINING

NAMAS BHOJANI

"I feel acutely what India is today. It has a soul that is 5,000 years old and a head that is in the 20th century. I am the same."
PROTIMA BEDI

KISHORE KUMAR

◆ "Enter at your own risk," warns the board outside Gaurikunj, Kishore Kumar's residence in Bombay. Inside, another board in the drawing room says flatly: "I want money." Soon, however, those boards, the broken-down old jalopy from *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi*, the horrendous skull in the bedroom will all be taken down and packed off to Khandwa, Kishore Kumar's ancestral home that has been beckoning him back with overpowering nostalgia and where he wants to return to "spend all afternoon just swinging in a hammock under a mango tree".

Filmdom is going to miss its most outrageous inhabitant. Since he announced his decision—typically out of the blue—to quit films, Kishore has been singing his last few dozen swan songs, completing only old contracts and signing no new ones. The decision is hardly out of character. He wandered into Bombay 37 years ago, a starry-eyed lad wanting to meet his idol K.L. Saigal and stayed on to hate films and "this stupid friendless

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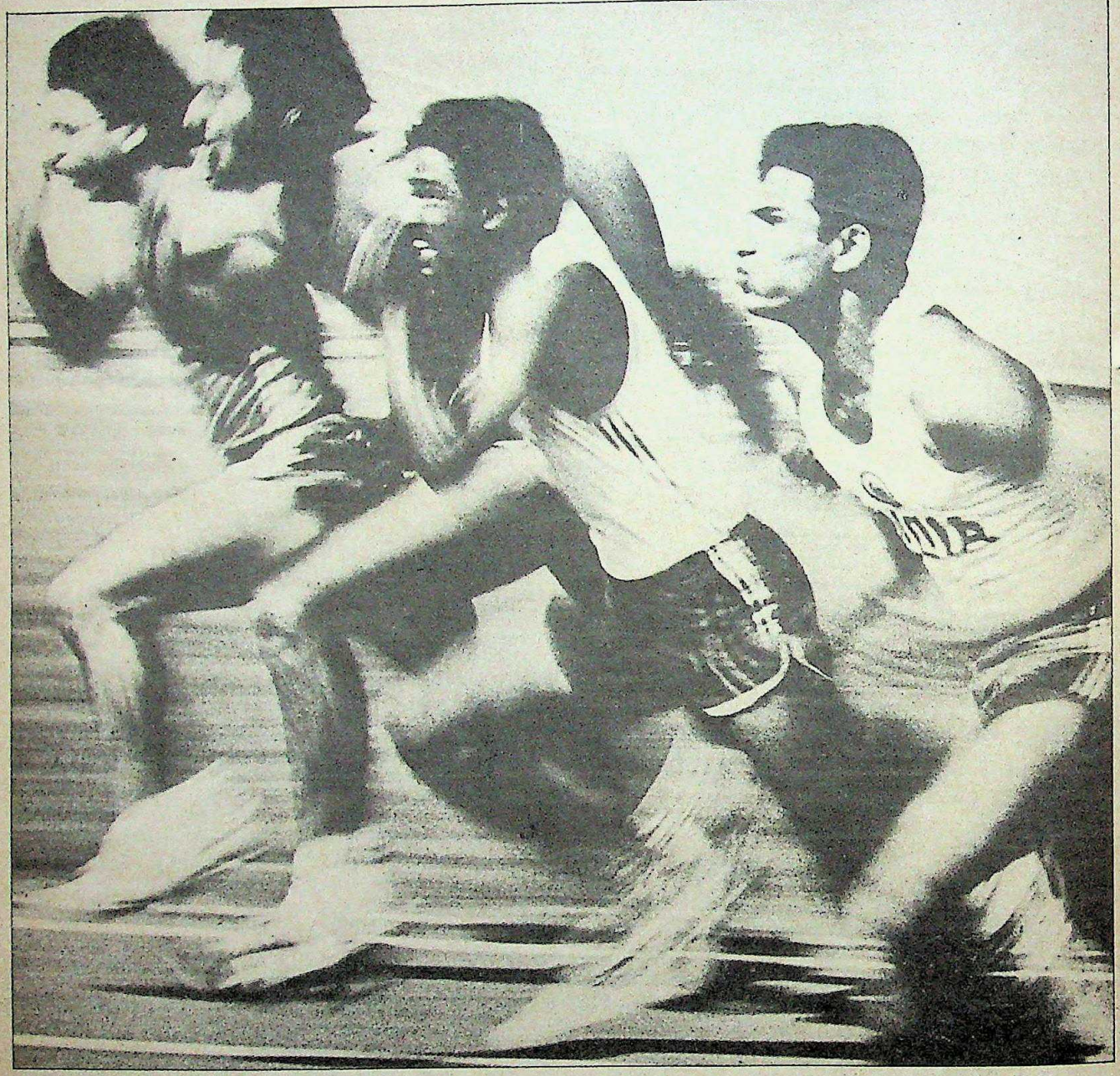
10 DECISIVE YEARS
Dec. 1975—Dec. 1985



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THE BEST WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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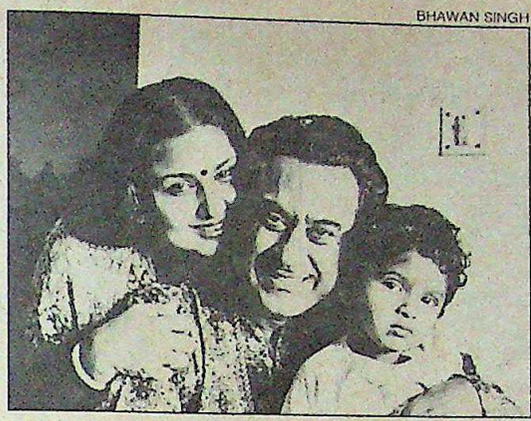
"Now I want to rest in my ancestral home. I want peace of mind."
KISHORE KUMAR

BHAWAN SINGH



KISHORE AS FAMILY MAN: ONE TOO MANY

city." His closest friends now are Frankenstein, Dracula, E.T. For a good time he'd rather go to *Motel Hell* than hop across to a neighbour's. A recluse, he has withdrawn more and more into his video parlour, where he sits in the dark surrounded by some 6,000 horror tapes and his beloved spooks.

At 56, he has behind him two heart attacks and four stormy marriages with stunningly beautiful women—though not at the same time, although with Kishore even that would have been possible. "Now I want to rest in my ancestral home," says the unfriendly neighbourhood singer, "I want peace of mind." One day he will probably disappear, just like that, in typical Kishore Kumar fashion.

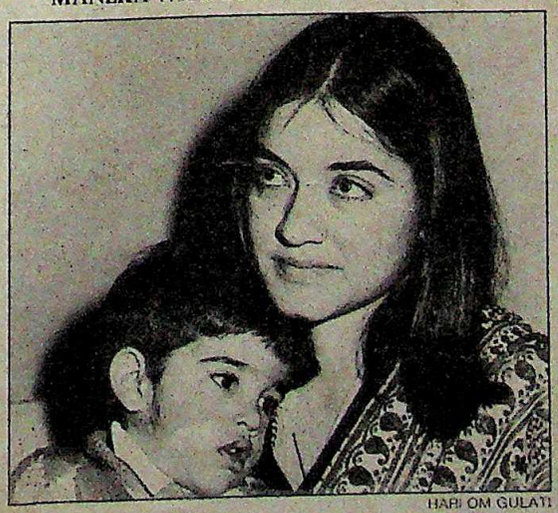
MENAKA GANDHI

◆ Ever since she first hit the public eye draped in a DCM towel till the time she left Amethi with tear stains on her face, the unflinching—often unsympathetic—public gaze has never lifted from Menaka Gandhi's freckled face. All through the decade, she has provided the drama people thirsted for, pitted as she was against the most powerful woman in the country, Mrs Gandhi. Now that the curtain seems to have come down on her personal political saga, Menaka, 29, has been left with precious few lines to deliver.

For the country's most famous daughter-in-law, it's back to work—in a ramshackle little office in Connaught Place from where she runs a trucking business. From there she zips, with an armload of wounded, squealing animals to her pet hospital—the largest of its kind in the country—which she has started in the name of her late husband. "It had always been a pet project and now I have the time to do it," she says. More interesting though, is that Menaka has picked up her pen again, not to shoot off the poisonous barbs that she triggered from her editor's desk at *Surya* but to write, surprise—a book on nature for children called *Legends on the Flora of India*. Co-author is her five-year-old son Varun Pheroze Gandhi. "If the book is for children why not get the children to contribute?" she asks.

She travels every now and then for the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch which she insists "is doing quite well in some of the states" and to Amethi where she says "my contact is a different sort of contact now". The rest of the time Menaka is at home in her red brick house in New Delhi—just plain old mama, growing flowers, singing to the birds and playing snakes and ladders with her little son rather than with her former political opponents.

MANEKA WITH SON VARUN: DOMESTICITY



HARI OM GULATI

Menaka has picked her pen again, not to shoot off the poisonous barbs that she triggered from her editor's desk at Surya but to write, surprise-a book for children.

DHIRENDRA WITH MRS GANDHI: NO MORE MAGIC

DHIRENDRA BRAHMCHARI

◆ He came to Mrs Gandhi on a pony in Pahalgam. He left her house in Delhi, some 30 years later, in a spanking white Mercedes. With Swami Dhirendra Brahmchari, alas, much of the magic has also gone out of contemporary political life.

No longer is the country hypnotised by the tall, lean, hypnotic sadhu striding easily up the pathways of the prime minister's house swinging a white ladies' handbag. No cabinet ministers linger around his Vishwayatan Yoga Ashram. Nor does

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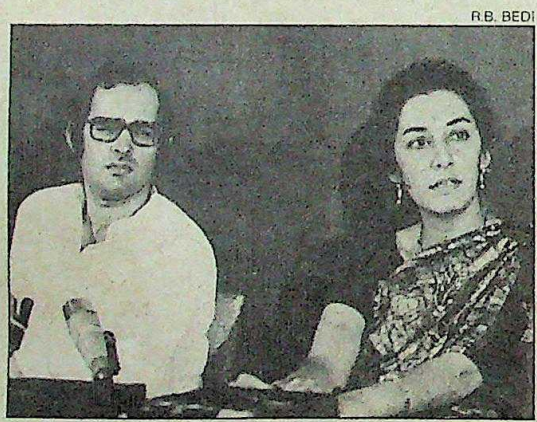
"In politics one has to learn to be patient and I ought to win by all accounts."
D.K. BAROOAH

he appear on television wearing power like a perfume and dispatching yoga students into nirvana. The country's prime-time swami who remote-controlled much political activity during Mrs Gandhi's time, is now simply a yoga master, left with nothing but his three airplanes, two private airstrips, three air-conditioned yoga ashrams, two bungalows, one Mercedes...

Brahmachari says he is fed up with all his wealth. He has resigned from the board of trustees of the posh Aparna Studios in Gurgaon which let *Hum Log* have it for Rs 20,000 a day. He also faces a criminal case for alleged illegal activity in his Shiva Gun Factory in Jammu which he now admits, "was a mistake. I want to close it down". Out of grace he maybe, but Brahmachari has no intentions of joining politics—"that will be the worst day of my life," he once said—nor probably is there any place for his mumbo-jumbo among Rajiv's computer men. He will however continue with his yoga, both teaching it in his posh ashrams as well as making films on the science of yoga starring, naturally, himself. As he said sadly: "Whatever I am doing, it is for the country. I have no personal interest. People will realise the importance of my work and contribution after my death." His main aim in life, always, has been to be loyal to the Gandhis. "How I love that family," he said.

R.B. BEDI



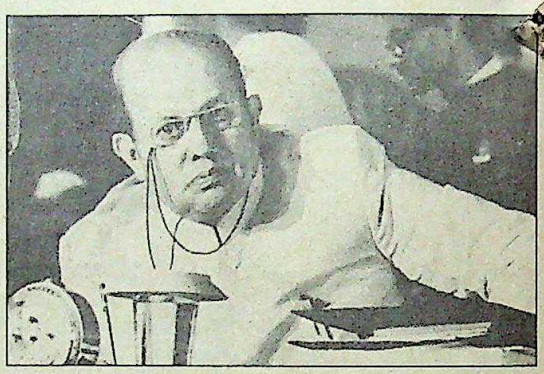
AMBIKA WITH SANJAY: HOOKED ON POLITICS

AMBIKA SONI

◆ November 14, 1975, and Ambika Soni glides on to the dais as the first woman president of the Youth Congress. It was the year that youth came of age. Now age has caught up with youth and exactly ten years later, Ambika Soni, a wiser 43, has come a long way—to a little MP's guest accommodation in Delhi. Why then does she stay on as general secretary of the Congress (S) and not simply fly off to Prague where she could play glamorous wife to her ambassador-husband? "Because," she says simply, "I can't give up politics while I'm at the zero-end of the yardstick."

So she will continue to fight in her own way through dharnas, satyagrahas—"And jail," she laughs, "I make it every other month." Defeat doesn't bother her at all. "If it did I wouldn't be in politics." Defeat has certainly given her time though—to spend with her 17-year-old son, to listen to the classical music she loves and to read, "oh, the few thousand books I have lying around". But as she leans back in her chair, the resilient Ambika Soni also knows that free time is not what she really wants. "When I think back to the life I used to lead," she says nostalgically, recalling her action-packed days with Sanjay Gandhi, "I seem idle now. I used to speak to thousands then, now I address 50-odd people." And what about the new youthful thrust in the old Congress (I)? "Rajiv," she says suddenly dropping her opposition defences, "I would certainly give him a chance. He is like a whiff of fresh air."

"When I think back to the life I used to lead, I seem idle now. I used to speak to thousands then, now I address 50-odd people."
AMBIKA SONI



D.K. BAROOAH: LESSONS OF HISTORY

DEV KANT BAROOAH

◆ The bald pate and pipe revive memories of a bygone era. Dev Kant Barooah, 72, former Congress Party president during the Emergency and coiner of the famous slogan "Indira is India and India is Indira" may be out of the public eye but is certainly not down and out of politics as far as he is concerned. As he put it: "At my age I don't think I want to do anything new" and the septuagenarian Assamese politician is going to do exactly what he feels he is good at—politics. Just back from an extensive tour of Assam ("the Congress Government stinks of corruption") and his constituency of Nowgong ("everybody there knows me"), Barooah shows all the signs of making a political comeback. "In politics one has to learn to be patient and I ought to win by all accounts," he says confidently.

"If elected I will try and bring out the dichotomy between the 'expensive' orientation of our economy and the extreme poverty that characterises our people," he intoned and in the same breath blandly praised Rajiv Gandhi's Government: "Modern government has to be run on modern lines." The apparent contradiction didn't faze him in the least.

The writer in the scholar impelled him to start working on a history of India—through his eyes—but later stopped. And why? "Because I realised that writing about history in this sudden manner is not scientific but journalistic."

—SIMRAN BHARGAVA

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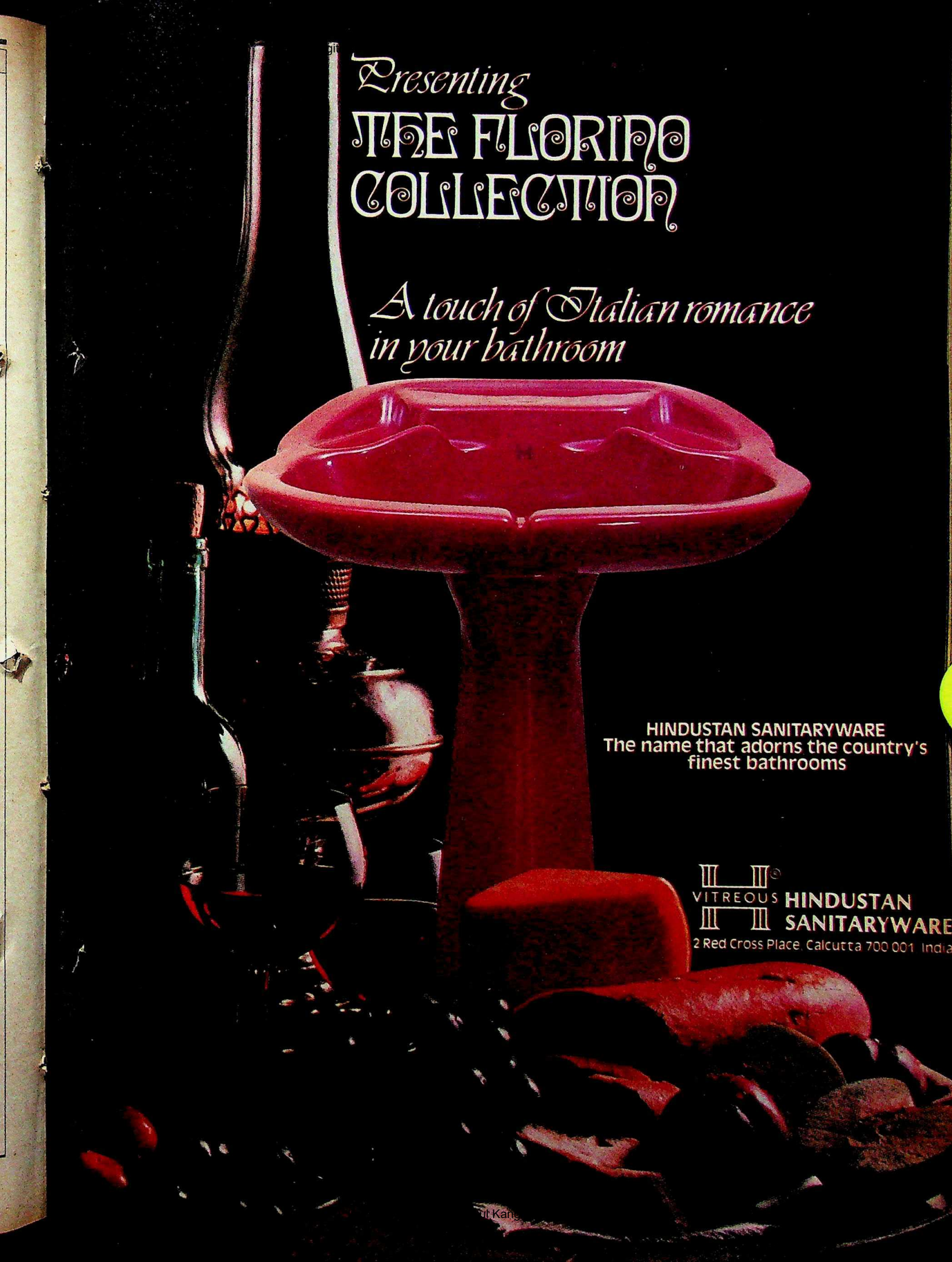
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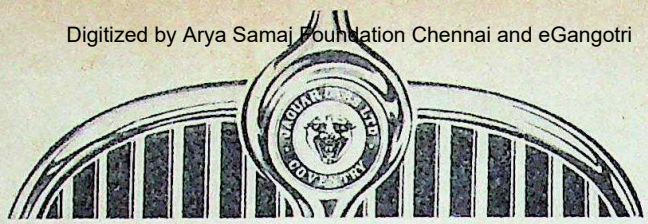

"Grace... Pace... Space"
The famous slogan that summed up the qualities that made the Jaguar marque a legend.

Great Classics of Motoring presented by Engine Valves Ltd.

The Jaguar XK 120. When unveiled in 1948, it was the fastest series production car in the world. The numbers '120' indicated its top speed of 120 mph. The car was powered by a 3.4 litre, twin overhead camshaft, 6 cylinder engine that developed a massive 160 horsepower.

Ian Appleyard stormed to four gruelling Alpine Rally wins in his XK 120. Stirling Moss and 3 others drove the car at an average of 100 mph for a week! They covered 16851 miles in 168 hours. Four world records were shattered. The age of the Jaguar had begun.

OBM 9350

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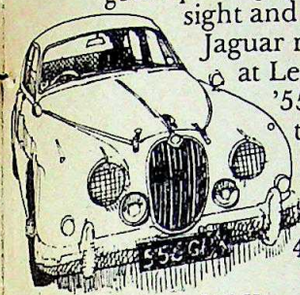
Le Mans 1951. The 24 hour Grand Prix d' Endurance is nearing its climax. The tense crowd waits in hushed anticipation... and a tumultuous roar goes up as a Jaguar vrooms into sight and flashes to victory. Jaguar repeated this feat at Le Mans in 1953, '55, '56 and '57. In the race of '57, all 5 Jaguar entries finished, ranking 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th!

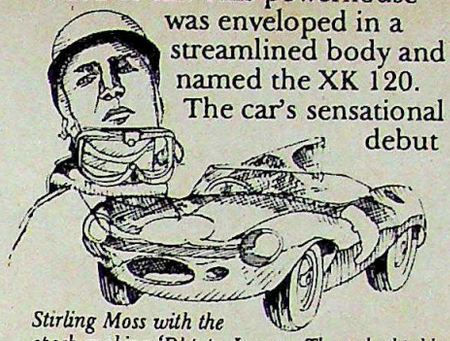


The Jaguar MK II Unbeatable in saloon car racing, it even put sports cars to shame.

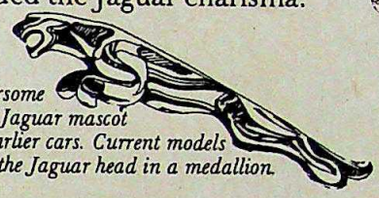
Now, would you believe that these full-blooded racing machines had a motorcycle sidecar for an ancestor? !

Jaguar cars grew from a vigorous and often stormy relationship between two men : William Walmsley and William Lyons. They started the Swallow Sidecar Company in 1921, making wood and aluminium sidecars for motorcycles. Five years later the Company also moved into the 4 wheeler business by making attractive bodies for cars like Austin 7. The Williams parted company in 1934 and William Lyons registered SS Cars Ltd. The 3½ litre SS Jaguar 100 became the Company's first 100 mph car.

In 1945, the Company's name was changed to Jaguar Cars Ltd. And then came that famed twin OHC 6-cylinder XK engine that ushered in a new breed of car. This powerhouse was enveloped in a streamlined body and named the XK 120. The car's sensational debut founded the Jaguar charisma.



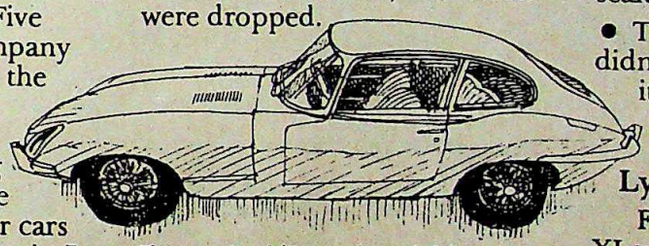
Stirling Moss with the epoch-making 'D' type Jaguar. The redoubtable Moss drove many a Jaguar to victory.



The fearsome leaping Jaguar mascot as on earlier cars. Current models feature the Jaguar head in a medallion.

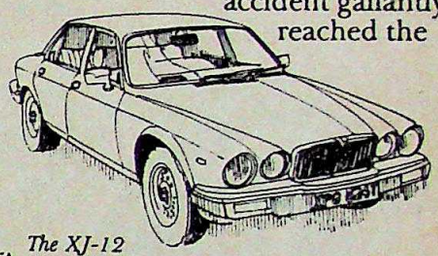
Jaguar jottings

- Earlier Jaguars were known as 'Jaguar-SS'. But when 'SS' began to be identified with the Nazi 'Schutz Staffel', the initials were dropped.



The sensational 'E'-type descended from the Le Mans winning 'D' type Jaguar. Intended to be a road car and not a racing car. 150 mph and 0-60 in 6.8 secs.

- The origins of the 'SS' initials were something of a mystery. Official translation was left to the individual and suggestions like "Standard Swallow", "Swallow Special", "Swallow Standard" and many more might apply equally.
- For all its legendary reputation, Jaguars have always been value-for-money cars. In 1931, when the imposing new SS Jaguar Saloon was first displayed, guests were invited to guess its price. The concensus was around £ 600. The car was in fact priced at £ 385!
- Chief Engineer William Heynes and his men planned many a Jaguar advancement sitting on the factory roof at night – keeping a lookout for Luftwaffe bombers.
- At the Le Mans race of 1963, an E-type Jaguar involved in an accident gallantly reached the finish – after its battered radiator was filled with raw eggs and sealer!

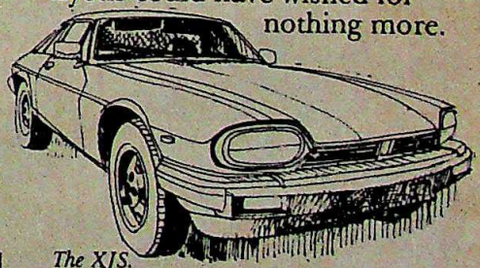


The XJ-12 Arguably quieter than even a Rolls-Royce! Its 12 cylinder engine is so powerful and flexible that you could accelerate the car from zero in top gear!

- The XK 120's speedometer didn't face the driver... instead, it faced the passenger!

Lyons' philosophy lives on

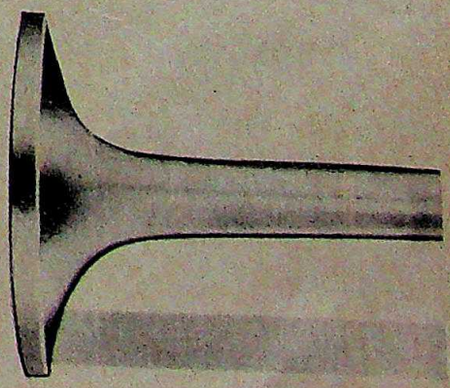
From the XK 120 to the new XJ series, Jaguars have competed in looks with the most elegant; in speed with the fastest; and in comfort with the most luxurious And yet, unlike other super cars, these big cats remain a realistic ambition for many. William Lyons could have wished for nothing more.



The XJS. This devastating performer can only be compared with cars costing £ 20,000 more!

World-famous cars use EVL valves

Did you know that EVL valves are used on cars like BMW, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot and Volvo? EVL, a member of the Rane Group, began operations in 1959, collaborating with Farnborough Engg of UK, makers of the famous Tranco valves. EVL exports mainly to UK, USA, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia. In India, EVL products are OE on every vehicle ... more recently on the Maruti-Suzuki.



Engine Valves Limited
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EVL

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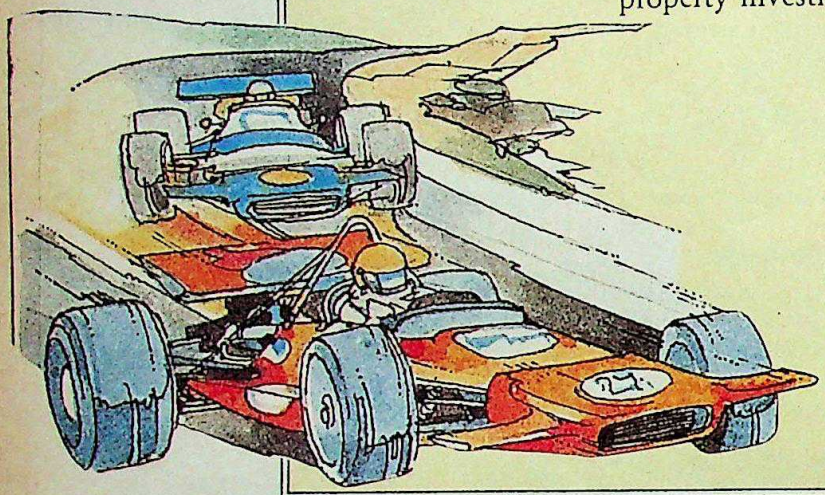
Why does DLF so much more sense to so

To many, a proven track record is decisively important.



Most property-buyers put their entire life – savings into property investment. So, they'd rather put their money on DLF. Because DLF is the only property developer with a proven track record of integrated colony planning. As many as 21 colonies in Delhi are standing testimony to DLF's expertise in the field. Colonies like Greater Kailash, South Extension, Hauz Khas, Model Town & Rajouri Garden. Colonies that DLF developed and sold at prices less than Rs. 30/– per sq.yd. and are today prime properties where land prices are over Rs. 3000/– per sq.yd.

To some, the quality of life that they'd always yearned for suddenly seems attainable.

Club membership is out of reach of almost everybody today. School admissions have become more difficult than getting jobs. And so when people see the plans for the DLF Gymkhana Club in DLF Qutab Enclave actually taking concrete shape on a 5 acre plot and the first school already under construction, they realise that DLF means business when they say there'll be no place quite like DLF Qutab Enclave in the years to come. Which is evident in a host of other ways too – like the provision for large green belts, landscaped parks and playgrounds, sites for shopping centres, hospitals, and public services like police stations, fire stations and post offices. And so much more. All pointing to a quality of life that people in Delhi have yearned for but have had to forgo and forget. And suddenly they all find it in DLF Qutab Enclave.

Registration for plots is open again

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New Delhi – 110001. Phone-322583.

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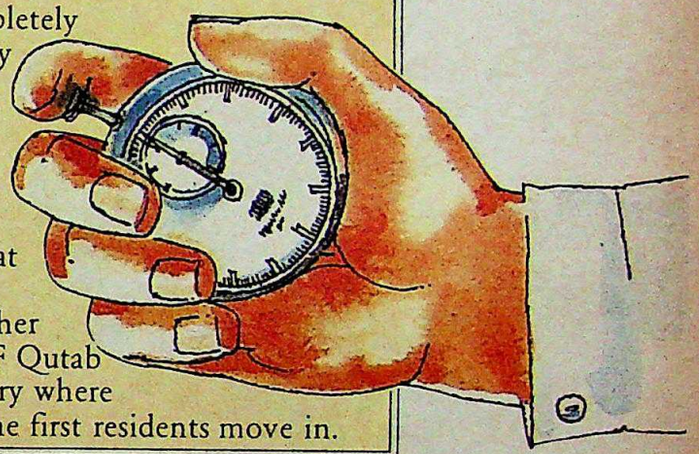
Qutab Enclave make many more people every day?

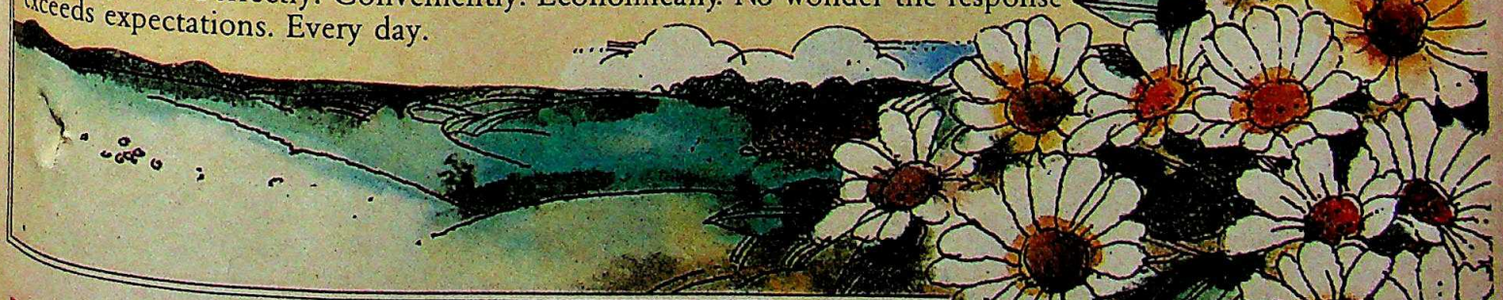
To others, the pace of development of the Complex and the fact that DLF is sticking to its promises, helps them make up their minds.

Over 90% of Phase I & II of the Complex has been completely developed. In fact, DLF Qutab Enclave is the only property where development is visible in so many forms – over a thousand houses nearing completion, 100 kms of connecting roads already laid, 60 kms of sewerage systems and pipelines completed, over 25,000 trees already planted, construction of the first club and shopping-cum-commercial complex well under way. Yes, people realise that it's better to invest & secure themselves with property in a Complex that is taking shape in front of their own eyes, rather than just live on promises that could remain promises. DLF Qutab Enclave would probably be the only township in the country where the infrastructure of facilities would be ready before even the first residents move in.



And to all without exception, it brings clean, open, independent living within reach again.

What clinches the issue when it comes to DLF Qutab Enclave are the prices and the easy payment plans. While prices may appear higher than other options around, people soon realise that it's worth paying every paisa extra for a township that's going to be exclusive. And with payment plans spread over 4 years for plots & 7 years for houses, the instalments are easy on the pocket. With financial assistance available from premier institutions like HDFC. Yes, at DLF Qutab Enclave, everything seems to come together. Perfectly. Conveniently. Economically. No wonder the response exceeds expectations. Every day.



DLF Qutab Enclave

There will be no place quite like it

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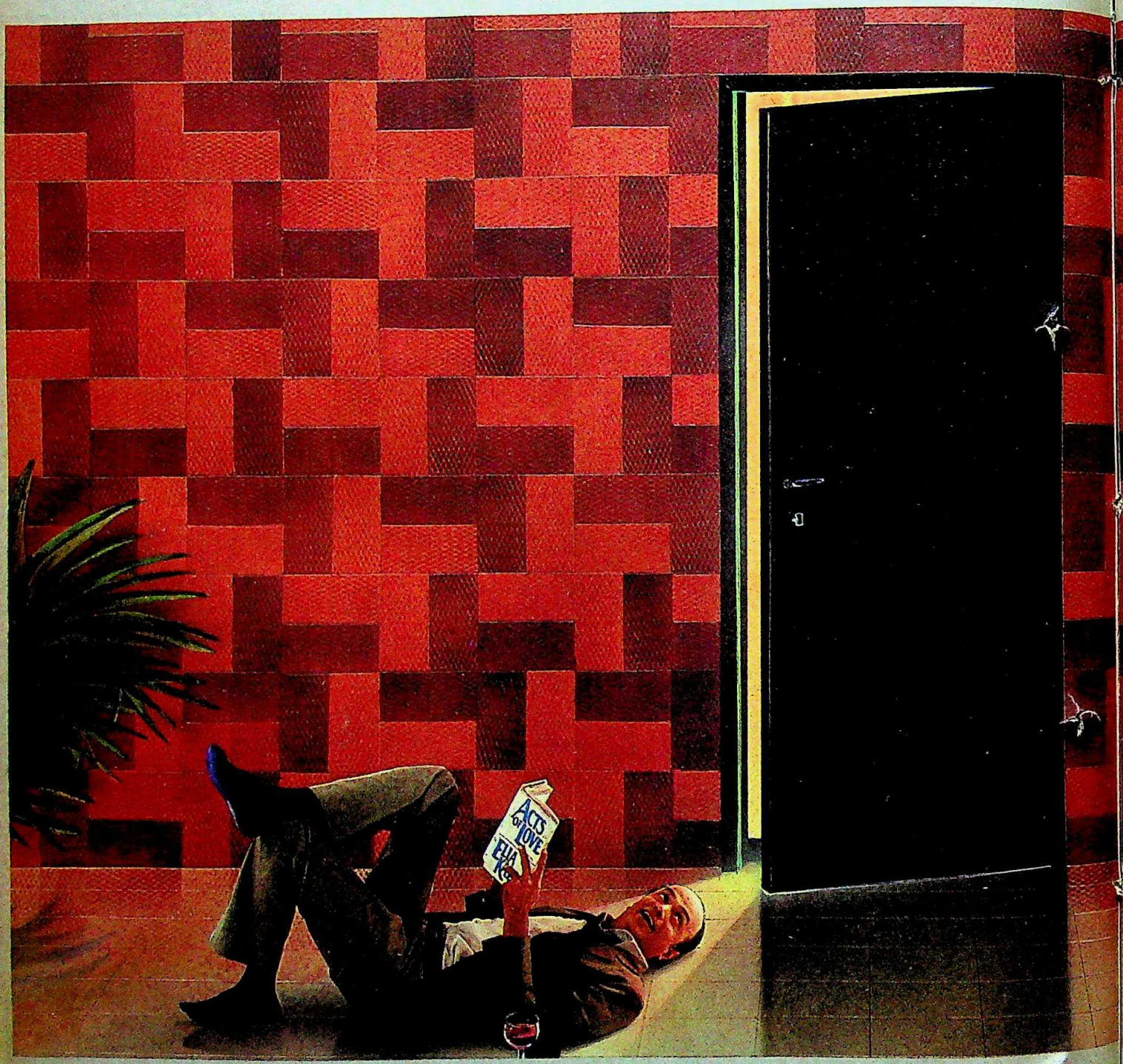

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And they'll certainly make it a lot different from the hundreds of bathrooms in your neighbourhood.

Textured tiles instead of smooth. Matt-finish instead of glossy.

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Ever since the new designer tiles came in, Mrs. Rao's been wondering where on earth Mr. Rao keeps disappearing.

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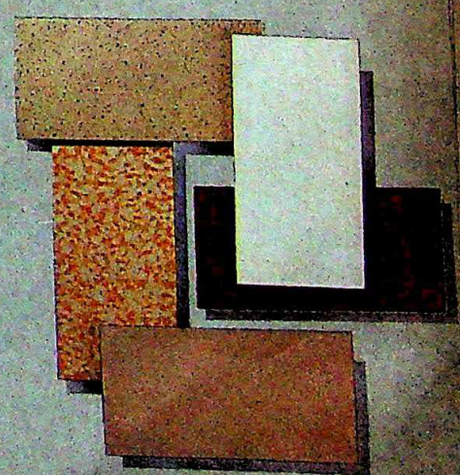

JOHNSON DESIGNER TILES

What the well-dressed bathroom is wearing.

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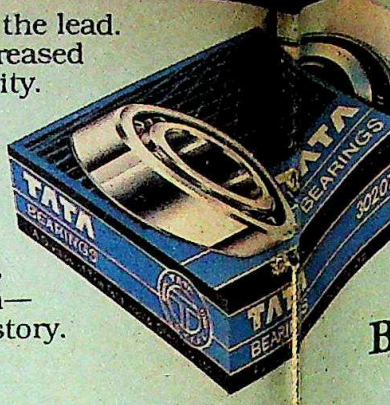
Tata Bearings... born with the strength of Tata Steel, the name that's known for its spirit of innovation—the driving force behind many a success story.



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And, now,
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that will go on...and on...

Tata Bearings... born to set the pace.

TATA
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Born of steel... born to lead.

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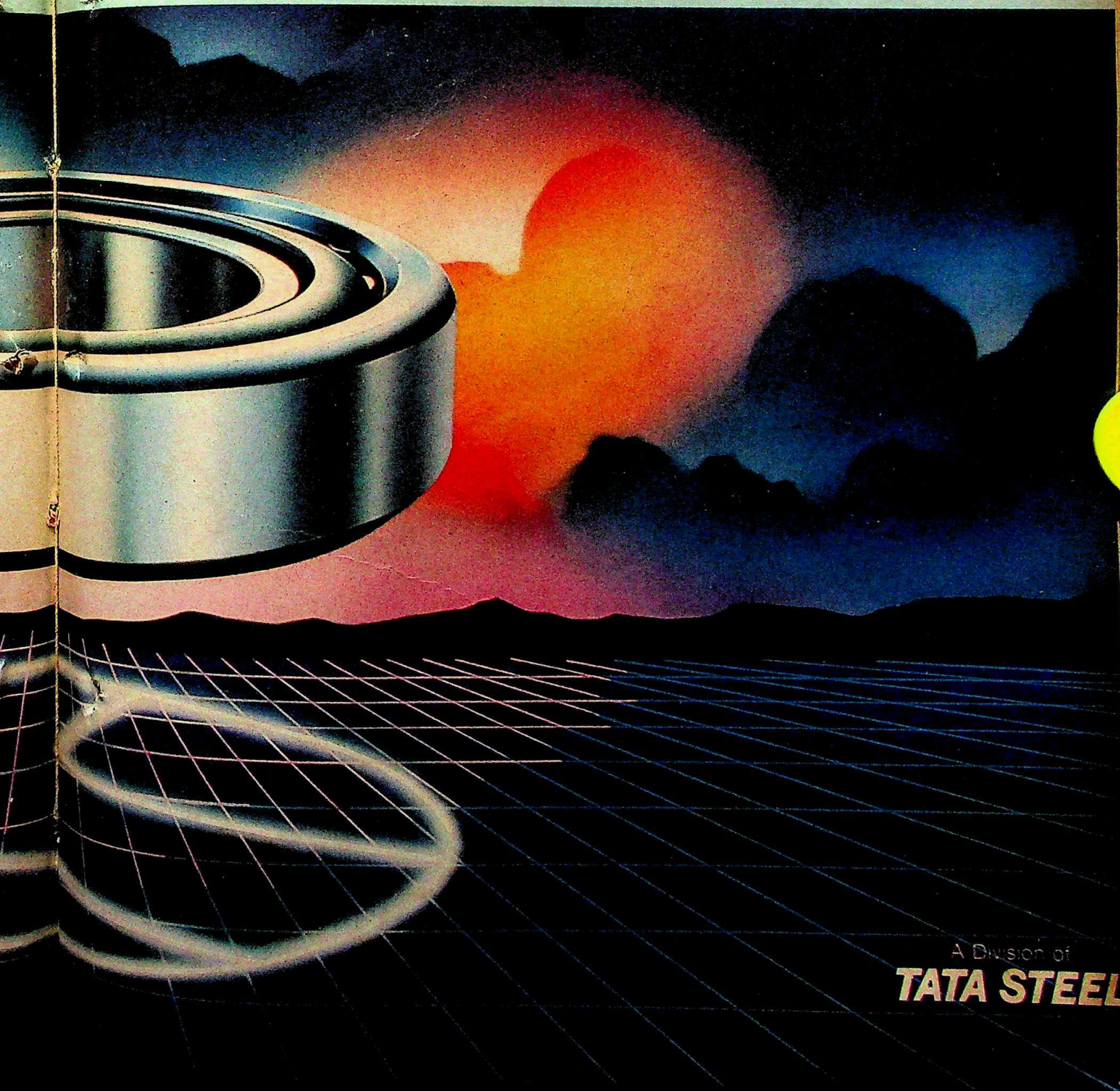

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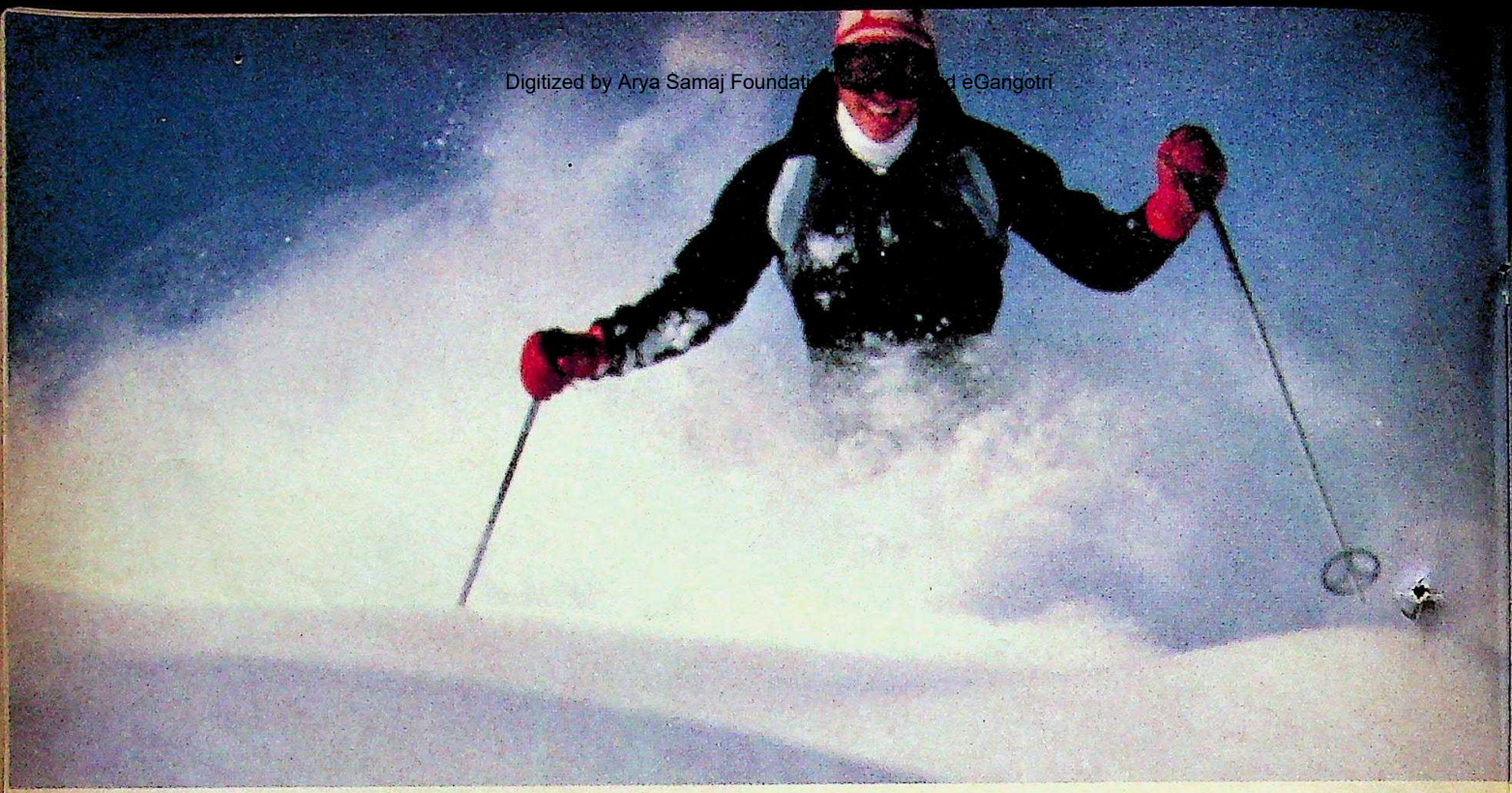

How to go to Switzerland by train.

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Imagine fir-trimmed mountains capped with snow. Imagine a lake with miles of clear water. Imagine yourself racing down the Alps on skis. Imagine Switzerland and you have Kashmir.

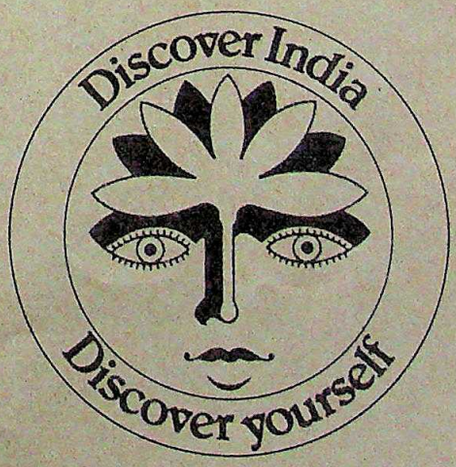
Srinagar could well be the Venice of the east. But what you can see in Srinagar, you can't in Venice. For a few short weeks, just before the sun burns them up, every roof-top is covered with flowers. Because the roofs of most Kashmiri houses are made of earth. The bazaar life is like a picture from the Arabian Nights. Men sitting idly smoking hookahs, tongas dashing by with jangling bells and women in flowing 'tent robes' hurrying down the lanes or bargaining loudly with the shopkeepers.

Even though the Dal and Nagin lakes are the most photographed, written and talked about, there are a number of Alpine lakes around Srinagar, that are equally, if not more, beautiful.

Gulmarg is another exhilarating experience. The seven-mile road which gives you a view of the entire Kashmir Valley is what will take your breath away.

Nature is most certainly the main attraction in Kashmir. But there are other attractions too, like temples and man-made monuments. Kashmir during a festival is a splash of colours that will make you wonder whether a rainbow had fallen from the sky.

Kashmir is accessible by air, road and rail. However, the road between Srinagar and Ladakh is closed in winter. In Kashmir you can experience the novelty of staying in a houseboat or enjoy the hospitality of the conventional hotels which range from five-star splendour to picturesque wooden cottages. Once you get to Kashmir, you just want to sit down and digest all that beauty. And once you've got your breath back, you can sight-see, visit museums, play golf, fish, trek or just browse the shops for the most wonderful bargains. When you're in Kashmir, you feel like you're on top of the world.



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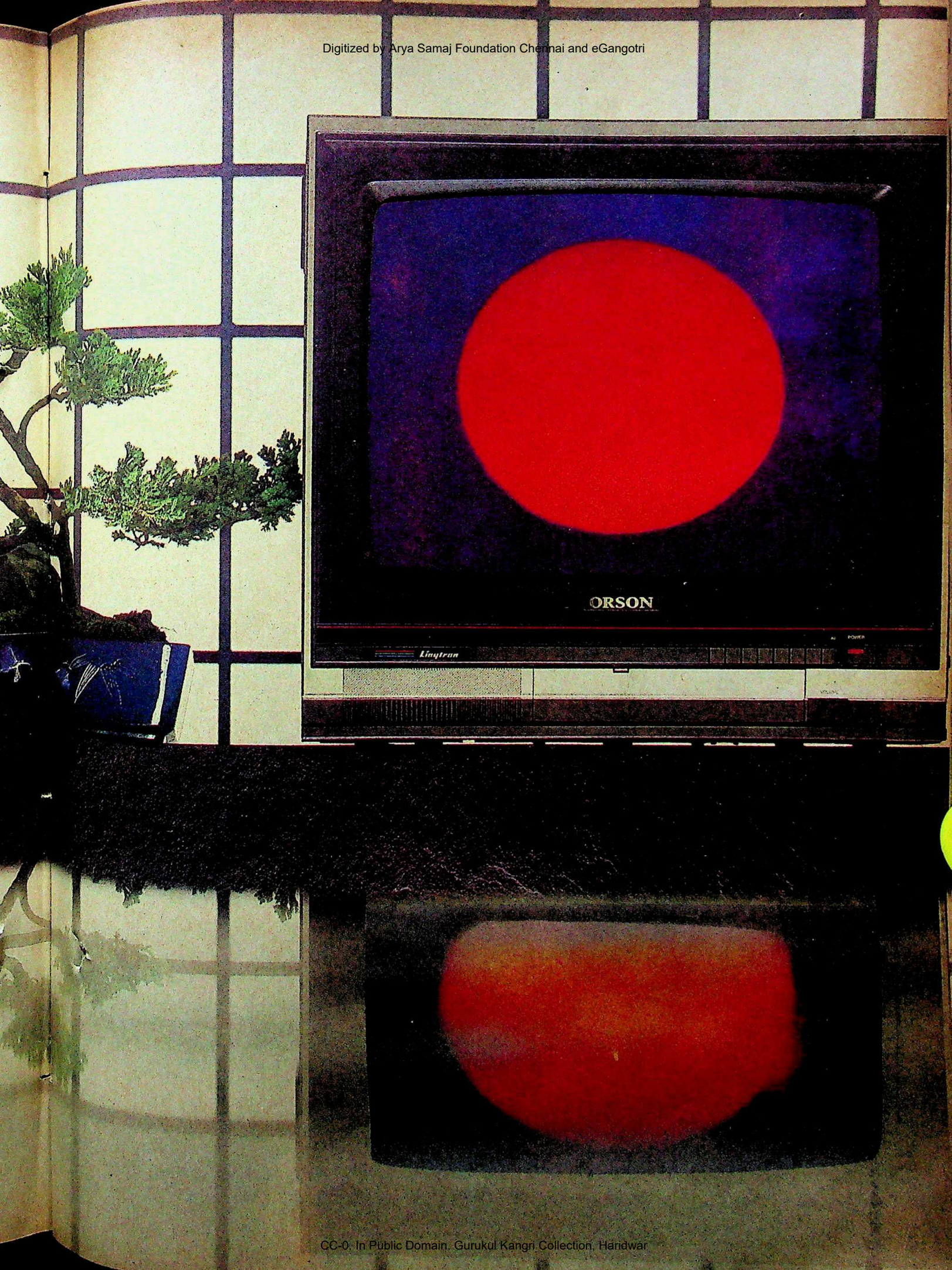

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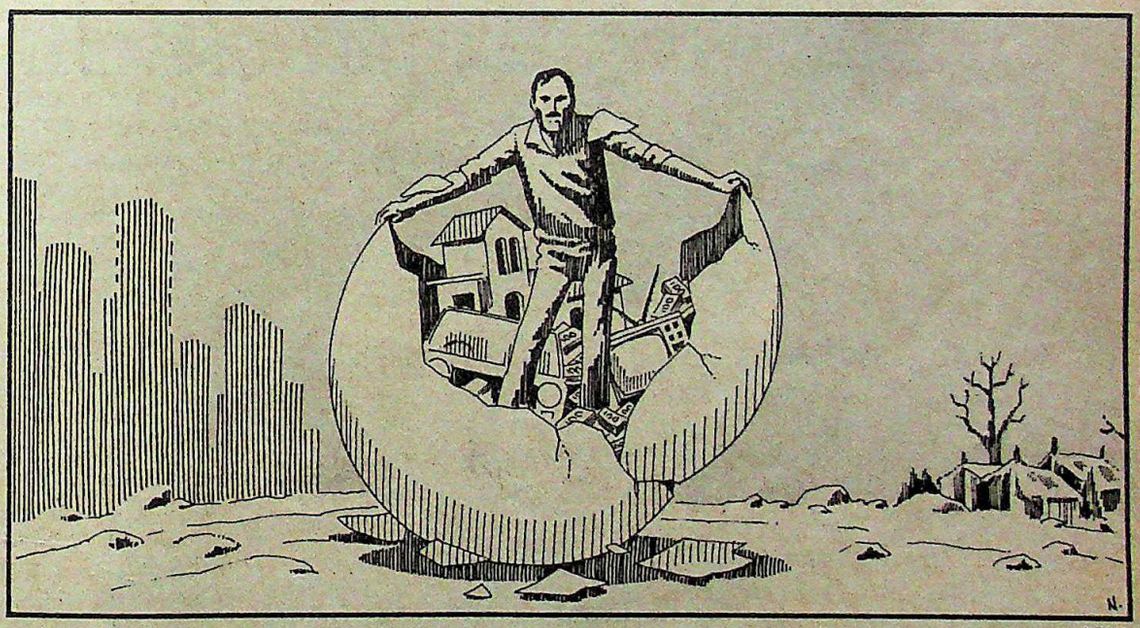
RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

India's new middle class of around 100 million people have suddenly taken centrestage, made their demands felt, forced the Government to shift its economic priorities and change its tax policy, and become the most visible sign of a progressing economy. In the process, India has ceased to be the world's byword for poverty and come to be seen as the land of opportunity.



NINAN

Prosperous farmers, the labour elite, the exploding number of small-scale entrepreneurs, the thriving professionals, and salaried employees of every hue: these now constitute India's new middle class.

"One tends to forget that India today has a very substantial middle class which didn't exist 30 years ago." —*Rajiv Gandhi in an interview*

TIGRI: One of the resettlement colonies on Delhi's outskirts that Sanjay Gandhi set up in record time exactly 10 years ago, so that the poor in a show-piece capital could be got out of sight.

A wedding reception: Receiving the guests was the bridegroom's father, Narain Singh, who retired as a general's orderly back in 1972, and who educated his sons with financial help from the general. Moving past him, the guests saw the sons all wearing woollen suits; one of them strummed a guitar, a second crooned the latest western songs in accented English and Hindustani disco hits into a microphone. And all the orderly's grandchildren—in jeans and matching jackets—gyrated on a stage done in pinks and pale yellows, shaking and twisting and bobbing with the music. The groom himself, it turned out, works in the Gulf in a catering establishment.

The meal was as at any other reception: soft drinks, a four-course meal and *halwa* and coffee at the end. And the whole function was being recorded on video.

A decade ago, shortly after Narain Singh retired, he might barely have escaped being classified in the Government's statistics as someone below the poverty line. Today, it is unlikely that he is the sort of person Rajiv Gandhi has in

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If it seems like stretching a point to argue that industrial labour constitutes a part of the middle class, the fact is that many workers earn as much as senior government officials.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

CROWDS AT A FAST FOOD RESTAURANT IN NEW DELHI

mind when he talks of India having "a very substantial middle class". Nevertheless, if *Roti, Kapda aur Makaan* is what it's all about, Narain Singh's family has all this and more: education, remittances from the Gulf, the luxury of a video-recorded wedding. If he himself has neither the address nor the aspirations nor the other characteristics that would entitle him to be called a member of the middle class, his children and grandchildren almost certainly will.

So will a lot of *dehaat* gentry in the countryside of backward eastern Uttar Pradesh, where the wheat yields are now as high as in Haryana a little over a decade ago, with as much money being pumped into the farmers' hands. And those who qualify more easily as the middle class are growing rapidly in number. To take just one example, there are twice as many doctors today as a decade ago, even though the population of the country has grown by only 25 per cent.

Perhaps the single most important emerging group in the new middle class is that of the entrepreneur. The number of people running their own industrial establishments has more than trebled to 12 lakh in the last decade. And even that may be a hopeless underestimation because of the inadequacy of government statistics. After all, there are no fewer than eight lakh powerlooms authorised by the Government, and another two lakh unauthorised powerlooms, all owned by people who have hit on undreamt of riches in the last decade.

Factory employment has shot up 40 per cent in the same period. And if it seems like stretching a point to try and argue that industrial labour constitutes a part of the new and rising middle class, the fact remains that an assistant with only a school-leaving certificate, working in Peico Electronics and Electricals Ltd, gets almost Rs 6,000 a month, and a technician who got no further than standard IV in school gets more than Rs 4,000. The annual reports of the large companies are full of such examples of workers with little education and training getting anything from Rs 3,000 to Rs 6,000 and more every month, putting them in the same income bracket as a joint secretary in the Central Government.

Prosperous farmers, the growing labour elite, the unprecedented explosion in the number of small-scale entrepreneurs, the increasing number of professionals, the hundreds of thousands who now work in the Gulf, and salaried employees of every hue: these now constitute India's new middle class, a broadening band of something like 10 to 15 per cent of the country's population that, at around 100 million, is more than the total population of most developed countries. In no more than a decade, they have shed the earlier image of being a financially squeezed section of the population and suddenly taken centrestage, made their demands felt, forced the Government to shift its economic priorities and change its tax policy, and become the most visible sign of a rapidly progressing economy.

In a word, they are Rajiv Gandhi's people, at home in a new political climate, happy with the new political jargon, relieved that the Government no

BUSY TRADING IN STOCKS AND SHARES ON DALAL STREET, BOMBAY

For the first time in India, a prime minister now feels that the middle class is a political force, and that it makes political sense to satisfy its aspirations even at the risk of being called anti-poor.

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longer tries to tax everyone to distraction in the name of the poor, enamoured of a prime minister who understands the importance of colour TV. For the first time in India, a prime minister now feels that the middle class is a political force in even arithmetical terms because it has grown so rapidly in numbers, and that it makes political sense to satisfy its aspirations even at the risk of being portrayed as anti-poor.

Ten years ago, the political rhetoric centred on abolishing poverty; today it looks forward to the 21st century. Then, it was a question of reining in monopoly capital; now the Government talks of industrial modernisation and opening up the economy. Then, the goals were more food, water, steel, aluminium, hospitals. Now, it is all that plus telephones, TV sets, scooters, cars, refrigerators. Then, it was a question of taxing 'luxury' goods to find money for the basics; now the Government has reduced the taxes on these so that more people can buy the things that make for a better life.

But perhaps most important of all is another change in the political culture. Ten years ago, the middle class dismissed politicians as money-grubbing ne'er-do-wells who took to the streets because they couldn't do well anywhere else. But today's new image of the vote-seeker is that of the manager-politician, personified by Arun Nehru and Arun Singh, and also by such others as former IAS officer Krishna Kumar of Kerala. Many members of Parliament have also switched from khadi to safari suits, making them physically indistinguishable from the business executive who otherwise monopolises the Bombay-Delhi Airbus. The middle class, it suddenly seems, has taken charge of the country's politics.

Ten years ago, India was still the first country that came to anyone's lips when he or she talked of extreme poverty. That poverty is still there, but in substantially reduced measure. The Government's statistics say that only 37 per cent of the population is now below the poverty line, against 50 per cent not so long ago. And in another five years it will be no more than 26 per cent. Even if some allowance is made for exaggerated claims, there can be little doubt that poverty is in fact on the decline in most pockets. So the standard reference point for poverty is no longer India, but Bangladesh or sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, India's increasingly visible middle class now travels abroad often and in growing numbers, signs up lucrative business deals, and pays good money for all manner of goods on more attractive shop counters. So India now is talked of as the land of economic and business opportunity, with a growing market and a consistent record of steady growth.

That seminal change is reflected in the scenes of everyday life, in shopping centres, in roads crowded with personal vehicles, and increasingly in basic perception. As an economist in the prime minister's office says, "For a long time the concept of development in India had nothing to do with goods for the consumer...But as income levels rise, you have to provide for more consumer goods, and this change has begun to take place."

And so indeed, the Government has introduced a host of policy measures aimed at boosting the stock-market, and private holdings of company stocks today are 10 times the sum a decade ago, while the number of investors has shot up from 1.5 million to seven million. The Government has also eased the restrictions on foreign travel, and made the foreign travel scheme increasingly more liberal. It has allowed the construction of new five-star hotels which—though built in the name of foreign tourists—are mostly frequented by local gentry. Even government officials, who in an earlier age would only have been familiar with dak bungalows and government guest-houses, now feel at home at five-star lunches, hosted invariably by public sector companies under their control. The new hotels have also made India a new haven for those on the conference circuit, while the country's opening up to the outside world has meant that Indians, especially middle class Indians, are now more plugged in to global trends in everything from business trends to clothing styles.

NEW EDUCATIONAL AMBITIONS FOR MIDDLE CLASS CHILDREN

Sometimes, even the Government has been unable to cope. In the capital, the Delhi Development Authority has tens of thousands of people queuing up with hard cash to acquire flats that are in short supply, while 2,000 cooperative societies wait to be given land on which they can build. Private developers have now colonised vast tracts of land across the Delhi border with Haryana, and

Ten years ago, it was a question of taxing 'luxury goods' to find money for the basis; now the Government has reduced the taxes on these so that more people can buy the things that make for a better life.

The image of the politician as a ne'er-do-well has given way to the era of the manager-politician. The middle class has taken charge of the country's politics.

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Feeding on burgeoning demand, Indian companies are poised to do in scooter manufacturing what Japan did for the world in cars and motorcycles.

THE INDUSTRIAL ELITE

NAME	AGE	COMPANY	QUALIFICATION	JOB FUNCTION	SALARY (Rs)
R. Baptiste	37	ITC	Not stated	Sr Secretary	55,232
K. Gokul	49	GTC	Not stated	Driver	38,632
B. Singh	39	Modi Rubber	Matric	Supervisor	64,572
M. Arumugam	58	Peico	Std I	Mazdoor	40,026
K.B. Moosa	51	HMM	Not stated	Worker	48,583
S.N. Thandge	42	Premier Auto	Std III	M/c Operator	47,325
A.D. Thakur	35	Union Carbide	School level	Mechanic	38,913
D.G. Amberkar	44	Glaxo	Up to Matric	Gen. Operator	36,003

once again demand quickly overshoots supply. Similar housing booms in other cities, like Bangalore and Madras, have changed the character of these once quiet southern towns, with Madras stretching way beyond Adyar, and Bangalore finding some of the biggest builders from Bombay descending on it in hordes. In Calcutta, Salt Lake City has come up as a whole new entity, personifying the survival of the middle class in a new enclave that has been carved out of what otherwise gives every appearance of being a dying city. As a spokesman of the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority says with a laugh, "Salt Lake is Calcutta's version of New Delhi."

Urbanisation itself gives birth to the middle class, and the last decade has seen an unprecedented explosion of the country's urban population. The total population in towns with more than one lakh inhabitants increased in slow paces by 12 million and 18 million in the 1950s and 1960s. But in the last decade this has gone up by an astonishing 45 million, and every fourth Indian now lives in a city or town. In some states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, the next decade will see more urban gentry than rural. And in Kerala, the Gulf boom has resulted in the urbanisation of virtually the entire countryside, with the demand for homestead plots outstripping that for agricultural land, and the prices of vegetables in places being higher than in Bombay or Delhi.

When villages become cities, *paathshalas* become 'public schools'. In Meerut district's sugarcane-rich Daurala, in western Uttar Pradesh, the unsuspecting early morning traveller will be surprised to pass hordes of schoolgirls in neat school uniforms. And establishments like Greenfields Nursery School flourish in the industrial colony of Rajajipuram on the outskirts of Lucknow, testifying to the exploding demand for that one prized commodity of any middle class: a good education.

The last decade has also seen an unprecedented doubling of engineering colleges, while the more general colleges and universities have started evening classes, correspondence courses and a host of other innovations to try and cope with the demand for education. A member of the faculty in even a well-established institution like Indraprastha College in Delhi says that the majority of its students are first-generation entrants to college. In the smaller towns, that figure could be anywhere between 80 and 100 per cent.

Education, housing, new government policies,

On offer now are whole new ranges of domestic appliances, including 75 brands of mixer-grinders and that ultimate sign of nouveau riche decadence, the 24-chime doorbell.

THE MAKING OF A CONSUMER SOCIETY

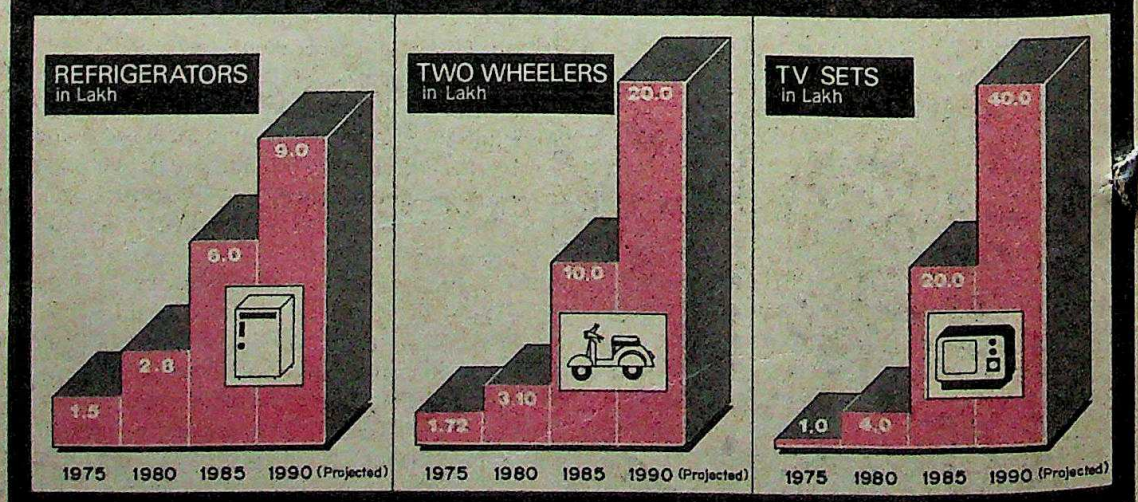

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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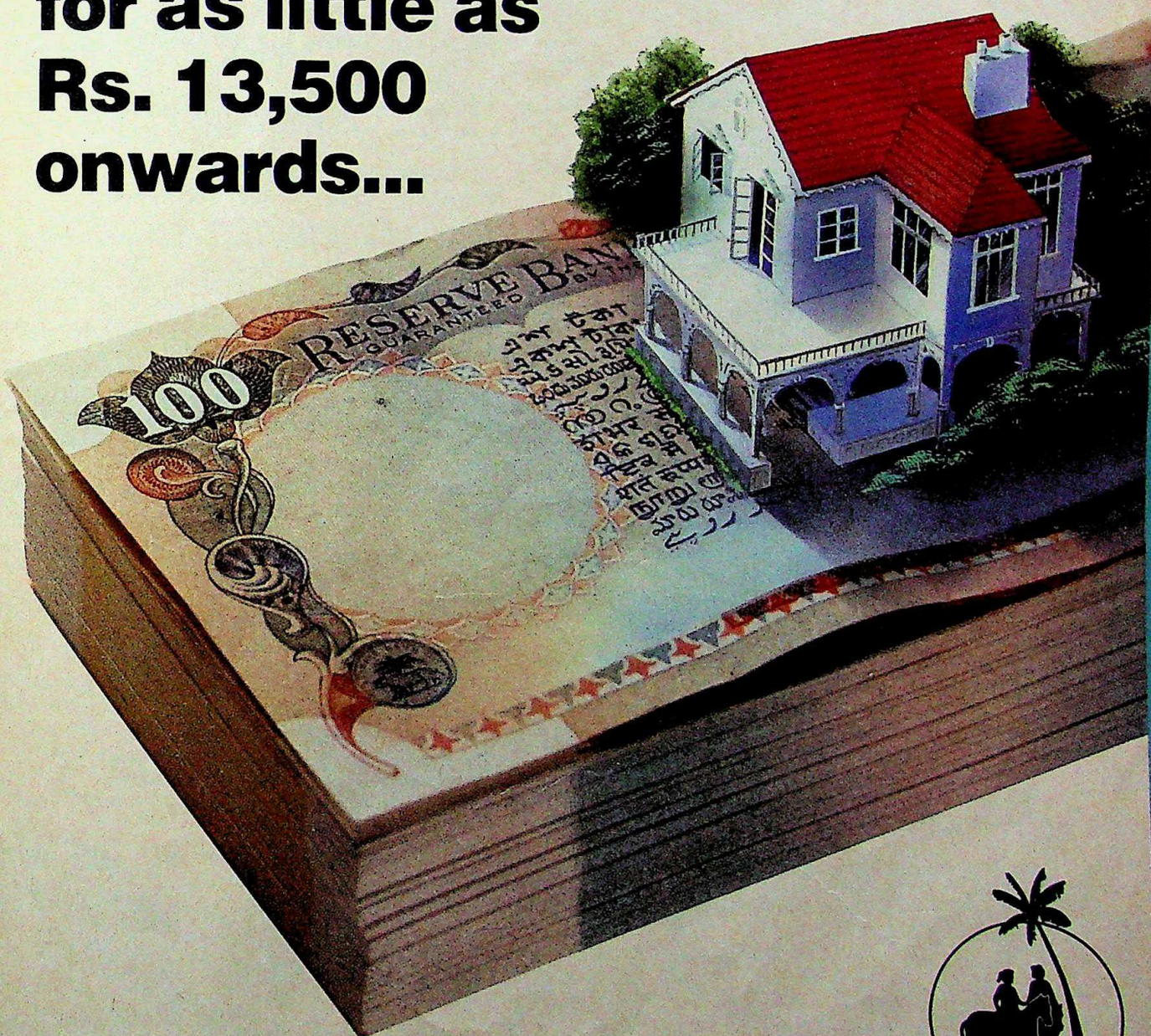
For the first time in India, an exciting new investment plan that lets you own your own holiday home for as little as Rs. 13,500 onwards...



DALMIA RESORTS
International

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35 solid reasons why people have snapped worth of Property Shares in Dalmia Resorts

1. What are Property Shares?
Property Shares is an exciting new concept proven successfully in 45 countries worldwide. In 1982 alone, its turnover was U.S.$ 1.6 billion. And it is expected to become a 100 billion dollar industry within the next decade.

2. Can you define Property Shares?
Property Shares is a whole concept that enables you to own a share in property related to the time you are actually likely to use it, each year.
It is particularly attractive when applied to holiday resorts. You need not now invest in a holiday home which would otherwise be idle when you are not there.
It is yours for the period you plan to stay there. You need not worry about making advance reservation for your holiday accommodation.
Because the time share once purchased by you is yours to occupy, live in, enjoy, loan to friends, sell, let or bequeath, each year.

3. What are Property Shares in Dalmia Resorts?
For the first time ever, this exciting new concept now comes to India. Dalmia Resorts International will construct as many as 32 holiday resorts in the next 4 years. Encompassing some of the most exotic locations in the country. From Goa to Delhi, Kodaikanal to Shimla, Srinagar to Darjeeling to wherever you've always dreamt of vacationing.

4. When will the resorts be ready?
Construction has already started in Delhi; a club house and over 6 acres are already in existence in Kodaikanal; 15 acres of land has already been acquired in Goa. These resorts should be completed in the next 18 months. Several other sites are in various stages of negotiation.

5. How do I purchase a Property Share?
You can own a share in property in any of these upcoming resorts with a nominal once-only investment of Rs. 13,500 onwards. This once-and-for-all payment entitles you to one week's stay in the resort every year...forever!

6. How many weeks can I buy?
You can buy as many weeks as you wish. But the minimum number of units is one week. There are 50 weekly periods for sale each year; the balance 2 being kept aside for maintenance. You can take you pick from any of them.

7. Will I get the week of my choice?
Yes, on a first-come, first-served basis.

8. Does the price vary for peak seasons and low seasons?
Naturally the price of each period varies with the seasons of the year and the type of holiday resort. There is a range of cottages to choose from; a studio-type efficiency unit, a one-bedroom cottage and a two-bedroom chalet.

9. Are the resorts furnished?
Of course! Each cottage is fully furnished and superbly appointed with elegant furniture, TV, intercom, cutlery, crockery, luxury linen, etc.

10. Is there an attached kitchen?
Yes! A full-fledged kitchenette is yours with every holiday home. Fully equipped with refrigerator, cooking range, grill and toaster.

11. What amenities do the resorts offer?
Every resort will offer you a host of amenities. Ranging from a health club, sauna bath, video parlour and library to tennis courts, children's parks and baby sitting facilities...even a swimming pool in most resorts.

12. What about restaurants?
A speciality restaurant serving excellent cuisine is also on hand should you decide not to avail of your attached kitchenette.

13. Are groceries and provisions available?
Yes! A well-stocked super market is planned within the complex. Even an efficient in-house laundry service.

14. What is the size of each cottage?
Even our smallest unit will be much larger than a 5-star hotel room.

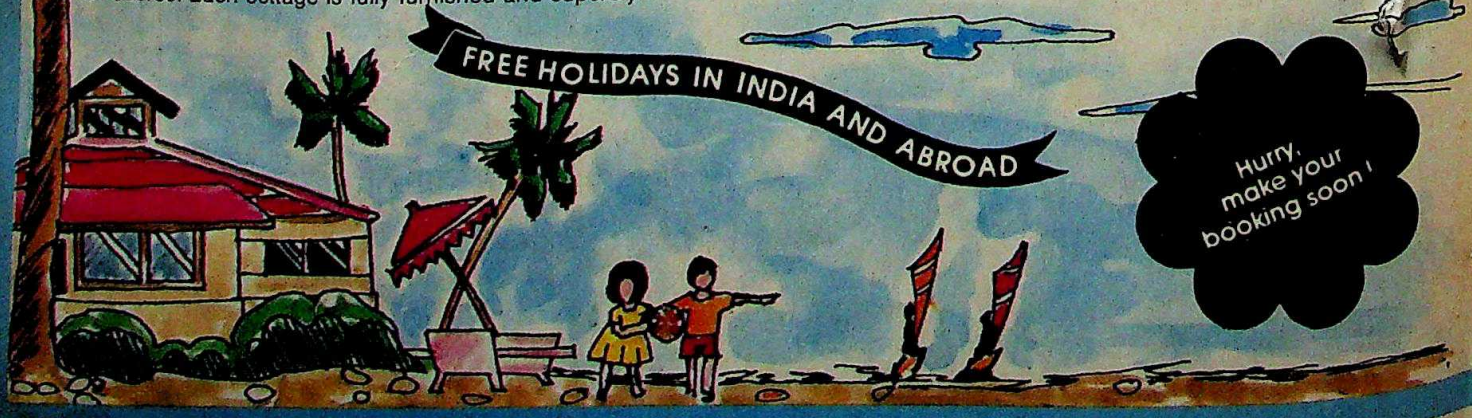
15. Is my money safe?
Your share purchase cheque will be deposited with the American Express Bank Ltd. in an Escrow Account with moneys to be released according to the terms of the Escrow Agreement. The bank will also hold the Title Deeds in trust on behalf of the owners. A copy of the Escrow Agreement will be made available with the application form.

16. Is the project professionally managed?
Of course! The project is managed by a team of highly qualified experts spearheaded by Mr. Prem Kapur, FHCIMA, Founder President of the Welcomgroup of Hotels, Chief Executive of the Hyatt Regency, New Delhi, and presently Member, Hotels Advisory Committee of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India.

17. Any tie-ups with international organisations?
An association with Resort Condominiums International (RCI) the world's largest Time Share Exchange company, lets you exchange you holiday home in India with any of 1000 RCI resorts in 45 countries worldwide—free. All you have to pay is a nominal exchange fee of U.S.$ 13. This can easily be taken out of your FTS quota (subject to RBI rules and regulations).

18. Do I get stuck with the same cottage year after year?
No! You can exchange your resort with other Dalmia Resort owners anywhere in India by just paying a fee of Rs. 99/-. Thus vacationing in a different resort every year, if you wish.

19. How does the exchange scheme work?
You deposit your 'week' into the computerised Space Bank and state your preferred exchanges. You are then allotted a week of



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up over Rs. 2 crores

your choice on a pre-stipulated fair exchange basis and your week is allotted to someone who wants it. Materialization in the past 5 years has exceeded 90%. You do not lose your week in the remote event of the exchange not materializing.

20. Can I gift my Property Share?
Of course! You can sell it, rent it, bequeath it to your heirs, or gift it to anybody you wish. And what a gift! You will be remembered year after year...forever!

21. Can I rent out my resort if want to?
Yes! You can rent out your holiday home to your friends or ask us to do it on your behalf. This will earn you a handsome income every year.

22. How do I go about selling my Property Share?
You can sell your share of the resort personally or appoint the Club Management Committee to do so on your behalf.

23. Who will manage the resorts?
The property will be managed by a Club Managing Committee with the assistance of experts provided by the Promoters at cost.

24. Who will maintain the resorts?
They will be maintained by a professional resort group with several years of experience in maintaining 5-star hotels. This group will be accountable to the Managing Committee in which you will have a say.

25. How much will it cost to maintain the resorts?
Annual maintenance charges will be divided amongst the owners of weeks. A security deposit of Rs. 3,000/- will be given by you to the American Express Bank to form a Fund. The Bank will manage this Fund and the return thereon will be used by the Club to renew and replace furniture and fittings and keep the property and resort in tip top condition.

26. Will I have say in the management of the resort?
Naturally, you will have a say in the Management. Just as in the case of a club, you will have your rights and obligations.

27. How will my voice be heard by the Management Committee?
You will be formed into a club with its main offices at convenient places like Bombay and Delhi to elicit views from the owners.

28. How do I pay for electricity?
Each holiday home is separately metered. You will pay only for the electricity you consume; similarly for telephones and gas, if applicable.

29. When does the weekly period start?
The weekly period commences on Saturday at 6 p.m. and finishes at 10 a.m. the following Saturday. This allows for enough time at changeover period for a thorough cleaning. Should you purchase consecutive weeks, the Management will ensure that cleaning and changing linen is arranged at a time suitable to you.

30. Are Property Shares really inflation-proof?
Property Shares are the first inflation-proof investment in the country. Because property always appreciates at a rate faster than the rate of inflation, you will stand to make a tidy profit any time you wish to sell your Property Share.

31. Are they better than Fixed Deposits?
In fact, Property Shares are better than Fixed Deposits by way of capital appreciation. Because the value of your Fixed Deposit steadily goes down as it gets eroded into every year by the rising rate of inflation and a fall in the value of money.

32. Will I get interest on my investment?
No. Which builder gives you interest on property? But then you stand to gain so much more when the property appreciates!

33. Can Companies buy Property Shares?
Property Shares can be of immense benefit to companies. They can now buy Property Shares to remunerate and reward their staff with free holidays. Or they can award a week's Property Share to their Executives as a gift or bonus in recognition of good work and thus earn their life-long loyalty.

34. How do I purchase Property Shares in Dalmia Resorts?
When you buy a Property Share in Dalmia Resorts, you sign an agreement to purchase and pay the amount which will be deposited in an Escrow Account with the American Express Bank Ltd. who will release the moneys according to the terms of the Escrow Agreement, a copy of which is available with application forms.

35. Is this the first time any builder is offering an Escrow Arrangement?
Yes! For the very first time of India, an international bank has agreed to open an Escrow Account. The Bank will also hold all titles to the property in trust and manage the maintenance fund.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Professionally managed by highly qualified experts.
- Capital appreciating asset.
- Association with Resort Condominiums International, the world's largest Time Share Exchange company.
- Concept proven in 45 countries around the world for many years.
- Exchange facilities in India and abroad.
- 32 resorts in the next 4 years.
- First 3 resorts will be ready in 18 months.
- Even the smallest cottage is much larger than a 5-star hotel room and fully equipped with a kitchenette.

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Ahmedabad Office:
Room No. 2 Hotel Capital
Khanpur,
AHMEDABAD 380 001.
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RCI

American Land Development Association

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This coupon is precious. It entitles you to a Special Discount of 10% ie. Rs. 1,350/- to Rs. 2,950/- on a first-come, first-served basis. Cut it out and reach it to us.

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COUPON VALID TILL DEC 31, 1985. ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT. HURRY!

DALMIA RESORTS International

Govan Advt & Mktg/DRI/16/85

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When the carpet is Persian, the walls are Luxol Silk.

Luxol Silk. It is the only emulsion paint you can tell with your eyes closed. Just run your fingers over the silken, super-smooth finish.

Luxol Silk. Its perfect silk finish makes it so easy to wash, so easy to keep bright and clean looking for years and years.

Luxol Silk. Choose from over forty shades of silk. And from a whole new range of whites that whisper.

Drape your walls with Luxol Silk — the richest emulsion in the world.

Luxol Silk

British Paints
BERGER
WORLDWIDE

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Private holdings of company stocks today are 10 times the sum a decade ago, while the number of investors has shot up from 1.5 million to seven million.

a new breed of politicians, urbanisation, foreign travel, luxury spending: all these are only some of the facets of the growth of India's middle class. Far more important than all these is the revolution that has taken place in the market-place as the middle class crowds into shops with newfound money.

It is an old traveller's dictum that a quick look at a country's shopwindows quickly reveals the nature of its society. And the rise of the middle class in India is amply reflected in the country's shopping centres and malls. On offer today are whole new ranges of processed foods, and a previously undreamt of choice in domestic appliances, including washing machines, vacuum cleaners, slow and fast electric cookers, mixer-grinders that come in 75 brands, room coolers, hot water geysers, and that ultimate sign of middle class decadence, the 24-chime doorbell.

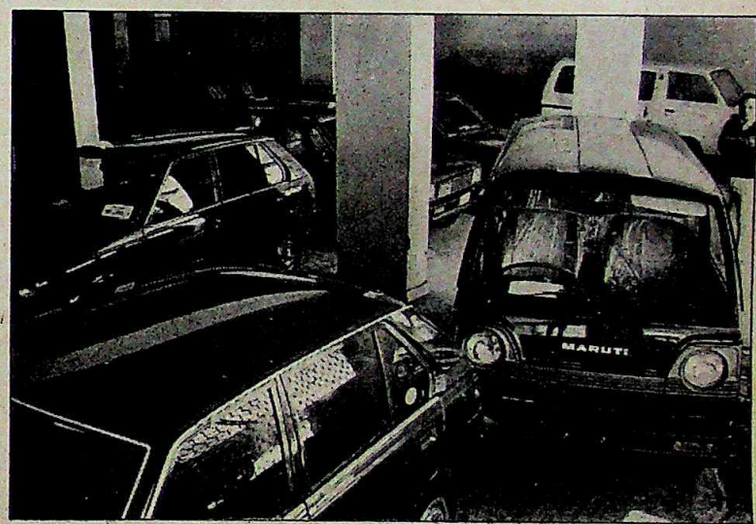
Fashion garments have come into their own with the entry of names like Ravissant, carpet and dhurry-manufacturing firms have been born (Transasia, Modifloor, Shyam Ahuja), and individual department stores like Benzer in Bombay and Snowhite in New Delhi, or specialist establishments like shirt makers Charagh Din, now have the money and the expertise to launch brand names and expensive advertising campaigns in glossy magazines. The magazines themselves are yet another mirror to the emergence of a relatively wealthy middle class because a growing advertising business can sustain far more publications than before.

The beauty business has kept pace with disposable incomes, as cleansers and *kaajals*, conditioners and cleaners, glossers and blushers and liners and lotions are all applied with increasing intensity: 50 kinds of shampoos, 500 shades of lipsticks, dozens of new moisturisers and deodorants, and at the end of it all a Rs 150-crore business.

As in the case of cosmetics, new or growing businesses have started supplying the shops with the goods in demand, and suddenly hit on good times. The production and sales of refrigerators has jumped fourfold in the last decade to six lakh annually, that of cars has more than doubled in the last five years to around 90,000, and in the case of synthetic clothing the per capita consumption has gone up 150 per cent in the last decade. Indeed, today's smart businessman senses more opportunity in such areas than anywhere else.

Sometimes, the business opportunity presented by middle class demand has placed India on the world manufacturing stage. G.Brazzelli, managing director of the Italian scooter-giant, Piaggio & C.S.P.A., said on a visit to New Delhi last fortnight that "India is now the world's largest market for two-wheelers." A million motorcycles, scooters and mopeds have been sold in the country this year, five times the number a decade ago, and the figure five years from now will be close to two million. By then, with a little luck, India may also have the world's two biggest scooter manufacturers: Bajaj Auto, and Lohia Machines along with its sister company Vespa Car, which between them expect to turn out over one million vehicles. Brazzelli himself admitted as much when he said that Piaggio (currently the world's leading scooter manufacturer) produced no more than three lakh scooters last year. And others say that Bajaj and his like are doing to the world in scooters what Japan did earlier in cars and motorcycles.

The burgeoning middle class has also made India among the largest markets in the world for TV sets (there are 5.5 million now in the country), and even the expensive video sets. India now has a million of these, while all of the United States had only five million two years ago. Even unpretentious neighbourhoods seem to be upwardly mobile as never before. On the streets around Bombay's Bhendi Bazar, the skyline is an uninterrupted maze of TV antennae.



MARUTI CARS WAIT TO BE DRIVEN AWAY FROM A SHOWROOM

The fact that TV has moved downmarket reflects the trickle-down of aspirations and to some extent spending power. Nirma has broadened the base of the population using synthetic detergents, watches are no longer a status symbol, milkmen cart their cans around on motorcycles instead of bicycles, which meanwhile have become more ubiquitous than the transistor, and cheaper synthetic clothes have converted yet another status symbol into an article of common consumption. To at least a limited extent, the rising expectations down the income ladder are being met with cheaper goods.

Even in the case of a relatively expensive product like cars, a decade ago the number of manufacturers was down from three to two because of a shrinking market. Today, there are four

Educational entrepreneurship at the level of new nurseries for pre-school children, or in the form of a host of 'public schools' or 'convents'—is one of the more remarkable offshoots of the birth of the middle class.

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Government policy has, inevitably, fallen in line. Taxes provide the best example. Over the last decade, the Government has actually slashed personal income tax rates from 97 per cent to 50 per cent.

car manufacturing companies, with one of the new ones producing the current middle class status symbol, the Maruti. Standard Motors will re-enter the car market soon, and another three companies are eagerly waiting for the Government's green signal to introduce their own models. If all of them get the go-ahead, India will have a record eight car manufacturing companies, and the total market could expand from 35,000 a decade ago to anything up to 1.5 lakh or two lakh annually: a rise of at least 750 per cent.

Government policy has, inevitably, fallen in line. Taxes provide the best example. Over the last decade, a money-hungry government has actually slashed personal income tax rates from a maximum of 97 per cent to no more than 50 per cent, and sharply reduced the excise and customs duties on the kind of goods especially dear to the middle class: two-wheelers, cars, refrigerators (which today cost only marginally more than what they did a decade ago, despite over 100 per cent inflation), TV sets, and all manner of consumer electronics goods. At one extreme, the customs duty on even Scotch whisky was slashed last fortnight.

The one finance minister who tried to move in the opposite direction was Charan Singh, who in 1979 announced that the consumers of such items as cosmetics, toiletries and other everyday middle class household goods should pay more tax in order to provide revenue for spending on the rural poor. What resulted for the hapless politician was instant ignominy in a press that reflects the aspirations of the middle class.

But the change in the Government's stance has gone far beyond just lower taxes, unprecedented though this is. Dozens of entrepreneurs have been allowed to make video recorders, and scarce foreign exchange has been given to companies so that they can import the components for everything from TV sets to washing machines, while new foreign collaborations have been permitted for the manufacture of such products as quality luggage. The leftists have mildly cried foul, but a middle class that is on a consumption spree is, unlike in the past, a whole-hearted supporter of the Government's economic policies. And the voices of dissent have been silenced, or been lost in the din of TV commercials.

The results of all this are now there for everyone to read in the newly-released Seventh Five-Year Plan document, for among the only sectors where production targets were handsomely overshot during the last five years were in consumer goods. Thus, refrigerator production last year was supposed to reach 3.9 lakh, but went up to 5.72 lakh. Two-wheelers were meant to reach five lakh, but achieved 9.2 lakh. And TV production, targeted at Rs 180 crore, in fact managed Rs 436 crore.

The next five years will see even more explosive growth, for the plan now talks of taking the production of VCR's from Rs 2 crore last year to an astronomical Rs 425 crore in 1989-90, of tape recorders from Rs 38 crore to Rs 300 crore, and TV's themselves from Rs 436 crore to Rs 850 crore. And the market for polyster staple fibre is expected to grow from 55,000 tonnes in 1985 to over one lakh tonnes in 1986 and close to 1.9 lakh tonnes in 1987. Says Anil Ambani of Reliance Industries: "There will be a market for all this and more."

If all this is the hardware side of the rise of the middle class, there is a software side too: in the form of women who have got an education now going out to work, in the progressive spread of the small family norm, perhaps in greater sexual freedom, and also in a change of attitudes on a host of fronts, not all of them positive or desirable. The increasing acquisitiveness in society has led to the spate of bride burnings, a grab-what-you-can attitude is increasingly prevalent, and as TELCO Chairman S.Moolgaokar said some time ago, business is pervaded by the "quick-buck" culture. In their turn, social scientists will talk of the possible harm to a society when its upper crust goes on a spending boom and shapes government policies to its tastes.

CUSTOMERS AT AN ELECTRONICS SHOP STACKED WITH GOODS

Even if the poor will always be with us, from now on so will the middle class, dominating the scene with increasing legitimacy and self-assurance, even as the former shrinks in numbers and importance.

For all that, however, there is no getting away from the fact that even if the poor will always be with us, so will the middle class from now on. And as the former shrinks in number and importance (however slowly or fast), the latter will hog the arc lamps with increasing legitimacy and self-assurance. If the last decade has seen the middle class emerge as the tip of the iceberg in an ocean of poverty, the next should almost certainly see more Narain Singhs and their children emerging into the sun.

—T.N.NINAN

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Bush Baron Auto Colour TV Take-home price: Rs. 7500 in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh

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For some people, choosing the best is a way of life.

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and Rajasthan; Rs. 7750 in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

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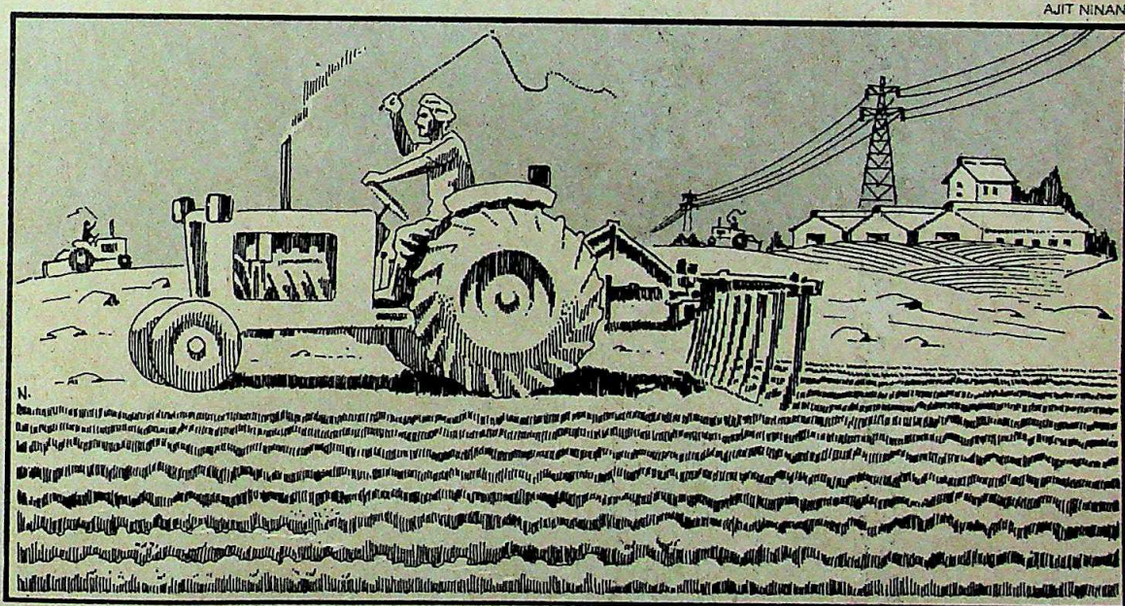
DAY OF THE FARMER

The decade has thrown up a new breed of farmers—aware, educated and aggressively productive—who pamper the soil into yielding the bounty of food on which the other millions depend. Their achievement in helping the country cross the hump in the search for self sufficiency, is as remarkable as the task of feeding one billion people by 2000, will be daunting.

AJIT NINAN



Punjab remains the brightest lighthouse on the agricultural landscape. The number (of lighthouses) will have to increase if the country is to produce 235 million tonnes of foodgrains by the year 2000.

HE IS already a celebrity, a Midas among farmers, with an uncanny ability to coax enormous amounts of golden grain from the soil of his 80-acre farm on the outskirts of Ludhiana. He is a show-piece introduced to dignitaries and ambassadors when they visit Punjab. His district, Ludhiana, leads the world in wheat and rice yields but gentleman farmer Jagjit Singh Hara, 49, beats Ludhiana's best by a wide margin. He extracts a bounty of 4.4 tonnes of grain from every acre of his land every year, half of it wheat and half rice. A city slicker who became a legend in a state which has many, Hara has now won widespread acclaim—from the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute which recently adjudged him one of the 14 outstanding farmers from 10 countries, from the Agriculture Ministry which anointed him a *Dhan Pandit* and from the nearby Punjab Agricultural University, which has made him a visiting professor. The centre-piece in a display of trophies, plaques and citations that crowd the walls of his drawing-room is Hara's picture with Norman Borlaug, the Nobel laureate who helped India's green revolution.

Further north, on a picturesque 25-acre plot near Pathankot, overlooked by the snow-clad Dhauladhar range, lives Kuldip Singh Gill, who has made a fortune out of Hi-Sex. No, he is not in the pornography business. Hi-Sex is his favourite breed of hen and Kuldip Singh Gill is to eggs what Hara is to grain. One day last fortnight, Gill contemplated the day's production of 1,05,000 eggs, which raised the fragile hoard in his store-room to an impressive 3.5 lakh. The size of his poultry farm—with its 2.10 lakh hens—is no cackling matter; even the description sounds odd

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The size of Gills's poultry farm—with its 2.10 lakh hens is no cackling matter. It has made him perhaps the largest commercial poultry farmer in the country—the King of Cluck.

He has no formal training in poultry. He learned by keeping his eyes and ears open and his mind receptive to new techniques of bird management.

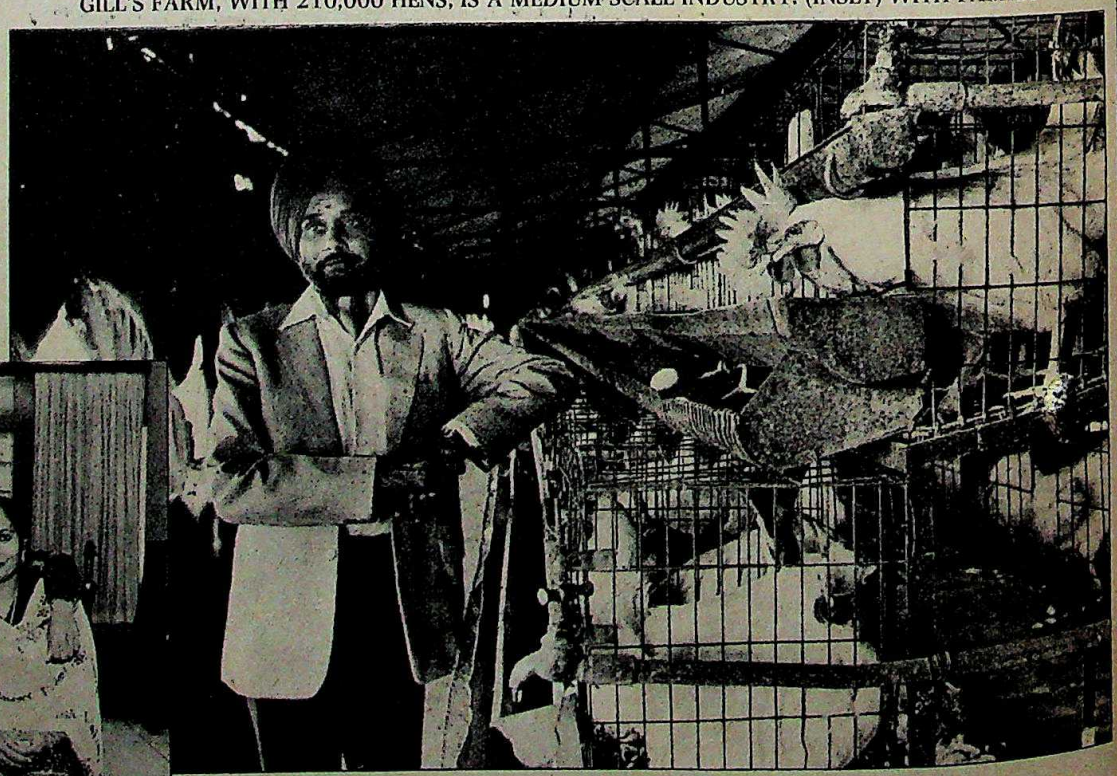
considering that it is registered with the Director-General of Technical Development as a medium scale industry. In fact, egg manufacturer would be a more appropriate description for Gill, 40, and a pioneer who introduced modern mass production techniques to the industry in Punjab where a unit was considered big if it had 40,000 to 50,000 birds. He had no formal training in poultry. He says he learned by keeping his eyes and ears open and his mind receptive to new techniques of bird management. He was the first person in north India to introduce the practice of keeping the birds in wire cages—three to a cage. The birds stay clean and so do the eggs. And their reduced mobility saves a considerable amount of feed. Hard work has made him perhaps the largest commercial poultry farmer in the country—the King of Cluck.

They are both ordinary looking, the kind you would not notice on the street. Hara, tall and jovial unlocks his heart and his bar to visitors. Gill, short and dapper, is more reserved. Both started out in somewhat identical fashion: Hara as a refugee from Pakistan and Gill as a farmer's son at a loose end. And both have achieved remarkable success in their respective fields.

Like them, there are others elsewhere in the country—the potato growers of Farrukhabad and Meerut in Uttar Pradesh and Biharsharif in Bihar, the cotton planters of Surat and Maharashtra, the dairymen of Gujarat and the paddy growers of Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district and Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur—who symbolise equally well the growing community of farmers whose easy receptivity to modern and mechanised techniques has helped the country cross the hump in the quest for self- sufficiency in food and other commodities. In this quest, the crucial ten-year period from 1975 to 1985 has been a turning point. In a microcosm, their story is also the story of Indian agriculture for this period. In 1974-75 India produced 99.83 million tonnes of foodgrains and 6.23 million tonnes of potatoes, around 65 lakh bales of cotton. Catalysed by the efforts of innovators like Hara, foodgrains production increased to 151.54 million tonnes in 1983-84, a not unimpressive increase of 51.82 per cent. Few other countries have achieved similar breakthroughs. In other areas too, the achievement was equally impressive: potato production more than doubled from 6.23 million tonnes in 1975 to 13 million tonnes. "Potato has produced as big a revolution as wheat," says Deputy Director-General M.V. Rao of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). "Previously potatoes were a luxury. Now a glut has caused prices to crash". Cotton output too swelled from about 65 lakh bales in 1975 to 93 lakh bales in 1985. Ten years ago long staple cotton worth Rs 70 crore was being imported, now it's surplus. Thanks to the Gills of the business , egg production jumped from 8,204 million to 13,500 million and broilers literally took wing, from 10 million to 50 million.

Success stories all, spurred mainly by the availability of improved seeds from agricultural universities and seeds corporations (70,000 tonnes were distributed in 1984-85 compared to only 25,000 tonnes five years ago), progressive mechanisation (annual production of tractors has gone up from 33,146 in 1976-77 to around 90,000 this year), easier bank credit (Rs 5,810 crore

GILL'S FARM, WITH 210,000 HENS, IS A MEDIUM SCALE INDUSTRY: (INSET) WITH FAMILY



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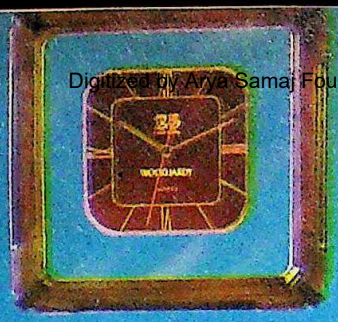

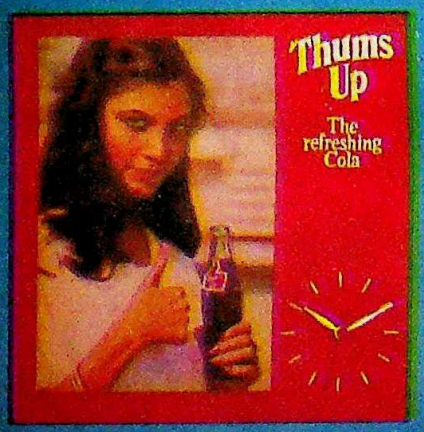

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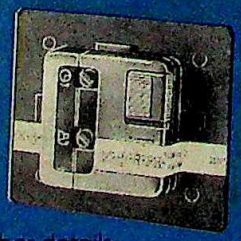

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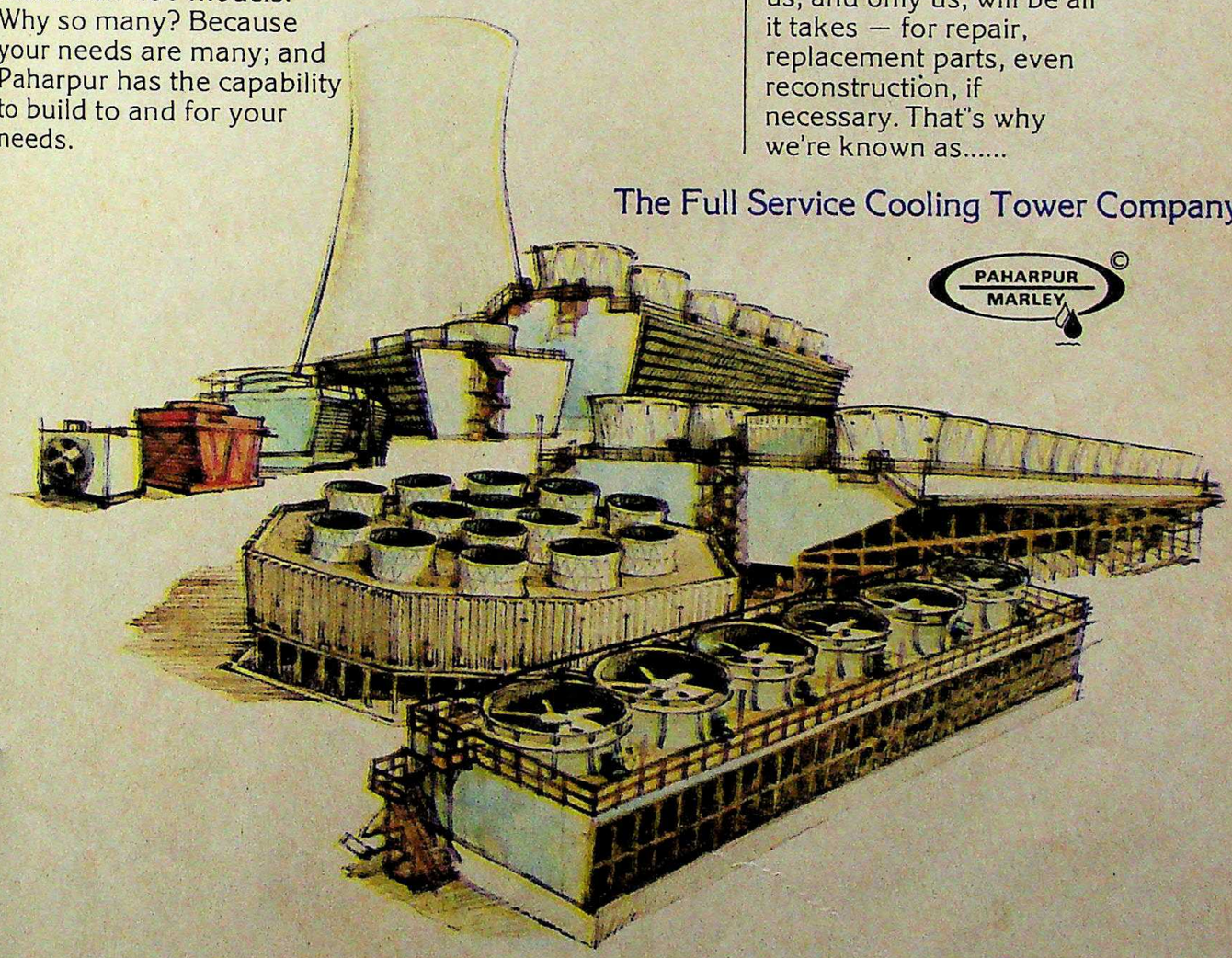

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"The strength of our agriculture lies in its improved ability to withstand droughts."
N.S. RANDHAWA
Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research

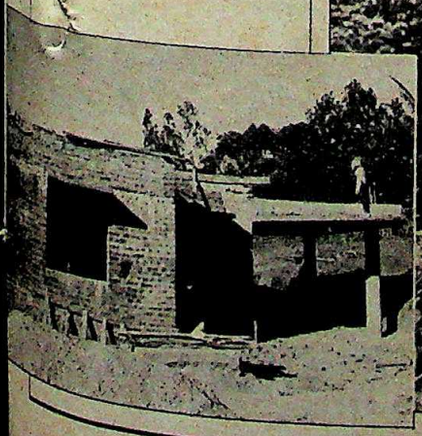
disbursed in 1984-85 as against Rs 3,387 crore in 1980-81), increased fertiliser usage (84 lakh tonnes in 1984-85 compared to 55.16 lakh tonnes in 1980-81) and increase in irrigated area and grassroots application of research breakthroughs in university laboratories. These achievements often get lost in the welter of publicity about droughts,shortages and price rises, but they have infused the farming community and the nation with a new confidence. This is echoed in the words of ICAR Director-General Dr N.S. Randhawa: "The strength of our agriculture lies in its improved ability to withstand droughts." In the 1970s a drought spelled disaster; the one in 1979-80 caused a shortfall of 22 million tonnes and wiped out a buffer stock accumulated over ten years. But some success in drought-proofing made a foodgrains production of 151 million tonnes possible in 1983-84, a drought year. Two areas of worry remain—oilseeds, whose shortage forces the country to import edible oil worth more than Rs 1,000 crore every year, and pulses whose per capita availability over the years has fallen from 72 grams to only 34 grams.

That apart, Punjab remains the brightest lighthouse on the agricultural landscape, says Randhawa. There are others too, but their number will have to increase if the country is to produce the 235 million tonnes of foodgrains required by the year 2000 to feed an estimated population of one billion people. Expectations of an increase of that order are based on the hope that the coming decade and a half will multiply the tribe of agricultural entrepreneurs like Hara and Gill and transform the operations of others like Karnataka coffee planter Ajjicutira Ponnappa who rejoices in his new-found prosperity after years of marginal earnings. Ponnappa's lean face lit up in anticipation as he admired the coffee berries ripening in the winter sun on his 20-acre estate near Mercara. It promised to be a good crop and Ponnappa was satisfied: "God has set me free from worries."

Life was not always a bed of berries for the aging Ponnappa, 60. With insignificant yields from five acres of paddy fields left him by his father, his youth was one of despair as he slogged it out as a clerk in the state Industries Department. With a wife and three children to support, he was terribly insecure. "I spent sleepless nights worrying about our future," he remembers now. In 1972, with the coffee boom under way, Ponnappa decided to invest his life's savings of Rs 35,000 to convert ten acres of jungle land into a coffee estate. Taking all the help he could get—high yielding seeds from the coffee board and development loans from a bank—he tided over the five years it takes for the plants to bear fruit. "Growing a coffee plant is like taking care of a baby," he says. "In the first five years we spent money with no returns." When the returns came, they gladdened his heart. Because of steadily rising coffee prices he started grossing over Rs 1 lakh a year. He bought another 10 acres near his estate and applied for more loans. Last year he spent Rs 1 lakh on a sprinkler system. The fact that he owes banks about Rs 2.5 lakh does not faze him. "No city job can give me the security that my estate does," he says. Security also means having the money to send his son to engineering college and the daughter to a college in Manga-

"No city job can give me the kind of security my estate does. It's a paradise."
AJJICUTIRA PONNAPPA
Karnataka coffee planter

PLANTER PONNAPPA ON HIS 20-ACRE COFFEE ESTATE NEAR MERCARA: (INSET) NEW HOUSE



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10 DECISIVE YEARS
Dec. 1975—Dec. 1985

Concern

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THE BEST WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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The Haras of this country produce 60 per cent of its food and the ripples of their achievements reach even those on the boundaries of the sphere. That is their importance.

lore, and a Rs 5 lakh concrete house with attached bathrooms which is nearing completion on the estate. "It's a paradise," he gloats.

Others have traversed different paths to the paradise of prosperity. Gill was doing pre-engineering when his father died leaving him, the only son, with 40 acres of land. "I used to ask people what's a good industry to start," he says. And a relative sold him the idea of starting a poultry farm. So he started out with 1,500 birds in the early 1970s. It soon became clear that he had a way with chicks. By 1975 he had grown to 10,000 birds and to 50,000 three years ago. Then he really expanded with the help of a bank loan of Rs 30 lakhs and now has 210,000 hens. The farm even has its own feed mill to process the 20 tonnes of feed needed every day. Yet another expansion is under way. Gill attributes his success to the farm's location, with the huge market of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and the army at his very doorstep, and availability of cheaper feed ingredients. With characteristic modesty he plays down his own role in husbanding his massive brood into a medium scale industry. Gill too has only one son who he hopes will join him in the business. Understandably, Gill is not overly fond of eggs; he eats only about two a week and chicken meat graces his table only once a fortnight.

Hara came to Kanganwal village adjoining Ludhiana's industrial estate in 1951 from Multan. His father was allotted 20 acres in exchange for the land they had left behind in Pakistan. Says Hara: "For three years we lived in a tin shed under the banyan tree. Little by little we saved and built a house." And bought more land. "Agriculture has to be run like a business," he says, "it's no use saying it's in the blood". Hara confesses that his business boomed 10 years ago when he adopted high-yield paddy as a summer crop. "Paddy has brought prosperity to Punjab as a summer crop" but the wheat-paddy rotation is taking a heavy toll of soil fertility. Hara displays a passionate concern for the health of the soil on his farm and is worried at the way farmers around him are neglecting their basic resource. He has prepared a soil fertility map of his entire farm and gets soil samples tested every two years at the Punjab Agricultural University which provides this service free to neighbouring farmers. Any deficiency of nutrients is quickly remedied. He plants an intermediate crop of green manure *(jantar)* which is mashed and buried in the soil to replenish depleted nutrients. Not afraid of dirtying his hands, Hara still works on the farm. The care he lavishes on his land has paid dividends. He now lives in a bigger house surrounded by exotic trees and plants with a small swimming pool he likes to plunge into after he has finished entertaining his frequent guests. Such is his reputation that every grain he produces is purchased by the National Seeds Corporation to be sold as seed to other farmers.

Entrepreneurs like Hara who have assured means of irrigation represent a minority of 30 per cent of the farming community. The remaining 70 per cent of the cultivators still depend largely on nature since they cultivate the rain-fed areas. But however small their number, the Haras of this country produce 60 per cent of its food and the ripples of their achievements reach even those on the boundaries of the sphere. That is their importance.

—RAMINDAR SINGH with RAJ CHENGAPPA in Bangalore

"Agriculture has to be run like a business. It's no use saying it's in the blood.... Paddy has brought prosperity to Punjab as a summer crop."
JAGJIT SINGH HARA

FARMER HARA EXTRACTS A BOUNTY OF 4.4 TONNES OF GRAIN PER ACRE; (INSET) WITH AWARD

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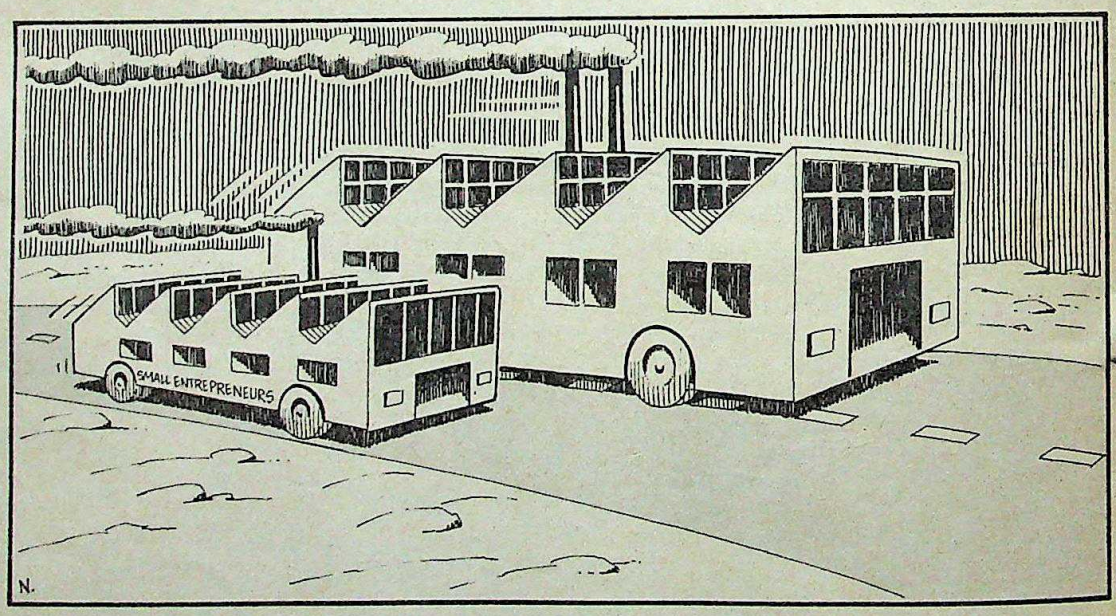
BUSINESS

SMALL IS BOUNTIFUL

One of the most remarkable developments of the decade has been the unprecedented flowering of small enterprises. Small companies and new entrepreneurs were at the forefront of practically every business boom of the last decade and have provided the platform on which broad-based industrial growth can take place in the decade ahead.



Small companies and new entrepreneurs were at the forefront of practically every business boom of the last decade with their ability to seize business opportunities and their aggressive feeding of burgeoning markets.

AT FIFTEEN he quit home and lived by his wits to support his passion for painting. The lad assembled and hawked radios door to door to keep the wolf at bay. At 17, he launched his first venture on a 60-sq ft plot across the Jamuna in Delhi, manufacturing small indicator lights for geysers and other electrical appliances. Three years later, after an art gallery sold a painting of his for Rs 2,300, he took on partners and floated a small electrical components company.

Vaishno Electricals still flourishes, but Mukesh Aggarwal has chucked up his artistic ambitions. Now 31, Aggarwal presides over a clutch of firms that last year sold television sets and home appliances (under the Hotline label) and switch gears worth Rs 15 crore. Says Aggarwal: "My aim was never just to make money. I wanted to set up a company and take it to the top." He recalls his rough years when he bought fans from the market on credit and sold them to raise cash for raw materials so that he could meet an order he had bagged, and concludes: "If you have determination, never postpone a problem and solve it, you can do anything."

Clearly, that upbeat message has swept the country over the last decade. Fervently believing that they could do better, six executives quit DCM Data Products 10 years ago and set up shop in a two-room *barsati* in the capital. Using Rs 1.75 lakh of provident fund money, they hired furniture, a typewriter and a typist whose first task was to type out his own appointment letter. Today, they steer the Delhi-based Hindustan Computers Ltd (HCL) group, which turns out computers and computer-related equipment, electronic typewriters, copiers and test and measuring equipment. Their eight

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and you get a success story like few others
in the construction business

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The story of a company called Unitech

In 1970, five engineers met in Delhi. They had studied in the best engineering schools abroad. They had worked in giant international outfits. They commanded enormous professional respect. Between them, they probably knew everything there was to know about the construction business. Above all, they were fiercely ambitious.

That day, the five decided to set up shop. The Unitech group was born.

What followed was an unparalleled success story.

The group of five grew within 15 years to a conglomerate employing 300 technical and highly skilled personnel. All over India, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Africa, Unitech put up radio and power stations, transmission lines, sports stadia, hospitals, hotels, housing complexes...

In the 80s alone, Unitech's turnover has grown almost 450% to Rs. 35 crores. Its net worth, which was a meagre Rs. 50,000 in 1970, today stands at an astonishing Rs. 12 crores. It has projects in hand worth Rs. 180 crores. And among construction companies, it is one of the leading foreign exchange earners in the country.

The Unitech group's activity areas include construction engineering and real estate, manufacture of cold formed sections, installation and erection of transmission towers all over the world, and the manufacture of metal bodies for light commercial vehicles like Swaraj-Mazda and DCM-Toyota.

Unitech. It's the story of a great company. Unlike most stories, it doesn't have an ending. The best is yet to come.

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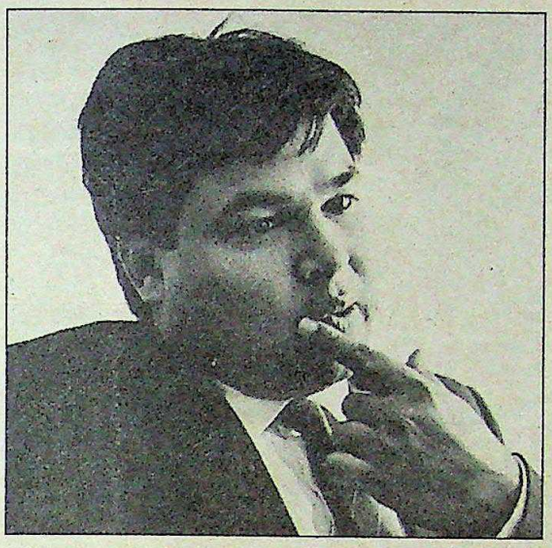
At 17, he launched his first venture on a 60-sq ft plot across the Jamuna in Delhi. Now 31, Aggarwal presides over a clutch of firms that last year sold items worth Rs 15 crore.

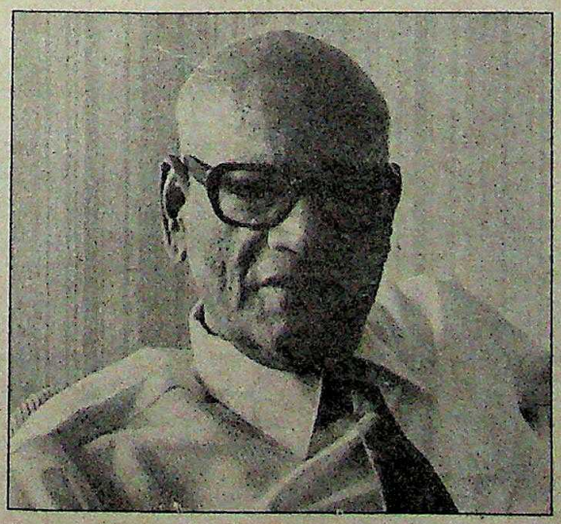


companies, including the Singapore-based Far East Computers Pvt Ltd, should gross an estimated Rs 60 crore in sales by the year-end.

Around the same time a decade ago, Satish Kaura launched Teletube Electronics and later Samtel (India) Ltd to become the country's largest manufacturer of black and white television picture tubes (group turnover this year: Rs 50 crore); advertising guru R.K. Swamy quit Hindustan Thompson Associates to set up R.K. Swamy Advertising Associates Ltd in Madras (billings: Rs 12.5 crore this year); and moulded luggage baron Sumatichandra Mehta founded Safari Industries Ltd (estimated sales this year: over Rs 22 crore) in a room in a small industrial estate in Bombay.

These and other examples like them testify to one of the more remarkable developments of the last decade: an unprecedented flowering of enterprise. The statistics give some indication of how sweeping a trend it has been. Small units have more than quadrupled in number over the last 10 years, going up from 2.68 lakh in 1975 to 12.75 lakh this year (*see chart*). Over 90 per cent of them have investments in plant and machinery of less than Rs 2 lakh each, suggesting a record broadening of the entrepreneurial base. The small sector's output has soared by almost five times from the level a decade ago, it now accounts for one-fourth of total production in the organised sector, and employs nine million people, almost twice the number 10 years ago. And in the biggest achievement of them all, small businesses last year accounted for a staggering 26 per cent of the country's exports.

R.K. Swamy quit Hindustan Thompson Associates to set up R.K. Swamy Advertising Associates Ltd in Madras, with current billings of Rs 12.5 crore



In a fact that is rarely realised, small companies and new entrepreneurs were at the forefront of practically every business boom of the last decade, whether it was computers, television sets, consumer electronics, garments, diamond exports or advertising. And they frequently put the established large industrial houses in the shade with the quality of their performance, their ability to seize business opportunities and their aggressive feeding of burgeoning markets.

Remarkably enough, the giants of the corporate sector fell flat on their faces in precisely these areas. With losses piling up, the JK group had to pull out of manufacturing television sets, while the Sarabhais' Telerad limped along. In garments, virtually all the big boys, including cigarette behemoth ITC tested the waters, only to call it quits or retain a small presence in the field.

The two biggest export success stories of the last decade have been diamonds and garments. Both would have been impossible without the drive and zeal of new entrepreneurs pushing for the success of their new-born ventures. Garment exports this year will be around Rs 1,000 crore, compared to virtually nothing a decade ago, and diamond exports too will be over Rs 1,000 crore whereas a decade ago these hardly existed.

The small sector has plainly come of age, and tens of thousands of entrepreneurs have seized the opportunities of the decade. Some hitched their wagons on to larger units and became ancillaries, others used cheap bank credit (which occasionally went up to as high as 90 per cent of the cost of a project), special government facilities and exploited low overheads to outsell bigger competitors. Yet others seized the opportunity presented by preferential tax policy, as in the case of small manufacturers of air-conditioners who virtually took control of this rapidly growing market, reducing market leader Voltas to minority status. And in a number of cases, the Government reserved production for the small-sector.

There is little doubt that the entrepreneurial flowering in small industry would have been impossible without careful government nurturing. As D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) points out, there have been excise exemptions, price preferences in tendering for contracts, and subsidised power tariffs in some states. But most important of all, small units by and large have not required any licences from the Government, unlike many large units that have not been able to venture into numerous areas or expand because of licensing restrictions. But

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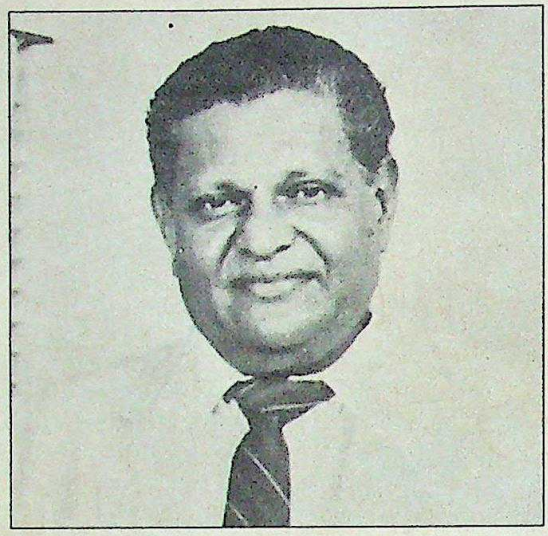

Moulded luggage baron Sumatichandra Mehta founded Safari Industries Ltd in a room in a small industrial estate in Bombay. Estimated sales this year: over Rs 22 crore.

incentives alone are not the prime mover. A survey of small units in Bombay, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Jaipur, commissioned by the Industrial Development Bank of India some time ago, on the effect of incentives found that they did not seem to have much to do with the success or failure of small business. In short, a genuine growth impulse has been at work.

At the ground level, successful firms attribute their scorching pace of growth to a host of other factors: marketing skills, being first in the market, a basic knowledge of the area of operation before entering it, product innovation, and an ability to take risks and brave new markets. What is equally clear is that a canny eye for protecting raw material sources, an emphasis on paring costs and overheads, operating in sheltered or sellers' markets, changing tack speedily whenever necessary, and personal attention to detail have paid off in more than one case. At another level, rising middle class affluence could have created a ready market for consumer goods, a market which the new entrepreneurs stepped in to feed.

Certainly, all these are important to success. Knowing the basics of the business is obviously essential, and many of the new businessmen seem to have qualified on this count before taking the plunge. K.Anji Reddy, who along with textile technologist C. Chandrasekhar Reddy floated Standard Organics Ltd (turnover in 1984: over Rs 14 crore) in Hyderabad five years ago, worked at the state-owned Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd. N.L.Thadani of Wings Wear Pvt Ltd (turnover: Rs 7.5 crore), the shirts and jeans company, worked for a fabrics company in west Africa before making a foray into garments at home. And Yash Verma, managing director of Beltek Electronics Pvt Ltd (turnover: Rs 30 crore), the television and audio equipment firm, roped in a brother from the US who was an engineer to provide the technical backup.

A.K. Puri, whose Mohan Exports, with a turnover this year of Rs 16 crore, ranks among the country's top garment exporters.

In consumer products, the importance of marketing skills and advertising are only too apparent. Predictably, the winners tend to have strengths in these areas. Mukesh Aggarwal, for example, is known for his marketing savvy and appreciation of consumer needs. The Fusebase boss didn't have the money to splurge on advertising when he decided to make a debut on the Delhi gas stove market four years ago. So he carefully cultivated dealers.

If marketing is one ingredient in success, spotting market opportunities, getting in on the ground floor, and the right timing are clearly others. A.K. Puri, whose Mohan Exports (turnover this year: Rs 16 crore) ranks among the country's top garment exporters, grants the point when he says: "I got in at the beginning and that helped." Ad man Swamy went early for public sector accounts, then almost virgin territory for new ad agencies. The Reddys floated Standard Organics to manufacture sulphamethoxazole, a basic drug, at a time when it was imported. In a sense, this is also true of computer companies like HCL. In October 1977, International Business Machines pulled out of the country, throwing the market wide open to the country's fledgling computer firms. Says an HCL spokesman: "That was a stroke of luck. We had announced the launching of a business machine; we were right there. We started demonstrating it in December." A.K. Aikat and A.K. Mukherjee launched Sonodyne (turnover last year: Rs 12.5 crore), the Calcutta-based audio equipment and television company, at a time when West Bengal was in the grip of an industrial crisis. Recalls Aikat: "Anyone who wanted to set up an industrial unit was treated like a VIP. We never had to wait in a queue for anything—land, loans or permission."

There is more to successful entrepreneurship than this of course. If HCL officials are to be believed, a combination of technical innovations and the development of know-how in-house put the group on the fast track. The R.K. Swamy agency came up with what may then have been a novel idea shortly after going into business. It pushed clients into selling products and conveying messages through letterheads and writing pads, a common enough practice now.

That apart, developing raw material options, cutting costs and sometimes plain chance have

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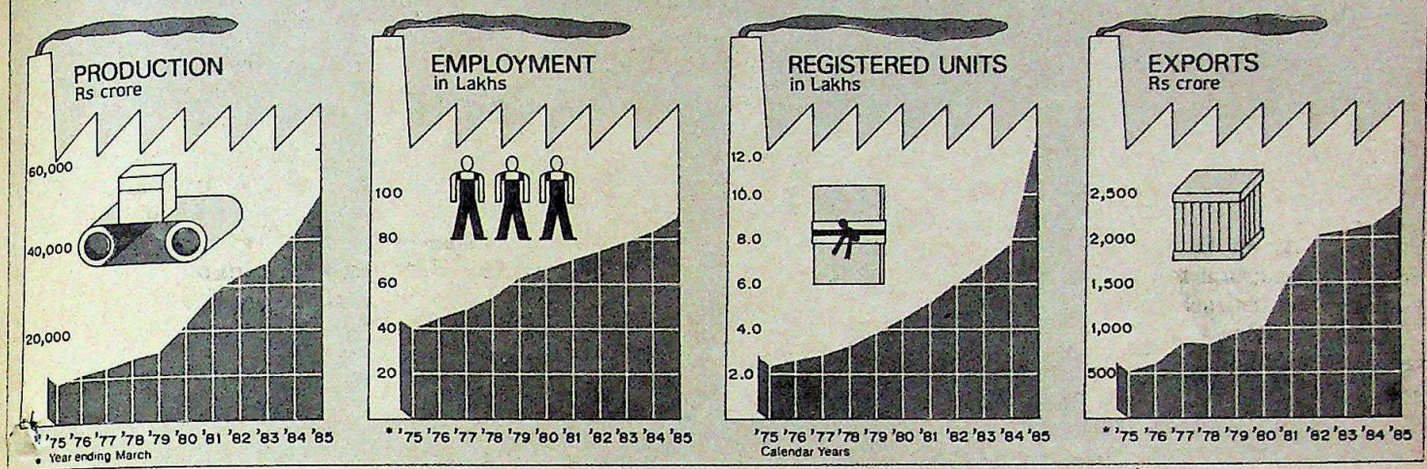
GROWTH PROFILE OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRY



helped many to prosper. Kaura protected his raw material flanks by acquiring the know-how to make glass bulbs (which is at times scarce on world markets) out of glass components (which are more easily available abroad). Safari set up a plant in Gujarat because production and labour costs in Bombay were vastly higher. As for chance, Arun Kumar Mehta, the country's second largest diamond exporter (sales last year: over Rs 47 crore), reckons that his turning point came when the London-based Diamond Trading Corporation expanded its list of Indian "sightholders" (dealers invited to its auctions). "We were among the lucky few. That year, we did Rs 5-crore worth of business." His second break came when his brother married a girl in Belgium and set up shop there, thus providing business outlets in Antwerp.

But these elements are common to most corporate winners, big or small. What seems to have also pitchforked several small companies into the big time is that they operate in partially sheltered markets (the moulded luggage industry) and sellers' markets (jeans, where manufacturers cannot produce enough to meet the demand though this is also due to a shortage of denim). Bhaskar Sen, who set up Qualcrete last year in West Bengal to manufacture chemical additives, admits that he expects fat profits because only one other firm in south India makes his product.

Small firms also seem to have an edge in industries that call for personalised service, attention to detail and the flexibility to adapt quickly to changes in the business or technological environment. For instance, in the garments and electronics fields the small have ruled the roost. A chorus of garment and TV industry voices says that big companies delegate responsibility down the line and cannot swiftly change tack when necessary. Says garment exporter Puri: "The garments business is personalised, oriented to changing fashions and has to be tightly controlled. Professional managers do not have the motivation for all this." And most in the electronics business agree that big firms have so far had limited success in their field because of their lack of flexibility. That may not be the whole story of course. JK Cotton Director Govind Hari Singhania says that the Government did not sanction higher production capacities for his group, and so the group's electronics division was awash in red ink.

Finally, several small businessmen point out that it was far easier to obtain bank credit after 14 leading banks were nationalised in 1969. Aikat of Sonodyne lists this as having been of fundamental help. But there is a dark side to the small sector story. Some believe that the blandishments held out by the Government have lured big industry into floating small concerns. Also, not all small companies function very well (6.1 per cent of them are in sick bay), and the quality of goods manufactured by these firms is often questioned. There is some truth to the first point, as economist S.K. Goyal of the Indian Institute of Public Administration has shown in a study. Goyal also argues that "distortions have taken place in the policy on small units because they are defined in terms of the investment in plant and machinery (the qualifying limit is now Rs 35 lakh), instead of criteria like the technology involved, ownership or labour intensity." Thus many of the small sector's pacesetters qualify for the term small, though their turnovers would put them in the big league.

But government officials do not buy many of these arguments. Snaps P.P. Khanna, development commissioner, small-scale industries: "How many cases has Goyal cited? You can draw your own conclusions." And on the quality question, Khanna adds: "The undercurrent seems to be that the small sector is worse than the large. That's nonsense. Cars are made in the large sector, but how many of them are of international quality?"

But the real point about the entrepreneurial flowering of small business in the last decade is that it has buoyed the economy and provided the platform on which broad-based industrial growth can take place in the decade ahead.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI with N. RADHAKRISHNAN and bureau reports

Small units have more than quadrupled in numbers over the last ten years, suggesting a record broadening of the entrepreneurial base. Small business last year accounted for a staggering 26 per cent of the country's exports.

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SATIRE

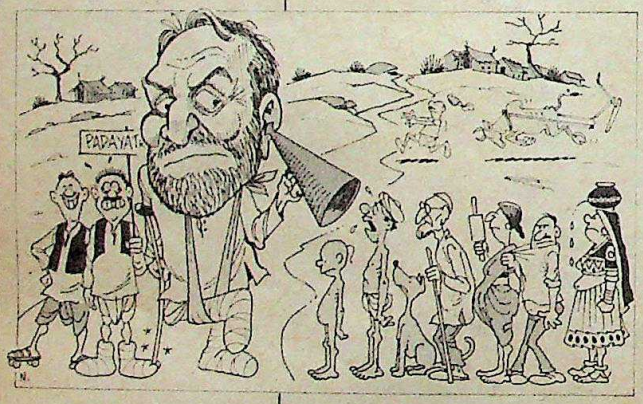
'AWARDS'

Mother Teresa's was well deserved as was Baba Amte's and Arun Shourie's. Shabana has been earning her's with monotonous regularity, so it was only fair that India Today should decide to present, in lighter vein, its own Awards of the Decade to those unsung Indians who worked unrecognised in their own fields. The award carries a certificate in triplicate and a bill for services rendered.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

SOLE OF THE DECADE AWARD

◆ To **Chandra Shekhar**, the bearded Old Turk, for his soleful efforts to give his Janata Party a leg up by embarking on the most protracted padyatra since Hannibal's Alpine endeavour. He set



a blistering pace but unfortunately, his walkathon took so long that, by the time he limped home, he found his support base missing. He started off so sure, and by the end he was just sore.

THE MOST BORING NEGOTIATOR

◆ To Mizo rebel **Laldenga** who spent almost the entire decade trying to decide whether to surface or stay underground. Initially, revelling in rebelling, he decided to return to the comforts of home in a opulent RAW safe house in Delhi. When negotiations dried up, he departed in a huff for London and a semi-detached life, only to return before he was left without a cause. He was.

THE VANISHING CREAM AWARD

◆ To **Subramaniam Swamy**, the cream of the Emergency opposition, who went so far underground, he surfaced in the wrong states. Hurriedly metamorphised in his favourite environment, the Lok Sabha, and then did his vanishing trick again much to the embarrassment of Mrs Gandhi. Having nothing to hide during the Janata rule, spent much of the decade donning a professorial hat at Harvard. But harvar hard he tried, he still succeeded in vanishing from the public platform—travelling ticketless no doubt.

THE TEETOTALLER AWARD

◆ To Maharasthra's **Ram Rao Adik**, whose liquid assets proved more potent than his political ones. Rocked the boat when he got higher than he already was on an Air India flight and then tried to scotch charges that he had some embarrassing brushes with the air hostesses on board. Went on the

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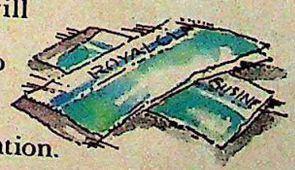

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The Reliable Airline **KLM**
Royal Dutch Airlines

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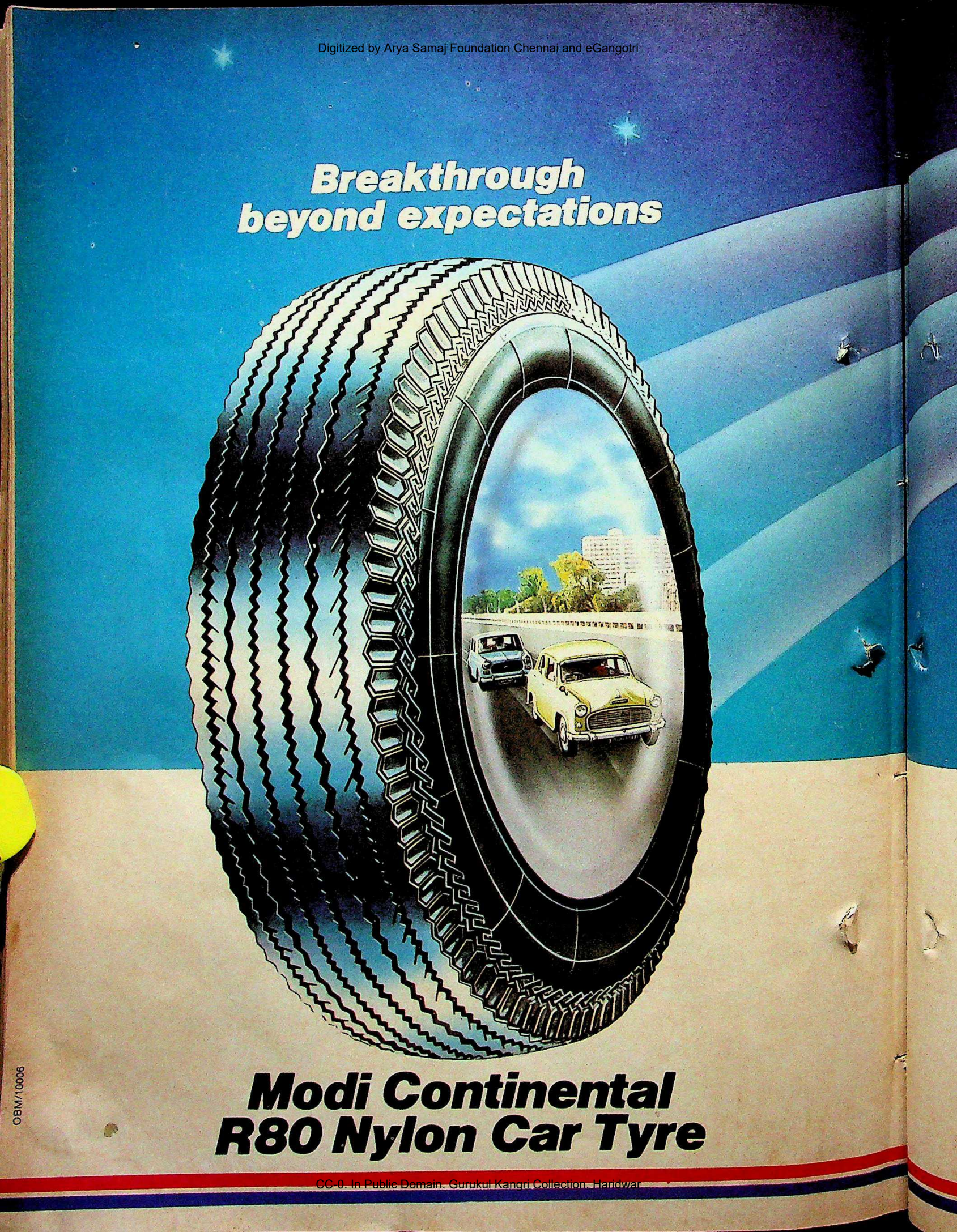

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A quality product by Hindustan Lever

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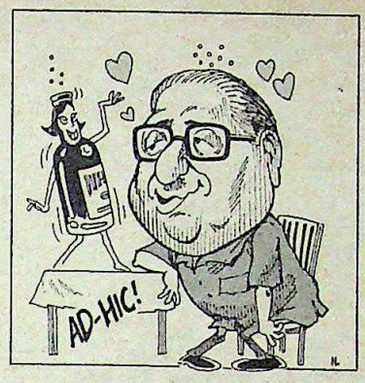
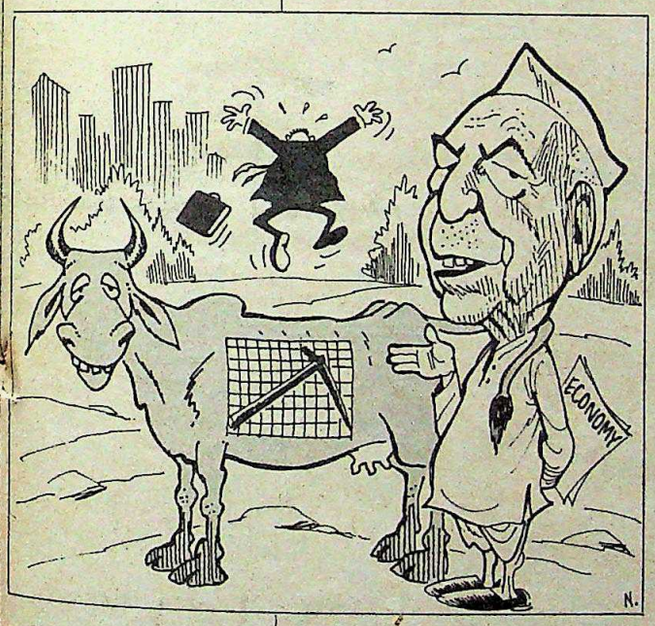


wagon instead and swore never to touch another drop. Was himself dropped.

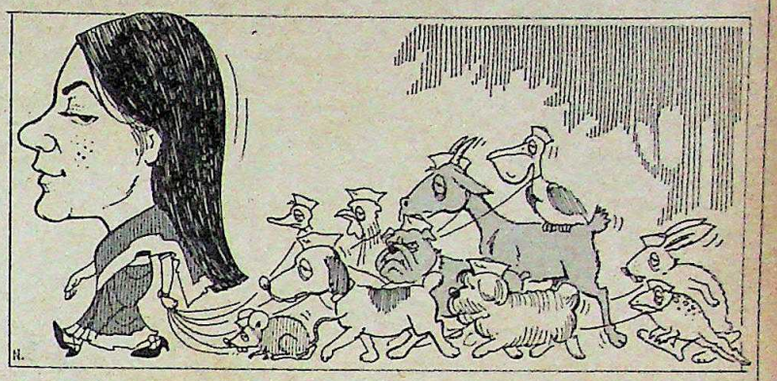
THE ECONOMIST AWARD

◆ To chieftian of the Jats **Charan Singh** who promised to turn the economy on its head if he was in charge. He was and he did. The country is still to recover from the hangover of his budgetary bash.



THE PHILANTHROPIST AWARD

◆ To **Abdul Rehman Antulay**, whose trust in Mrs Gandhi inspired him to make charitable deeds his chief priority as chief minister of Maharashtra. His powers of persuasion led to a flood of donations till he was stopped in his tracks by economist-turned-journalist Arun Shourie in the *Indian Express* and the courts which ruled to let him halfway off the hook.



THE DO GOODER AWARD

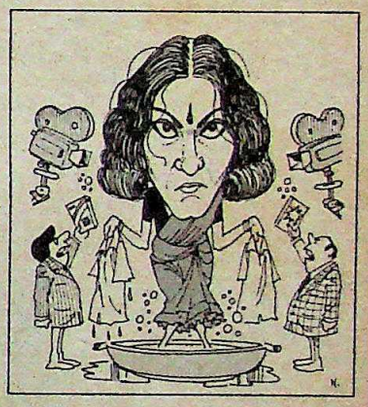
◆ To **Menaka Gandhi**, who left the First Family to do good in various fields. Tried politics but fielded the wrong team, took on brother-in-law Rajiv but discovered it was a different ball game, switched her ministrations to attempting a Mother Teresa with the animal kingdom, where she seems to have had better luck.

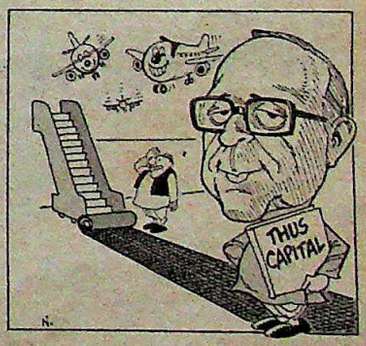
THE ROLLING STONE AWARD

◆ To **George Fernandes**, the eternal gladiator, who spent the decade rolling along in battle with Mrs Gandhi, Coca Cola and other assorted Goliaths but gathered very little moss. Now fighting from a new bunker for the Lok Sabha elections in Banka, Bihar.

THE ADVERTISING AWARD

◆ To **Priya Tendulkar**, whose rise from Rajani to riches brought in a flood of advertising coffers. Unfortunately, she forgot her lines in the contracts and wound up plugging competing detergents leading to a lot of dirty linen being washed in public.





THE CAPITALIST ROADER AWARD

◆ To **Jyoti Basu** who managed to successfully produce his own version of the Gospel according to Marx by laying out the red carpet for industrialists and entrepreneurs while consistently blaming the Centre for diluting his dogma.

—DILIP BOBB

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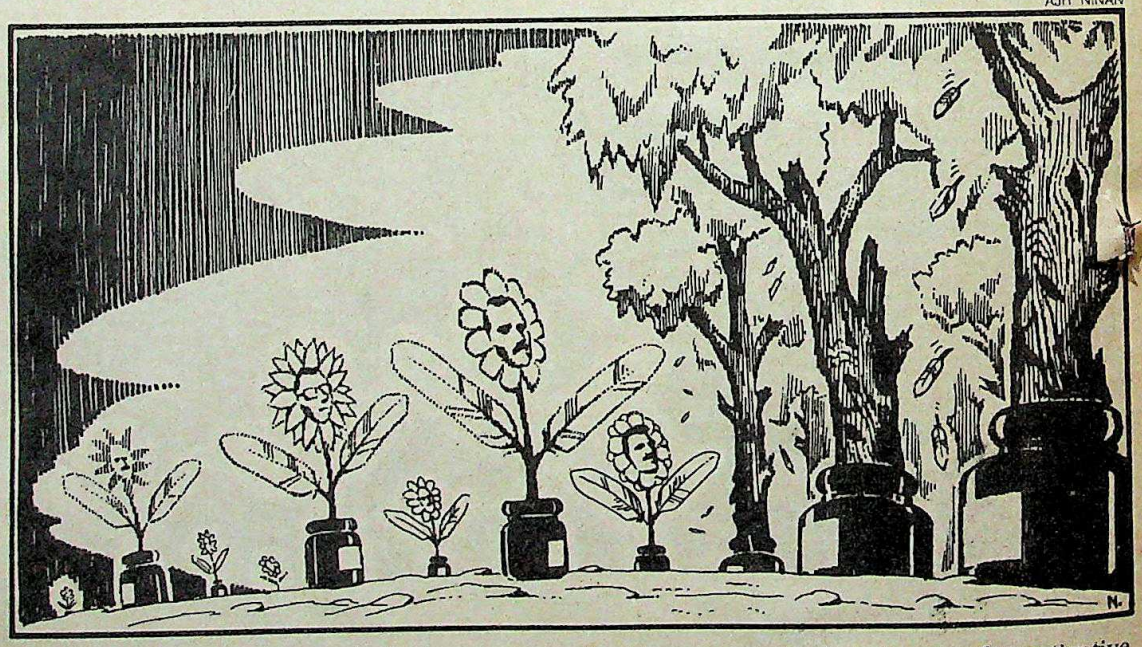
MEDIA

OFF WITH THE COBWEBS

Among the most noteworthy and remarkable developments of the decade was the coming of age of the Indian press. During the Emergency it seemed beyond repair, ready for a final epitaph. But a strange thing happened on the way to its funeral, it rose, suddenly, with Phoenix-like alacrity to heights of maturity and adventure.

AJIT NINAN



"The Emergency affected the politicisation of the Indian middle class with the result that they wanted to know more and more about the people ruling them."
ARUN SHOURIE
freelance journalist

IT WAS almost as if a Jack Anderson or a Seymour Hersh, having donned the garb of a media Johnny Appleseed had criss-crossed the Fleet Streets of India's cities and muffasil towns. Overnight, it seemed, there germinated—miraculously—a new strain of journalist charging and tilting at the windmills of hidebound government handoutery.

Former World Bank economist Arun Shourie in his new avatar as executive editor of the *Indian Express* took on Congress(I) Party boss A.N. Antulay in a series of muckraking stories, in one of which he called the Cabinet minister a liar—and got away with it. Shourie's crusading shovel work—trail-blazing effort though it was—was hardly unique to the frenetic pace of investigative reporting that appeared with rapid-fire regularity during the past, fateful decade. Ashwini Sahn, another gutsy reporter for the *Express* deliberately got himself arrested on charges of drunkenness so he could do time in the clink in Delhi's notorious Tihar jail in order to be able to report first-hand on conditions inside as well as on the jail mafia.

Also fighting free of the dreary desert sands of the dead ink that had characterised so much of Indian journalism of the past was Bombay freelance journalist Sheela Barse who followed up a poignant series of articles on child prostitution with direct action by moving the courts to release children languishing in a remand home. Arun

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Sinha of the *Express* dug into the reports that police had deliberately blinded under-trial prisoners in Bhagalpur, Bihar. *The Times of India*'s Praful Bidwai broke through barriers of secrecy erected by India's powerful nuclear establishment and laid bare the inefficiencies plaguing the system. And long before the Bhopal cataclysm established methyl isocynate as a household name, Raajkumar Keswani, editor of *Saaptahik Report*, an obscure weekly, had sounded several reportorial alarms warning of the impending tragedy.

The last decade, undoubtedly, had cut a swath of excitement and vitality through the quagmire of staid punditry in which Indian journalism had bogged down. So far as the media was concerned 1975 had rolled in as the worst of times. The declaration of the Emergency and the ubiquitous censor's scissors had snipped away at whatever dreams the Indian public had dreamed about of a free and unfettered press. Journalists and editors, when asked to bend by the Emergency's autocrats, chose instead to crawl.

But with the Emergency's end—and the rededication of the Janata government to the ideal of a free press—India's Fourth Estate came back on a rebound perhaps unmatched anywhere else in the world. It was as if Prometheus had been unchained. A revolution was underway not only of style and substance but also in variety, management, circulation, technology, professionalism, marketing and design.

The boom in circulation is a dramatic illustration of this phenomenon. In 1975 there were about 225 publications—newspapers and magazines—with a combined circulation of just over 14 million. In 1985 there are over 300 publications with a combined circulation of more than 26 million. Put another way this means that one significant periodical (circulation:12,000) has appeared on the news-stands every month-a-half during the last 10 years. By any standard this is a phenomenal rate of growth considering that the price of newsprint rose to a staggering threefold.

And consumer demand for the media product remained elastic as witness the cost of the daily edition of *The Times of India* which has risen to 90 paise without affecting the sales or circulation. Only part of this seemingly unquenchable newsthirst can be attributed to the rise of India's nearly 70-million strong middle class and the purchasing power it commands. Arun Shourie offers an additional explanation.

"The Emergency," he notes, "affected the politicisation of the Indian middle class with the result that they wanted to know more and more about the people ruling them." And the job that these readers and consumers wanted the new breed of eagerly responding reporters and editors to do for them was, as Mobashar Jawed Akbar, editor of the *The Telegraph* of Calcutta, put it, "to take the cobwebs out of reporting."

And they went about their work with a happy vengeance — responding to demand where they sensed it or, in keeping with Say's law, first furnishing a supply that would create its own demand. The most striking and attractive debutants on the media stage now swirling with the winds of change were the news-and-views magazines like *India Today* and *Sunday*—attractively packaged, carefully written, and combining vision and seriousness of purpose with entertainment.

And the spirit was infectious. Vinod Mehta, an advertising executive in London returned to India to start *Debonair*, the Indian playboy. Mehta now edits the sophisticated *Sunday Observer* whose circulation has topped 60,000. Poet and PR-man Pritish Nandy has been engineering the long overdue face-lift for the Times stable of magazines. Dilip Thakore, a lawyer by training teamed up with a colleague to bring out *Business India*, the largest selling business periodical. Says Thakore: "I realised when I was working with a company that there was very little for a manager to read, and *Business India* was born out of that need."

These developments also bought to shore in their wake a cavalcade of trendily written bitchsheets, "people" magazines, and film mags. Their leader, *Stardust*, began to set the pace and pitch. The woman behind *Stardust*, who later started two other successful magazines. *Society* and *Celebrity* boasts: "We made a religion out of irreverence."

"I realised when I was working with a company that there was very little for a manager to read, and Business India was born out of the need."
DILIP THAKORE
editor, Business World

SYMBOLS OF THE MAGAZINE BOOM

The almost instantaneous success of the "personality" ethos wafted into the newsrooms of the business magazines as well. Even Thakore reluctantly admits: "There is greater emphasis on the human resource in the industry."

The human resources who ushered into journalism's new decade the investigative scoop, the personality profiles, the gripping photofeature, the startling interview benefited dramatically from their entrepreneurship. They had become part of the growing world of big business journalism.

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"The revolution in the language press will continue for some time."
GOVIND TAWALKAR
editor, Maharashtra Times

Banished were the days when the journalist was part of the underpaid underclass, wearing the bottoms of his trousers rolled and measuring his impoverished life in cupfuls of cheap rum at the local press club. The mandarins have now risen and senior members of the caste now revel in hefty four-figure salaries. Editors in the newer magazines can get away with five-figure incomes. Even the sub-editors of yesteryear — the Harijans of the fraternity — now begin jobs in progressive organisations with four-figure packets. With so much money beckoning several senior journalists have quit cradle-to-grave secure positions to strike out on their own as syndicated columnists. And they are getting rich quick.

The revolution affected not only the message but the medium carrying the message. Several of the country's leading publications are as attractively, imaginatively produced and laid out as

THE PATH-BREAKING EXPOSÉS

their counterparts in the West. The glue-besotten designer of yore who died of old age and rum on his cut-and-paste cardboard frame is today an important man of technology and sophistication. Offset printing today is the rule rather than the exception as are the photocomposing and colour. Types are chosen with conscientious care. The Times group, slowly shaking off its dinosaur syndrome is joining the fray. Its flagship *The Illustrated Weekly of India* is bolder in language, catchier in headline, more striking in photography, resplendant in good colour, and thoughtful in lay-out. Nandy calls this "The transformation of the visual grammar of a magazine. Design is just as much a journalist's tool as the pen he uses: it can get your point across well, if not better. And now the Express group (combined net circulation: 2 million) is engaged in a Rs 4 crore revamping and expansion programme.

"Design is just as much a journalist's tool as the pen he uses: it can get your point across well, if not better."
PRITISH NANDY
editor, Illustrated Weekly of India

But the action is just not confined to the English press. The language press is also zipping along at breakneck speed. In Andhra Pradesh, unabashed N.T. Rama Rao supporter Ramoji Rao's Telugu *Eenadu* is pushing 400,000. The *Express*' Hindi daily *Jansatta*, started in Delhi two years ago, sells more than 110,000 copies. Says Govind Talwalkar, editor of the Bombay-based *Maharashtra Times*: "The revolution in the language press will continue for some time."

This is also the decade of the specialised magazines and a glut of new periodicals now feed the information needs of purchase managers, computer programmers, health care professionals, share brokers, investors, real estate brokers, and fashion designers. Many of them have begun to show modest returns on investment within months after hitting the news-stands. *Industrial Products Finder*—a glossy showpiece for products—is so successful that a sister publication, *Imprint*, can piggyback on its profits. Sterling Newspapers Pvt Ltd, run by former newshound Minhaz Merchant, publishes a series of magazines on television, the corporate world, and technology.

True, the decade justifies the euphoria over the media business. But now the bad news. It's largely the magazines which have caught the aggressive spirit of the decade. And notwithstanding the Express group's expansion plans and the Times' move to Lucknow and Bangalore, the newspapers have by and large disdainfully side-stepped it. The capital's main daily continues to be the *Hindustan Times*, badly written, badly produced, and confused in planning and vision. And even the *Express* has lost some of the punch it packed during the Shourie years. And signs are that magazine market may be tapering off. *Sunday*'s circulation has reportedly dropped below a lakh. The Hindu group's *Frontline*, a glossy newsmagazine with splendidly reproduced colour pictures has slowed after an initial spurt. The Bangalore-based *Deccan Herald*'s attempt to bring out another *Economist* called the *Herald Review* was a disastrous flop. The Express group has shelved plans for a newsmagazine because, as General Manager J.C. Jain puts it: "We can't find a suitable editor."

There is also a growing disenchantment among readers about the contents in the publications born of the journalism boom of the decade. Complains Shourie: "How many journalists, writing about the Anandpur Sahib resolution, the Gujarat reservation issue, or Shah Bano, bothered to give their readers anything other than human interest stories and pictures? If the print media is to compete with TV, it must go beyond the mere reporting of events and concentrate more on analysis and forecasting."

The last 10 years have undoubtedly been ones for print and its people. They have survived prolonged spells of darkness like the Emergency, have resisted attacks on their freedom like Jagannath Mishra's press bill.

But TV is still an untried commodity and few projections for the print media can be made for the next 10, or even the next five years: all dressed up it certainly is but where it will go, in another desperate sub-editor's words, remain to be seen. Only time will tell. —JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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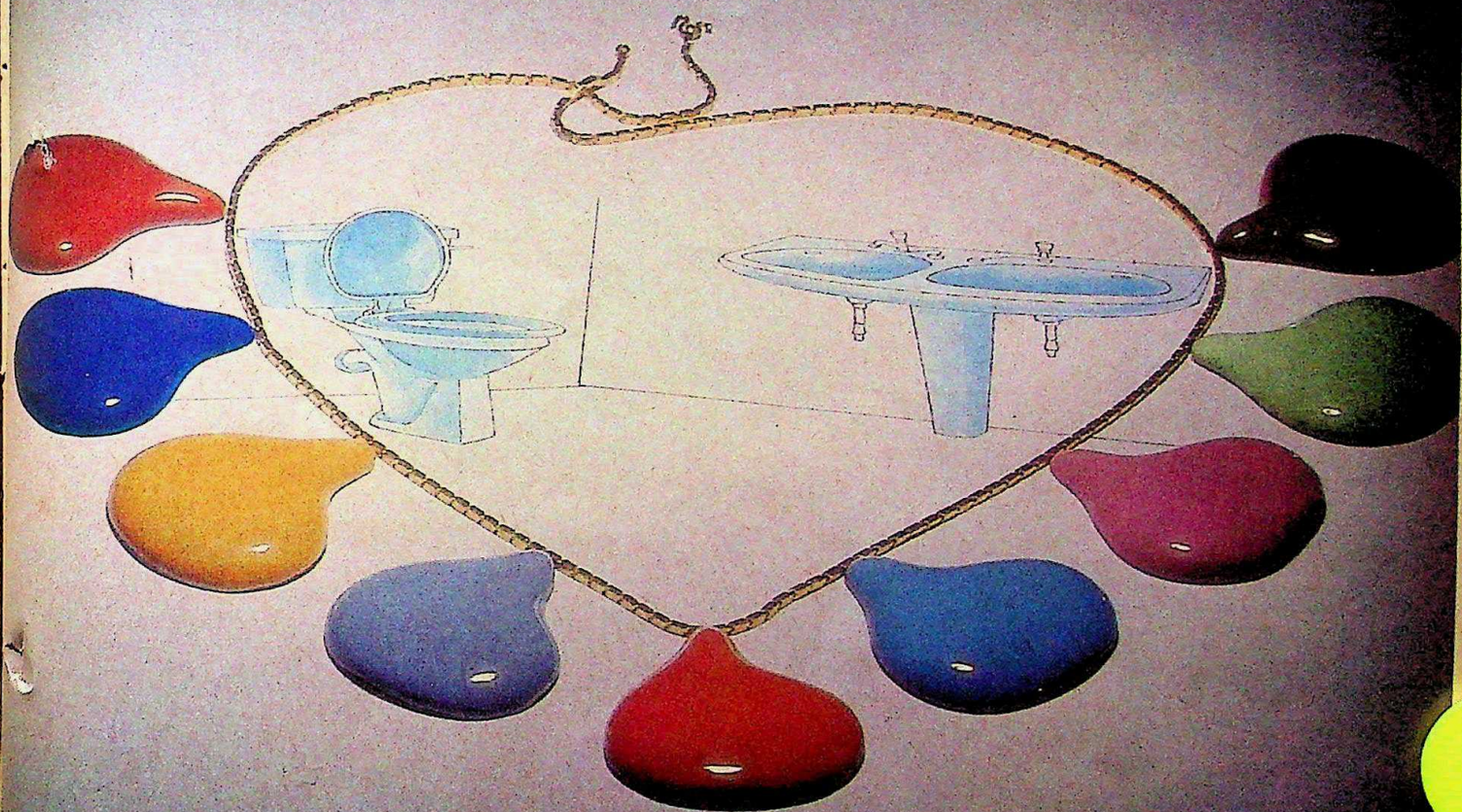
What the well-dressed bathroom is wearing...



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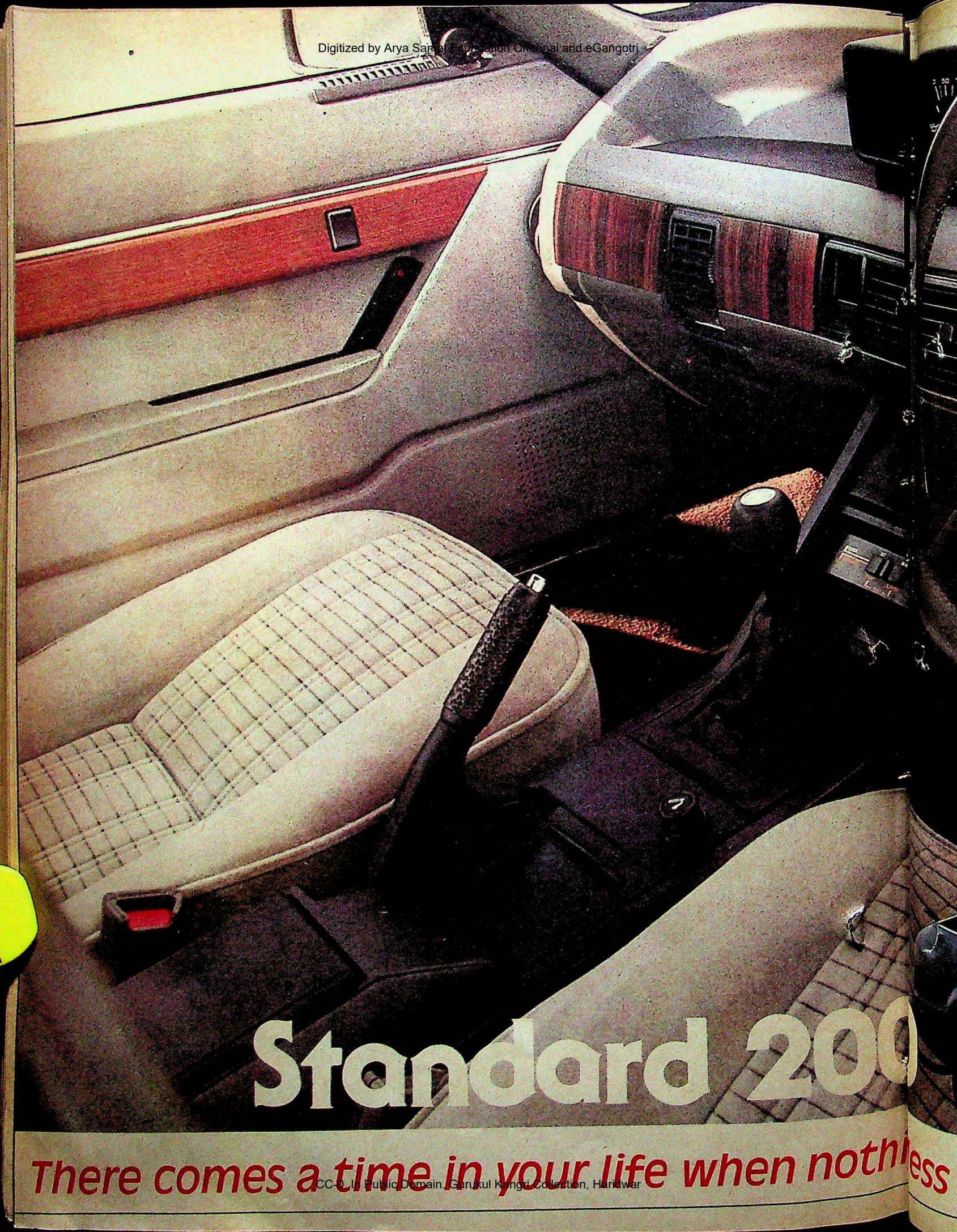

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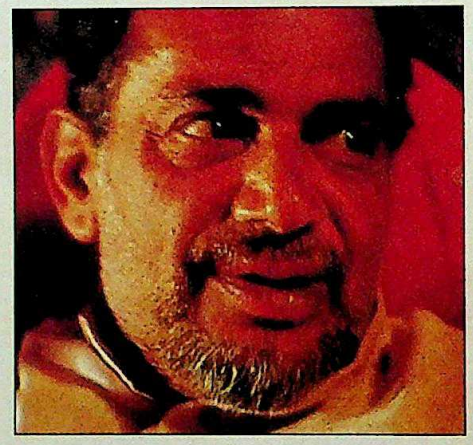
'MY DECADE'

For some individuals, the decade was far more eventful than for the rest, whether in their personal or professional capacity. In a sense, their memories of the decade also reflect the changes that took place in their respective areas of operation over the last ten years. INDIA TODAY *picked the most representative and asked them to document in their own words, their decade and its vicissitudes.*

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE



For Ramakrishna Hegde, Karnataka chief minister, the last ten years have been the most momentous of his 48 years. As Congress(O) leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council during the Emergency, he was jailed. In 1977, when the Janata Party was formed, Hegde became its general secretary, a post he held right through the disastrous years of the Janata government till 1983 when he was asked by the party to head the Karnataka Government with a slender majority. Warding off repeated onslaughts by the Congress (I) to topple his government, Hegde proved himself a brilliant strategist and when assembly elections were held last March the Janata Party came home with a solid majority in the state Assembly, establishing him as a regional force. Here, in his own words, are his reminiscences of those eventful years.

"I was very happy when we lost the elections in 1980. I felt the Opposition got the treatment that they deserved. Our real worth had been exposed and we showed ourselves to be narrow-minded and self-centred."

IN 1975, I thought I was going to die in detention. I had been arrested after Emergency was clamped and was put into a single room cell in Belgaum jail. I was very sad and depressed and felt I should have perhaps gone underground and done something. It was the blackest period in our history and all democratic institutions were defiled, devalued and demoralised.

I was terribly lonely in jail but it was a great education too. It gave me time to reflect and come face to face with myself. It made me come to terms with my weaknesses. I was a bit proud. Maybe my pride bordered on arrogance. But being in jail mellowed me. Since Madhu Dandavate, then a socialist, and L.K.Advani of the Jan Sangh were also in the same jail, we were able to wipe out the prejudices that we had against each other.

We welcomed the news of the elections in 1977 and knew we could win if we had a united opposition. I knew that dictatorship cannot continue because it breeds its own enemies.

When we won, I thought it was a great moment for Indian democracy and the biggest ever event after Independence. I thought it would be the beginning of the two party system in the country. But that was not to be. It didn't take much time for our leaders to become arrogant and complacent.

By early 1978, it had become obvious that we could not stay together for long. Our leaders had become criminally indifferent to the mandate the people had given them. They did not recognise the danger of having an adversary like Mrs Gandhi who had always been a great fighter. At every level, we functioned as several parties with a very thin veneer of the Janata label holding us together.

I was extremely disgusted and you know, I was very happy when we lost the elections in 1980. I felt the Opposition got the treatment that they deserved. Our real worth had been exposed and we showed ourselves to be narrow-minded and self-centred.

For almost two years after that, there was no motivating force or physical strength to push us along. We continued to lose the elections everywhere and it increased my dejection. I felt the efforts being made to bring the Opposition together was a futile exercise. There was no point in taking people back who practically murdered the party. It

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was a period of deep introspection for me too. But in 1983 something happened that never in my wildest dream I thought would have occurred. I was made chief minister of Karnataka. I had left state politics 10 years ago and had never thought that I would return.

I took up the assignment with mixed feelings. I had not been in touch with the local administration for a long time. But I had plenty of ideas for Karnataka and it was a challenge and an opportunity to implement them. But there was an element of uncertainty because of our slender majority and this created a feeling of nervousness for me. It was the first time I was number one. Now, I had complete freedom to do what I wanted.

My first term as chief minister was the most challenging period in my political career but I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. It was a terrible strain on my health and I must have aged more than 10 years. I took a political decision to resign after we lost the Lok Sabha elections last year so that I could come back stronger as I was being stifled by the lack of a proper majority. In the event, it turned out to be a right decision and we won in the assembly elections. But I am not very happy with my second term. We had a severe drought, we are facing a financial crisis and many of our MLA's have become complacent.

Other things worry me too. There seem to be two Indias emerging now. The fruits of development have not been shared equally and I find a large part of the people left far behind. But if in 1975, the sun was eclipsed, now at least it is shining again in India."

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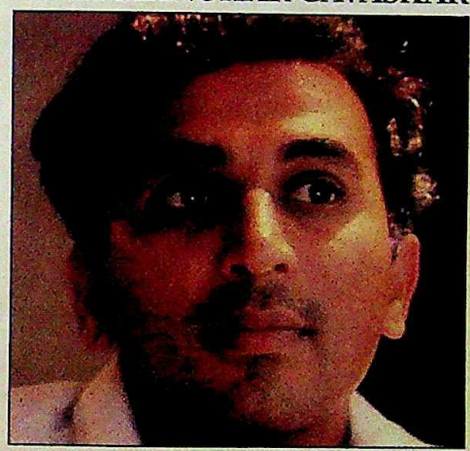
SUNIL MANOHAR GAVASKAR



Sunil Manohar Gavaskar and Indian sport have been two sides of the same coin for over a decade. Now, in the twilight of a magnificent cricketing career, he can afford to look back at the last ten years with particular personal satisfaction. It was during the decade that he established himself as one of cricket's all-time greats, apart from the number of world records that he created along the way and the new element of professionalism he injected into Indian sport. He had his disappointments as well, including losing the captaincy and even facing the mortification of being dropped from the team. But for all that, it was, as he says, his most satisfying decade as a sportsman. Here, in his own words, are his recollections of the decade, as a cricketer, as a member of the Indian sporting fraternity, and as the new spokesman for professional sport.

FOR ME, the last decade started on a sad note. I had an injury and could not play in the majority of matches against the West Indies in 1974-75. Then came that very forgettable—but unfortunately not for me and a lot of people—World Cup innings of 36 not out. There have been ups and downs since then, but thankfully it has been more of ups for me than downs. Anyway I would rather remember the ups than the downs.

There were the wins against Pakistan, against Australia, that fabulous run chase where we got 400 against the West Indies in 1976 to win the Test, the World Cup win in 1983, the world championship win this year, these have been the high points of the decade. It has been a very pleasant 10 years. I really cannot think of many incidents that would be regrettable as far as Indian cricket is concerned.

Yes. I was removed from captaincy, but that was a selectors' decision. I suppose if people can appoint me they can also remove me. So you take it just the way you do when you are selected for one Test and dropped for another Test. The selectors are appointed to do a job and they do it. You have to go on and try to do your best.

Cricket has given me so much in the last decade that whatever odd disappointments I might have had in life do not compare anywhere near the pleasures that I have got out of playing for India. I have toured so many countries, made so many friends and met so many important people all over the world. How else would I have had the opportunity to sit at the same table with prime ministers?

Some of these meetings are etched in memory, like the ones with Mrs Indira Gandhi for instance. She has been a source of inspiration to all of us. Every time we won or did well; every time I did well individually there was a message or a telegram waiting when I got home. There were the meetings with the former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser in Delhi, with his successor Bob Hawke and Forbes Burnham of Guyana.

For me cricket has been a way of life. You have a team, you play. You can't do anything on your own. But I think I have managed to keep a fair line of demarcation between the game and my personal life. When I am through with all this maybe I will go back to a 9-5 job or perhaps some business. But I want to continue to make some contribution to the

"I just like to assume that people think I have done my job as best as I can. I might have failed. But by and large when I finish my circketing days I would like people to think of me as a person who tried his best."

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game more in the form of helping younger people.

The last decade has been one of spectacular changes in cricket with the Packer influence which has changed not just Indian cricket, but cricket all over the world. Then there was the fading away of spinners and the emergence of Kapil Dev. We have had some good wins but fairly bad losses as well. We lost to teams we should not have lost to.

The emergence of one-day cricket is a phenomenon which has occurred in the last 10 years. When you look it one way, one-day cricket is what everybody starts off with. But until 1974 there were no one-day internationals. In 10 years the one-day game has gained a lot of followers and has become an integral part of the international cricket calendar. I think one of its positive aspects is the attention paid to physical fitness. The fielding has also improved beyond recognition.

I see every possibility of Indian cricket going from strength to strength, but it is all up to the players. There is a lot of batting talent in the country, but I do not see any bowlers around of whom I can say 'This guy is going to be match winner.' I have always believed that with the kind of cricket fanaticism that exists in our country, all the records, or what the statisticians make of records, should belong to Indians.

My own record over Bradman, that was a nice thing to achieve. About my other achievements, I would rather not speak about that. It is for others to judge. I just like to assume that people think I have done my job as best as I can. I might have failed. But by and large when I finish my cricketing days I would like people to think of me as a person who tried his best.

We talk of professionalism in Indian cricket in a fairly loose way. I think it is a question of attitude. You are out there knowing that your livelihood depends on the game you play. That is what I guess professional attitude is. I suppose most players would like to think that they have the professional attitude. But it is for different people to judge in different ways.

The Players Management Group is a very recent thing. It is a new development in India. It has not been just my wife's idea. It has been an idea with a couple of other people who are with me. But it will take some time to get off. We want to do something so that sportsmen can play their game and leave financial worries to others."

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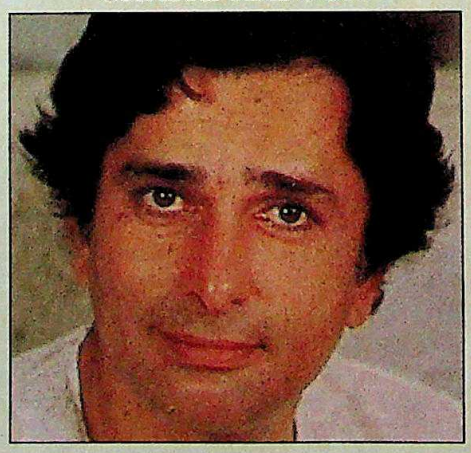
SHASHI KAPOOR



Shashi Kapoor is a distinguished 47 now, his hair streaked with generous strands of white with patches of red. He put on weight for his Utsav *role and though currently on a regimented diet, now bears a startling resemblance to his famous father and film pioneer, Prithviraj Kapoor. For him, it has been a decade of major career upheavals and personal tragedies with the death of his wife, Jennifer, and his attempts to straddle the two swiftly moving worlds of art and commercial cinema. It was a decade which started with him finally making it into the top bracket after many years in the wilderness and then producing his own films. But a combination of bad luck and celluloid mishaps countered whatever financial remuneration his new-found status guaranteed. Looking back, Kapoor reminiscences on what has been his most eventful decade.*

"If anyone had told me in 1975 that I would in 1985 have built Prithvi Theatre and made serious films of my own, I would have laughed at them."

IT'S BEEN a very dramatic decade for me, with enormous changes in my personal and professional life as well as in the Indian cinema scene. In 1975, I had suddenly become a very big star—*Deewar, Kabhie Kabhie, Roti Kapda aur Makaan.* I was acting in maybe four or five films a day and to top it all, I had just been signed by my brother for *Satyam Shivam Sunderam.* After 15 years of knocking around in films, I was finally tasting big success.

It was then, in 1977, that Jennifer and I sat down and talked things over. It would, we realised, be a futile exercise to continue like this and we decided to do two things that were to change our lives completely. We would build Prithvi Theatre and form our own company, Filmvalas. Well, we got started on both. Work on *Junoon* began that same year and the theatre was finally completed in November 1978. It was actually Jennifer's effort; we raised money for it through cricket matches and such like and Amit (Amitabh Bachchan) and Sanjeev (Kumar) helped out. That was a very fulfilling period for me. After that we were set. *Kalyug* followed, then *36, Chowringhee Lane* which I consider to be the best-acted film made in India, then *Vijeta* and finally *Utsav* which got to the screen 18 months after it was completed. By then, I just didn't care about it or my career—Jennifer was ill and despite a number of operations, we knew the end was inevitable. She died on September 7, 1984 at her favourite hour; breakfast time.

The decade can't be said to have been a financial success. *Junoon* barely recovered its cost

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and *Kalyug* lost money. By that time, the market, specially the overseas market, was dropping very rapidly because of video. *36, Chowringhee Lane* bombed and we got peanuts for it. *Utsav* found no buyers partly because of the state of the market and partly because of false rumours that its video tapes were out and we had to really struggle to sell the film, but it's doing well enough now.

Personally, it's been an enormously eventful decade. I have just done a role in *New Delhi Times* which is said to be good—it's the first time I have acted in the 'good' cinema in films other than my own. I'm also working in about 15 films in the Hindi film industry which over the years has deteriorated considerably in taste and content. It's just one big masala factory now.

But I plan to continue working the mainline circuit. Of course, I have shifted to character roles but it's a bit odd to be Ashok Kumar's contemporary in one film and address him as '*tu*'. I am 47 and he's 75, almost a generation older. I am also playing a villain in *Bhowani Junction* which is a new mask for me to wear. So you can see that there have been constant and unpredictable changes throughout the decade. But if anyone had told me in 1975 that I would in 1985 have built Prithvi Theatre and made serious films of my own, I would have laughed at them."

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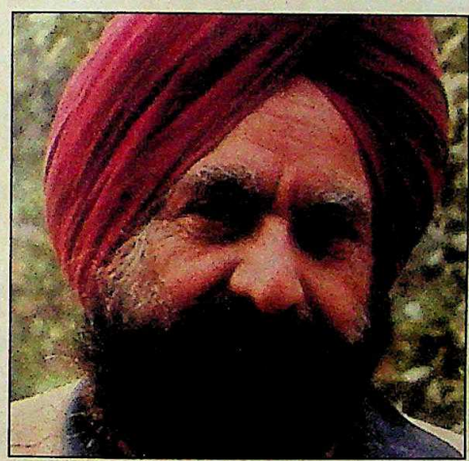
KHUSHWANT SINGH



He has always walked arm in arm with controversy. As a writer and historian who jumped headlong into journalism and pepped up the staid Illustrated Weekly *with some salacious sex and later unabashedly championed Sanjay Gandhi even to the extent of praising the tin cans then being produced in the Gurgaon shed which later took the name of Maruti. His support for the mercurial Sanjay and his wispy wife Menaka and the alternating love-hate relationship with Indira Gandhi has caused him to be "tossed about by political changes in the country". One thing journalism's Blackbeard Khushwant Singh, 70, has never lacked is courage to say what he thinks and feels strongly about. He called Bhindranwale "demented" and "madman". He talks about things that happened to him and around him during this tumultuous decade.*

THE LAST decade has been disturbing as well as rewarding. In 1979 I was fired from the *Weekly* which I had edited for 9 years. I have little doubt I was put out of the *Illustrated Weekly* because of my support for Mrs Gandhi when she was in the Opposition and that later I got the *Hindustan Times* editorship and the Rajya Sabha nomination because she came back to power. The *Weekly* is an old story. I had criticised Morarji's government and he was very upset. He spoke to the proprietor about me. Morarji rang me up personally to say he had not done it but Ashok Jain said he had. Now I don't know which one is telling the truth. I have reason to believe it was either Morarji or his son Kanti. It was shabby, the manner in which I was told one morning to hand over. I just walked out.

But Mrs Gandhi was worried about my constant criticism. I have reason to believe my leaving the *Hindustan Times* and Menon's appointment was largely the doing of P.C. Alexander, her main advisor and the man who misled her about Punjab. I did not meet Mrs Gandhi after Sanjay's death except when she asked me to intercede with Menaka. I did not succeed and Mrs Gandhi—she could be very petty—thought I was Menaka's main supporter. She looked for an opportunity to snub me but I did not give her the chance.

The political developments have been more dramatic. I had a fairly active time in the Rajya Sabha where I think Mrs Gandhi deserved more criticism for mishandling Punjab. The Akali members had resigned and being the only non-Congress Sikh I voiced the Sikh point of view. I was one of the few who warned Mrs Gandhi that touching the Golden Temple would spell disaster. I was correct and a bloodbath of terrible dimensions resulted. I returned my Padma Bhushan in protest and brought the wrath of the Hindu community on my head. But this gave me a kind of rapprochement with my own community which I never enjoyed in the past.

I was one of the few Rajiv Gandhi consulted during negotiations with Akali leaders. In our initial meetings, I unburdened my mind in no uncertain terms. He said "I don't agree with what you say but now tell us what we should do". Whatever I spelled out has come to pass, and this has changed my mind about Rajiv. I earlier had doubts about his succession but he has bettered expectations. I have become an ardent admirer; he has done some things which compel admiration.

"I was one of the few who warned Mrs Gandhi that touching the Golden Temple would spell disaster. I was correct and a bloodbath of terrible dimensions resulted."

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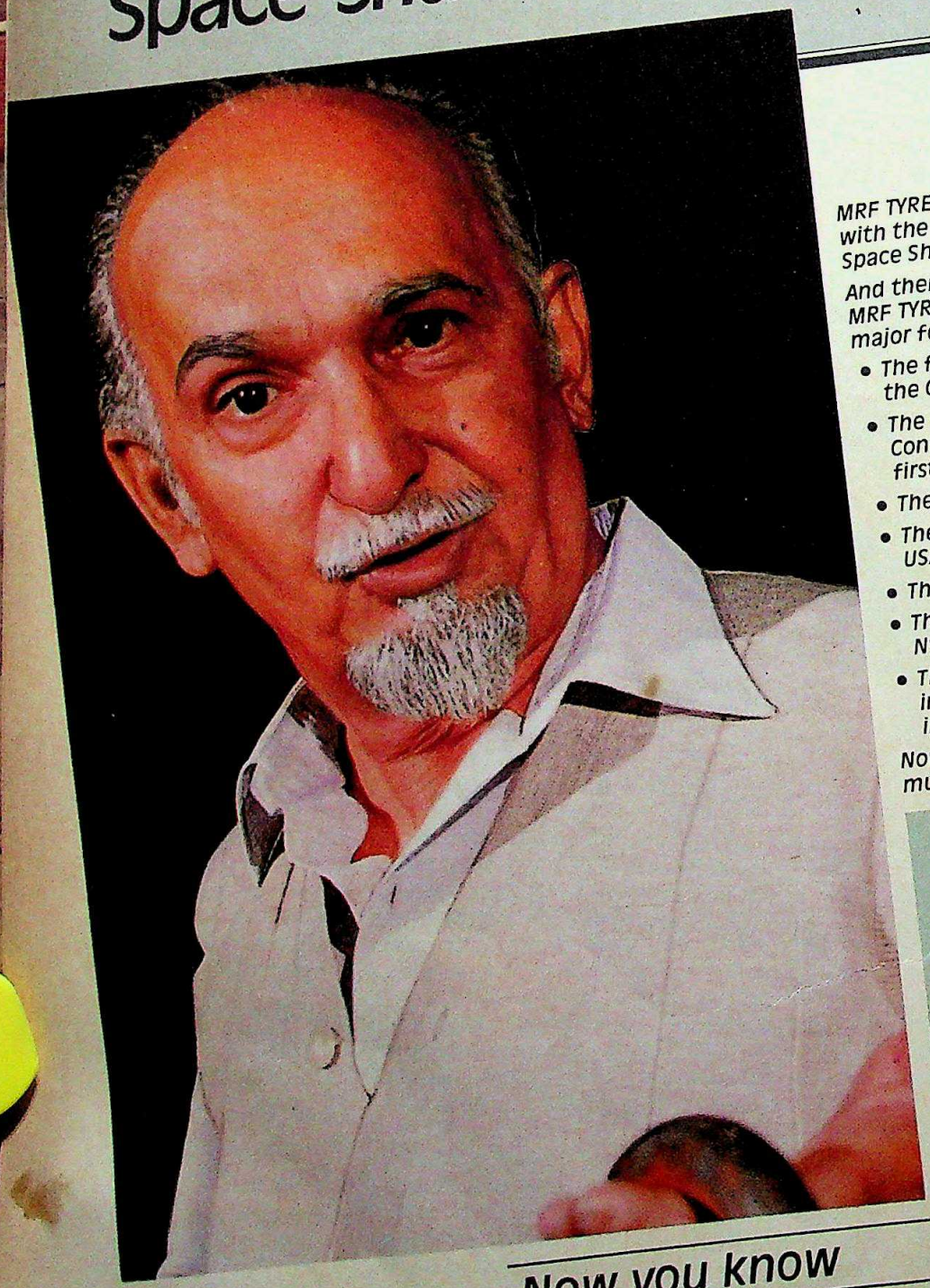

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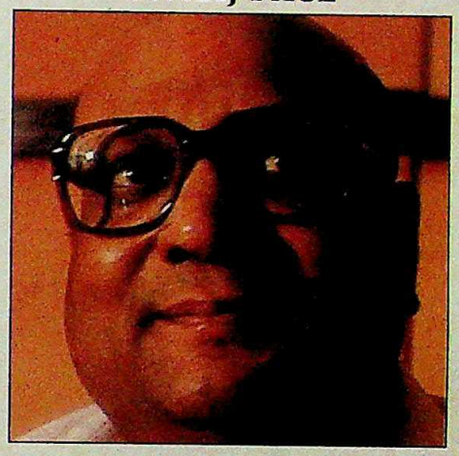
even undoing things in which his mother was a collaborator. Apart from letting violence against Sikhs go on and later exploiting anti-Sikh feelings to win the election, he has shown the courage to take decisions. He is willing to gamble on political issues and he can trust people, something his mother never did. But I always warn him of the sycophants that surround anyone who has so much power. The ones around him are subtle. Mrs Gandhi had come to a stage when she couldn't tell subtle flattery from blatant and even preferred the blatant. This, Rajiv Gandhi has to be warned against. There are symptoms that he is falling victim to this by ignoring democratic institutions. He does not take parliament and the President as seriously as his mother and grandfather did.

"

SWRAJ PAUL

Whether as a corporate-raider with an unquenchable appetite or an industrialist launching multi-million pound ventures or his friendships with powerful political figures, bald-pated and portly Swraj Paul retains a knack of remaining in the news. His second glossy book on Indira Gandhi has a foreword by both Rajiv Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher. His battles with Escorts and DCM have now become part of Indian corporate legend. At his gleaming new headquarters "Caparo House" on London's Baker Street, Paul sits surrounded by cartoons and photographs with the Gandhis. Appearing remarkably unscathed after his bloody boardroom battles in India, Paul is now planning big new ventures—a steel plant in Goa, a fertiliser plant in Rajasthan. Paul's reminiscences centre round his unquestioning admiration for the late Indira Gandhi.



THE MOST significant development in India in the last decade, in my view, is the firm establishment of democracy in the country. In 1975 some people thought all of a sudden democracy was coming to an end. But the elections—in '77 and '80—ended these speculations.

To me, the most dominant figure in Indian politics was Mrs Gandhi. My association with her goes before the decade to 1967. I saw her during the critical days in 1975 just after the Allahabad judgement. I felt I must go to India and say my bit. I found her so composed and she couldn't have cared less about the prime minister's job and she was all ready to resign until all the fellows in the Congress Party who later walked out on her in 1977 were insisting she shouldn't resign.

For me those were critical days since I faced intense criticism here in the UK. I was a lone voice who argued that Mrs Gandhi is very democratic and not many people were ready to believe it.

Was the Emergency defensible at all? Well, firstly nobody can justify an abuse taking place irrespective of whether it is during the Emergency, pre-Emergency or post-Emergency or under any rule. The problem in India at that period was some of our people got so carried away by the word "emergency" that they forgot that excesses can be done with or without the Emergency. The other problem was that too many little fellows were settling their personal scores when it was difficult to know the truth what with the censorship.

Being involved in controversial news stories is never good. But as far as the recent battles are concerned, I have certainly enjoyed what has gone on because the biggest contribution I think I have made to Indian corporate life is that I have brought into focus the abuses which are taking place. I have broken some myths—such as people who call themselves the owners are not really the owners at all—a lot of abuse of public funds is taking place right before the very eyes of the shareholders. And I have proved that a few families are really monopolising government funds and unless that is broken all these ideas of socialism will remain on paper.

"The biggest contribution I think I have made to Indian corporate life is that I have brought into focus the abuses which are taking place."

Is the Government giving a better deal for the private sector? What exactly do you mean by the private sector? I don't consider Messrs Escorts as private sector what with 54 per cent public holdings. This is a misnomer. These are government companies and they ought to be treated as such. I am not pro- or-anti family-run concerns. What I am simply saying is that you should not treat a public limited company as a private one.

NRI's indeed face obstacles in India. Firstly I do not think the Indian environment really does not want NRI investment. It is all very well for the Government wishing to encourage it but then they have a system which sets up obstacles. Because the private sector fellows feel they have the monopoly on the control of the industry, they have not allowed any Indian to come up. Never mind non-resident Indians but even resident Indians. They fear competition. There are 11

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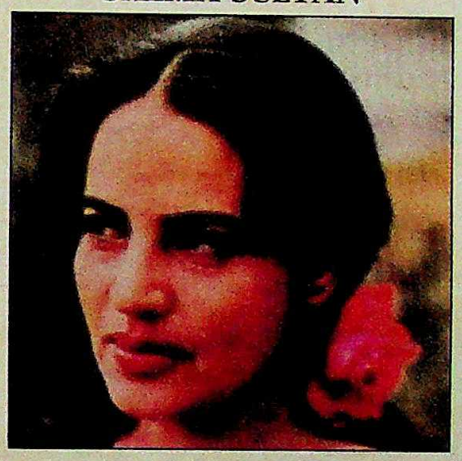
families controlling 80 per cent of government funds. These people are a 'special class' who function themselves as a 'super-government'. Fortunately the present Government has put the handle on them and there is less talk of buying up ministers or bureaucrats than before.

I am very pleased by the performance of the new Government and the initiatives of the prime minister. I think Rajiv Gandhi is very determined to shake up the bureaucracy. He has also got around him a very good team. Unlike some of the members of Mrs Gandhi's government who pledged their loyalty to her but were working at cross-purposes. That sort of thing does not exist any more. The liberalisation programme started by Mrs Gandhi and continued by Rajiv Gandhi has already produced fine results. Our debt management has been good. And India's credit rating is high. I think we are on the right track and the future looks promising."

"

SALMA SULTAN



People have been watching Salma Sultan for almost as long as they have been watching television in India. But Salma is more than just a pretty face who comes home most evenings, softly informing us about people, politics and the weather. Reading the news has been an emotional odyssey for her and the last decade more so than ever. She was there during the Emergency, the Janata rule, the return of the Congress(I) to the Centre, the assassination of Mrs Gandhi and the arrival of Rajiv. And she was there when television switched to colour shortly before the Asiad. Now with television making its way into the remotest corners of the country, Salma's audience has multiplied. She has grown with the medium, gaining self-confidence, insight and awareness just the way television has. It has been a decade, she says, when both came of age.

I JOINED Doordarshan in 1967 as an announcer. Newsreading was not in my cards, although I was fascinated by it and wanted to do it someday. I was rather young so they wanted to wait till I matured as a woman. Then one day, a TV newsreader did not turn up and I was informed that I had to read the news. I was very nervous, I kept waiting to say *samachar samapt hue.*

I believe in destiny. I would never have enjoyed any other job as much. Here you cannot hide your personality, you are able to utilise your full capabilities. Even today, after so many years reading the news gives me the same enjoyment. That thrill hasn't gone, it can never go since you're always accountable to people. The only difference is that now I can hide my nervousness.

I saw TV during its teething problems. Now it has come of age. I can say the same of myself. This job has given me objectivity, tremendous self-confidence, an insight into myself. At every stage I've had to evaluate myself since the demands of the medium have kept changing. Technically it has changed enormously although I think the news content has not changed that much. It's still not as professional as it should be.

Fame has been coming slowly but suddenly a year ago it increased tremendously. With the onset of the national network, suddenly everyone knows you, so many more people appreciate you, so many more people criticise you. Everything happened so suddenly. I thought colour would come when my hair turned grey. I never thought I would see myself in colour, but there it is. I am more particular now about the way I dress than I was a decade ago.

My fan mail has also increased greatly. Earlier I used to get very sedate letters, now there are a few weird ones, including some from very persistent writers who insist I like them and even dress for them. It amazes me how close they can feel to a person in a box. After the national hook-up, I was very scared that I might be bothered like film stars, but although people approach me on the roads, it is always with respect. I guess television is that kind of a medium.

So much has changed during the last decade. I was there during the Emergency, during the Janata phase and I'm there now. Although I have tried to retain my objectivity always, a human being cannot but be affected by the news he or she is reading. Some things have affected me more than others. Like the Bhopal tragedy last year. I come from Bhopal, I know every corner of it. When I was reading out the gas deaths, I almost broke down. It was my training before the cameras that prevented me. Tragedies affect me but I always try to be objective. Politically, I think our new prime minister is doing a tremendous job. Within such a short time so many things have been done. It gives one hope.

"Even today reading the news gives me the same enjoyment. That thrill hasn't gone, it can never go since you are always accountable to people. The only difference is that now I can hide my nervousness."

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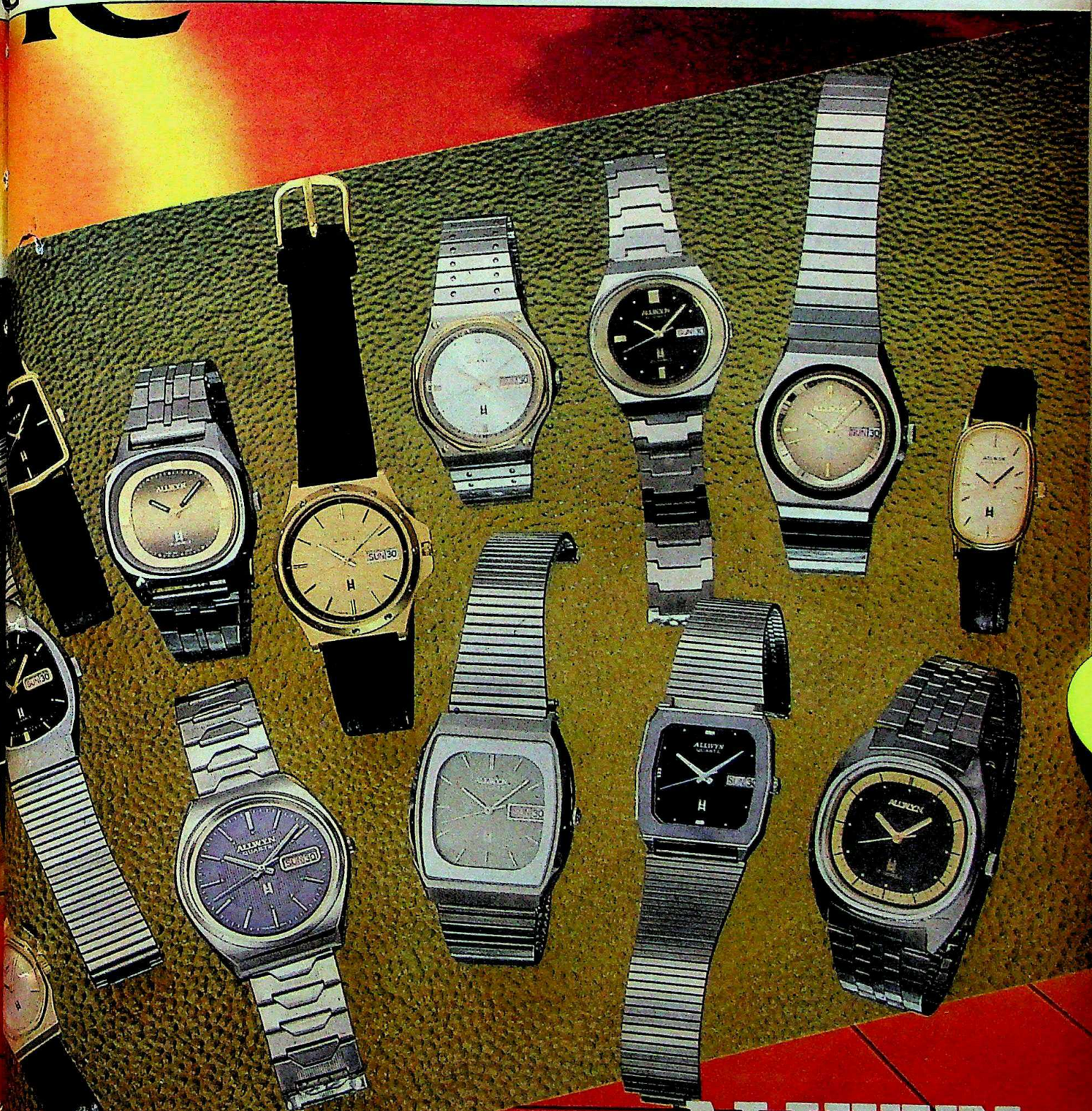

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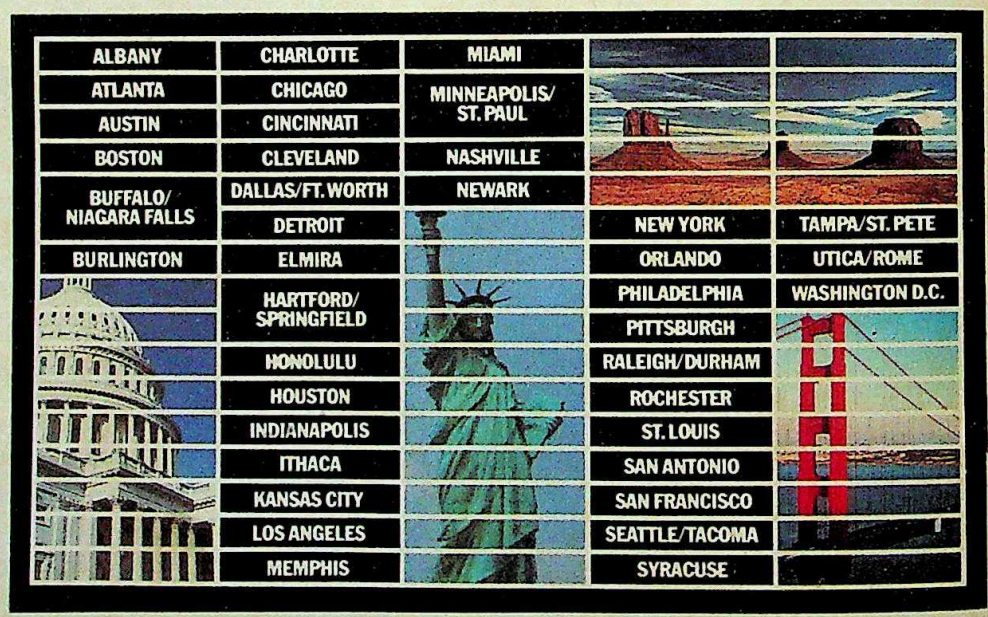

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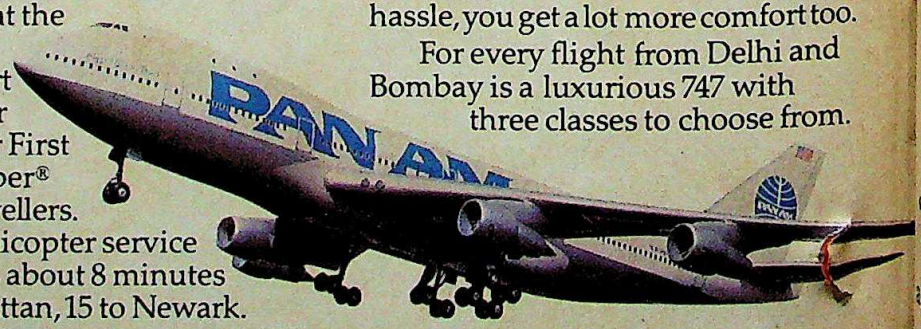

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CINEMA

THE FADING GLITTER

The Indian film industry faced its biggest crisis in its long and distinguished history during the last decade. Television, the video boom, changing audience tastes and budgetary factors have all contributed to the fading glitter of Bombay's dream factories. The number of flops now far outnumber the hits and Indian commercial filmmakers found themselves groping in the dark.

SHOLAY'S UNPRECEDENTED POPULARITY SIGNALLED THE ARRIVAL OF MASS CINEMA

"The industry has suddenly aged. Its problem is the geriatric problem of not being able to throw up new dreams."
AMIT KHANNA
film maker

WHEN Amitabh Bachchan flew into Bombay last fortnight for the *mahurat* of Manmohan Desai's newest fantasia *Ganga Jumna Saraswati* where he leads the star cast, it was history coming full circle. At a slightly jowly 43, Amitabh looked decidedly less angry and less young than 11 years ago. At that time in *Deewar*, a character had prophesied about him: *"Yeh lambi race ka ghoda hai."* That prophecy came true as the tall and lanky actor galloped his way into the Lok Sabha. However, unlike the superstar, the mass cinema industry after a few years of fast canter has now virtually collapsed on the track.

And it all happened as rapidly as if somebody had flicked the fast forward switch on a video player. Ten years ago, Hindi cinema was travelling into its high noon, riding on the electric wave of *Sholay* and Amitabh Bachchan. But 10 years later, in the flicker of a film frame, the high pulse momentum is gone with the wind.

The old patriarchs of Bandra and Juhu still clutch at straws in the wind, pinning their hopes in

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a handful of freak successes—a *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* here and a *Mard* there—but deep down in their hearts the 3.3 lakh people involved in the country's dream factory are so filled with a sense of futility that they are ready to pack and leave.

It is not only the profitability of the film industry where the rot has set in. The decay is all-pervasive, afflicting economy, aesthetics and the pure fun value of the 850-odd films that the country's 70 studios churn out every year. The show still goes on, but what has indeed ebbed away—besides profits—is the capacity of the silver screen to keep its audience spellbound in the darkened theatre. "Ten years ago," says an aging doyen of the film industry, "people were identifying with Amitabh Bachchan. Now they just watch him."

SILSILA: BOX OFFICE DISASTER

Even now successes alternate with failures and mega-hits still occur. In just four weeks, Desai's latest film *Mard* has drawn from the market nearly Rs 3.5 crore—its cost price after paying half the collections to the Government in entertainment tax. Raj Kapoor's *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, a corny poem of overflowing rivers and overfilled breasts, has pulled more crowds to the theatres than any two of his earlier films in the last 10 years put together.

But for every film that just covered its cost in 1985, eight films have lost the race and in many cases the men involved have gone bankrupt, pawned the last piece of their wives' jewellery, attempted suicide, gone insane or found refuge in the bottle. Says top-flight distributor Gulshan Rai, who used to distribute 15 films every year but has of late shrunk away from business: "There are many more casualties today than 10 years ago. I'd imagine that buying lottery tickets today is a safer investment than making films."

Of the 132 films made in 1983, only 17 managed to recover their cost. In 1975, about half of the Hindi films made money. In 1983, the industry as a whole suffered a net loss of Rs 92.7 crore. This is expected to go up to Rs 120 crore by the time the accounts close this year. But in 1975 the film industry, always a loser on the aggregate, could nevertheless keep down the losses to just Rs 12 crore. Ten years ago, the stars were grooming their children to either face or move the camera. Now septuagenarian movie moghul G.P. Sippy, who produced *Sholay*, says: "I came to Bombay as a property agent and builder. With me, my sons also joined films. But I'm sure my grandchildren will never be in show business. Never."

"It is not only cash that has dwindled," says film-maker Amit Khanna, "the industry has suddenly aged. Its problem is the geriatric problem of not being able to throw up new dreams." In 1975, besides Amitabh there was a glittering battery of charismatic actors and actresses—Rajesh Khanna, Dharmendra, Manoj Kumar, Dev Anand, and Dilip Kumar who had not yet gone grey, Sharmila Tagore, Hema Malini and Mumtaz. Today, Amitabh alone stands like the lone tree of the Tao legend. In fact, the "heroine" has made an unsung exit from the scene meanwhile, giving way to a galaxy of teeny-weenies who are employed purely as cheesecake.

But there are exceptions to every rule. Shabana Azmi, for one, has been rated by no less than film maker Mrinal Sen as one of the "10-best actresses in the world. And Smita Patil is another who had the rare distinction of a retrospective of her films in Paris. Other than such exceptions, the young bunch of today's top performers is working overtime to slog it to the top and attain that elusive charisma which makes all the difference between an actor and a star. Jackie Shroff never drinks and takes his script to bed. Anil Kapoor works out at the squash courts of Sea Rock Hotel one hour every day, jogs two miles, practises gestures before the mirror whenever alone and tries to study his roles as intently as Shakespeare plotted his plays. Sunny Deol wonders if father Dharmendra had paid as much attention to his job as the youngsters of today do. They all hate what they privately call the "Rajesh Khanna syndrome" of excessive drinking, skylarking and five-star bohemianism. But ironically, despite so much of

"It is not enough to cast me. Because once you have put me there, you've raised the expectations of the audience. You must know how to handle me, how to give me a lot of things to do."
AMITABH BACHCHAN
film actor

TOP 10 GROSSERS OF THE DECADE

Sholay
Jai Santoshi Ma
Muqaddar Ka Sikander
Amar Akbar Anthony
Naseeb
Ek Duje Ke Liye
Nikaah
Namak Halal
Mard*
Ram Teri Ganga Maili*

(*based on current earnings)

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effort, nobody in the present generation has achieved that charisma.

It is the charisma of Amitabh, the willowy Allahabad lad who could fight the world single-handed, that had put the mass cinema on a tornado-like growth path in the mid-'70s. It rose to new heights, powered by two failed actors—Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar—who took to writing film scripts and painted the tinsel town literally red with gore and raw violence, interspersed with dialogue straight from the 'chawls'. Enter directors like Prakash Mehra, Ramesh Sippy, Manmohan Desai and Yash Chopra—men of a more go-getting generation, swashbucklers of celluloid who could go to any length to make a scene grab the audiences. Cinema soon became an addiction. Against 5.5 million people watching cinema daily, 10 million people flocked to the theatre in 1976. "It was a miracle, it was like a big bang, the beginning of the universe," says Salim Khan who lives mostly with his memories.

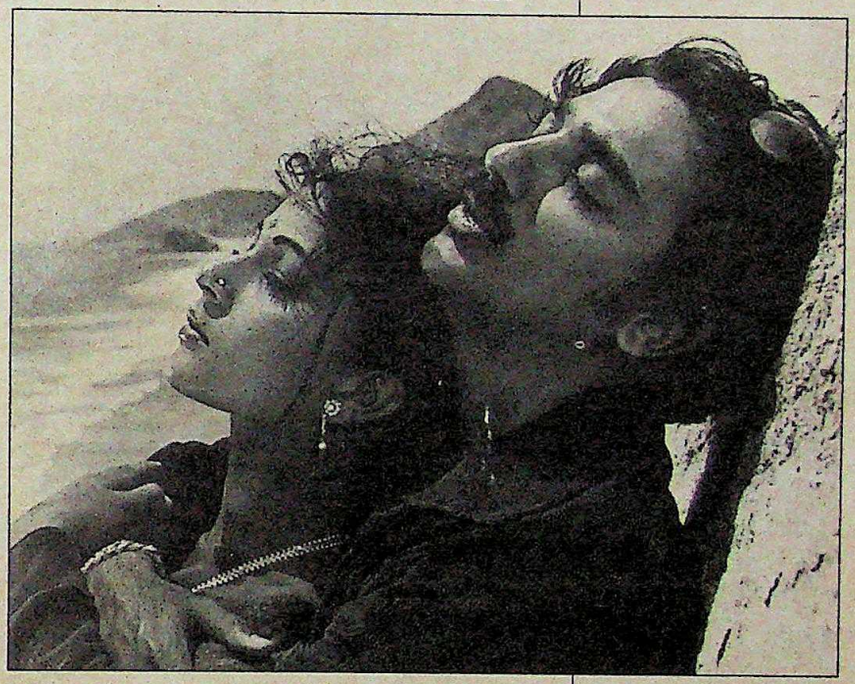
The frenetic years produced some vibrant cinema. When a child-actor in *Deewar* playing Amitabh as a boy, polished Iftekhar's shoes but refused a coin thrown at him, saying: *"Mein joote saaf karta hoon, bheekh nahin mangta hoon, paise utha lo do"*, it became the talk of every little street urchin in the country. Gabbar Singh's famous line in *Sholay*—*"Arre o Samba"*—turned into a folk legend, the sound track of the film alone having sold more than 600,000 copies in discs and cassettes. And in Prakash Mehra's *Muqaddar ka Sikander*, when Rekha serenaded Amitabh with *"Salaam-i-ishq meri jaan zara kabool kar lo"*, the message wafted across to millions of homes, blown by the new hi-fi revolution gathering momentum in the country.

And while the cash registers were jingling, a bonanza of new technology arrived. Film speed became faster, making shooting easier in insufficient light. The advent of portable halogen lights allowed for more of location shooting, slowly changing the texture of films. Dozens of new dubbing theatres came up in the late '70s, changing the quality of the sound track by making it crisper and noise-free. There was a spurt in the number of colour laboratories. The biggest mandarin of the technology change was L.V.Prasad, the octogenarian movie moghul from Madras who had begun his career as an usher at the old Krishna cinema in Bombay. Prasad set up his 70mm stereophonic sound processing facilities in Madras, the only one in Asia outside Japan and the spectrum of sound changed.

"But," says G.P. Sippy, "the real quantum jump was in budget. We realised the limits to which the market could be flexed." Till the mid-'70s, no distributor would buy the rights of a star-loaded film for a major territory at anything above Rs 10 lakh. Eyebrows were raised when Sippy demanded and got Rs 22 lakh for *Sholay* but thereafter, the sky became the limit. Desai's latest film *Mard*, which is in the theatres now, has reportedly sold for Rs 66 lakh per territory.

But the heady wine of success was blended with the slow poison of decay. "We created a Taj Mahal on bamboo stilts" Mehra now cynically admits.

EK DUJE KE LIYE: TREND SETTING SUCCESS



FILM MAKING COSTS

	1975 (in Rs)	1985 (in Rs)
Raw film negatives 1000 feet	2,000	4,000
Superstar cost	15,00,000	60,00,000*
Top director	10,00,000	30,00,000
Top music director	4,00,000	8,00,000
Extra (per day)	22	37
Fight composer	15,000	1,00,000
Dance composer (per song)	3,000	10,000
Cost of one print for a 3-hour movie	25,000	40,000
All-India publicity for an A-class film	12,00,000	30,00,000

*plus share of profits in some cases

"The masses are no idiots sitting in the dark hall, or by staying away they are constantly in communication with men like us. They are telling us all the time their current likes and dislikes."

RAJ KAPOOR
film maker and actor

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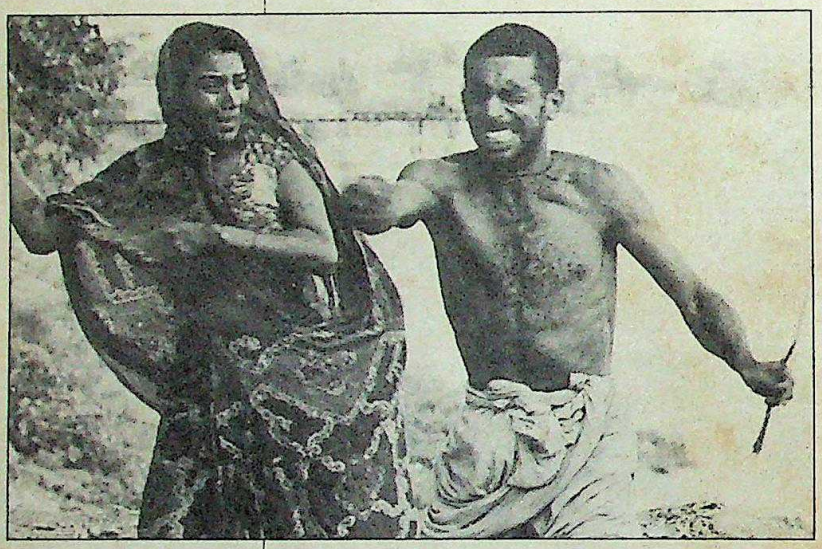
Many were actually sleepwalking down the sunset boulevard, without thinking the market can be stretched only up to a point and not beyond. And as inflation eroded the profits, the film fraternity realised that they had driven the bandwagon to the edge of the precipice. "It is no longer an industry," remarks Gulshan Rai. "It has become the collective deathwish of a handful of people like us who are intoxicated with the neon lights."

The debacle began in the early '80s when *Shaan*, an over-budgeted film by Ramesh Sippy—the maker of *Sholay*—badly bombed at the box-office. It was followed by a series of costly flops: Yash Chopra's *Silsila*, Kamal Amrohi's *Razia Sultan*, *Mahaan*, *Inquilab*, *Mashaal*, *Pukar*—the most disconcerting thing for the industry was that they bombed despite Amitabh being associated with most of them. It was the first sign of an archetype getting subjected to the law of diminishing returns. "It is not enough to cast me," Amitabh confesses now, "because once you have put me there, you've raised the expectations of the audience. You must know how to handle me, how to give me a lot of things to do."

PAAR: NEW LOW-COST CINEMA



That meant money, and with inflation and entertainment tax taking their toll the industry wasn't exactly flush with it. In 1983, out of a total collection of Rs 984 crore from ticket sales the state governments claimed Rs 497 crore in taxes and not content with it, the Centre claimed another Rs 8.5 crore as excise and other duties on prints. Then theatre owners took away 65 per cent of the rest, leaving just about Rs 170 crore for the entire show business. "It is like hundreds of hungry vultures scrambling for one piece of dry bone," says Prakash Mehra who, sometime back thought of making a film to be called *Sarkari Dakoo*.

The small screen revolution too has also taken its toll. Of the estimated half a million VCR and VCP sets in the country, claims Amit Khanna, at least one lakh are in commercial use, spewing out mostly pirated prints of the popular films in hotel rooms, illegal parlours and video coaches. The video boom has already killed the overseas territory which in 1975 accounted for 20 per cent of a successful film's total business. The Producers' Guild assesses loss because of video and television boom at 30 per cent. Rising cost calls for rising revenue but that has not happened with films. After paying the entertainment tax and an inexplicable one per cent levy of gross takings for showing the obligatory films division news round-up, the revenue from the same seat has risen by 10 to 15 per cent only.

And, rupee to rupee, both filmmaking and exhibition have lost viability. *Sholay* cost over Rs 3 crore in 1975. A film with the same production values now will cost no less than Rs 10 crore. In the first 18 months of its run, *Sholay* netted around Rs 12 crore. Today the extent of business of a *Sholay* alone can be no more than the same amount, because the video invasion has chipped away a film's repeat value. "The cinema of great scale does not make sense any more," says Ramesh Sippy.

There have still been low-cost wonders. Like Govind Nihalani's *Ardh Satya*, Mahesh Bhatt's *Saraansh*, and Goutam Ghose's *Paar*—targeted narrowly to the art-conscious upper middleclass urban audiences who constitute the thin icing on India's social cake. But unfortunately their appeal has never gone beyond the narrow segment to which they are addressed. Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari* ran for months together in London and New York but in Aligarh, not very far from the film's milieu, the audiences were so enraged by the seemingly endless maneouvres with the chess pieces that they smashed up theatre furniture.

"The masses are no idiots" says Raj Kapoor, flushed with his latest success, "sitting in the dark hall, or by staying away they are constantly in communication with men like us. They are telling us all the time their current likes and dislikes." It is true that for many years they had lapped up the fantasy of protest, exemplified by Amitabh. But also liked in between a film like *Ek Duje Ke Liye*, a tale of passion and sensuality in which Kamalahasan gave a resounding performance. Now they are flocking to *Ram Teri* (expected business in 18 months Rs 7.5 crore) and *Mard* (Rs 10 crore) neither of which uses the protest format strongly.

Raj Kapoor says that "brutalising" cinema is born in a society "that is gripped by a fear of impotence" but he forcefully argues that "Ramboism" creates its own backlash too, forcing men into looking for objects that they can love. He mentions Spielberg's *E.T.* and his latest *Back to the Future*. Like Raj Kapoor, there are many in the show business keeping their antennae alert, trying to capture the fleeting obsessions of the faceless masses. In 1975 they found the answer. Today they are groping in the dark.

—SUMIT MITRA

"There are many more casualties today than 10 years ago. I'd imagine that buying lottery tickets today is a safer investment than making films."
GULSHAN RAI
film distributer

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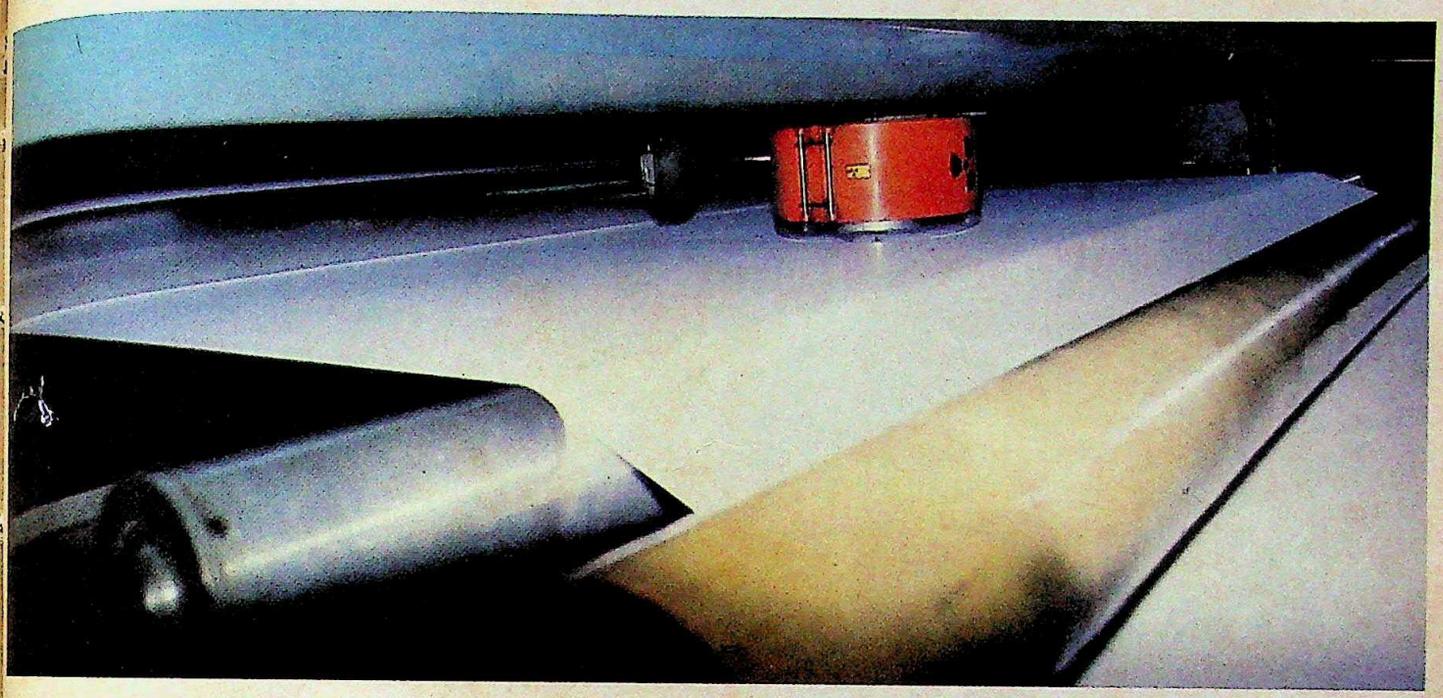
HI-TECH



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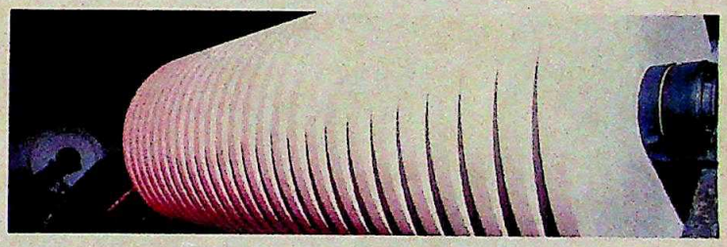

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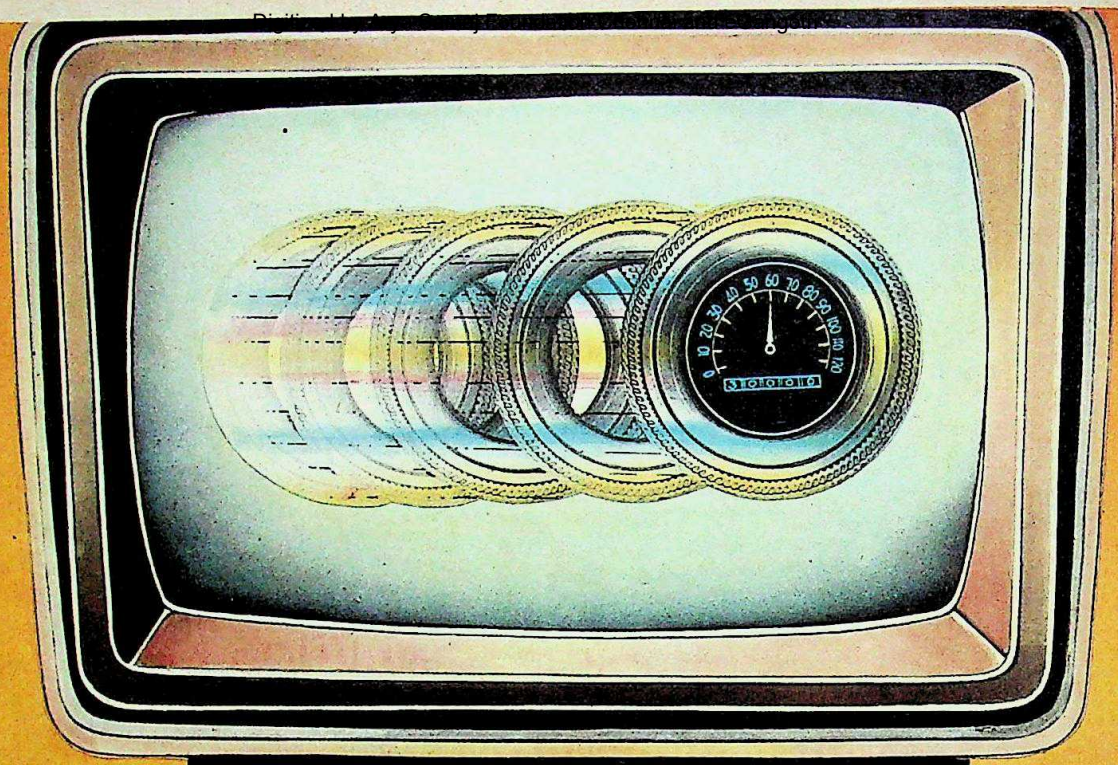

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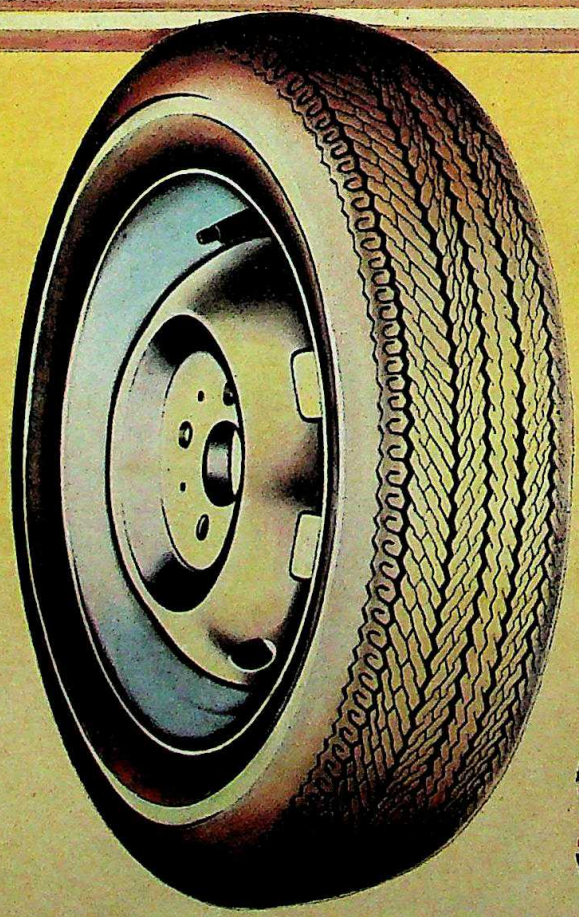

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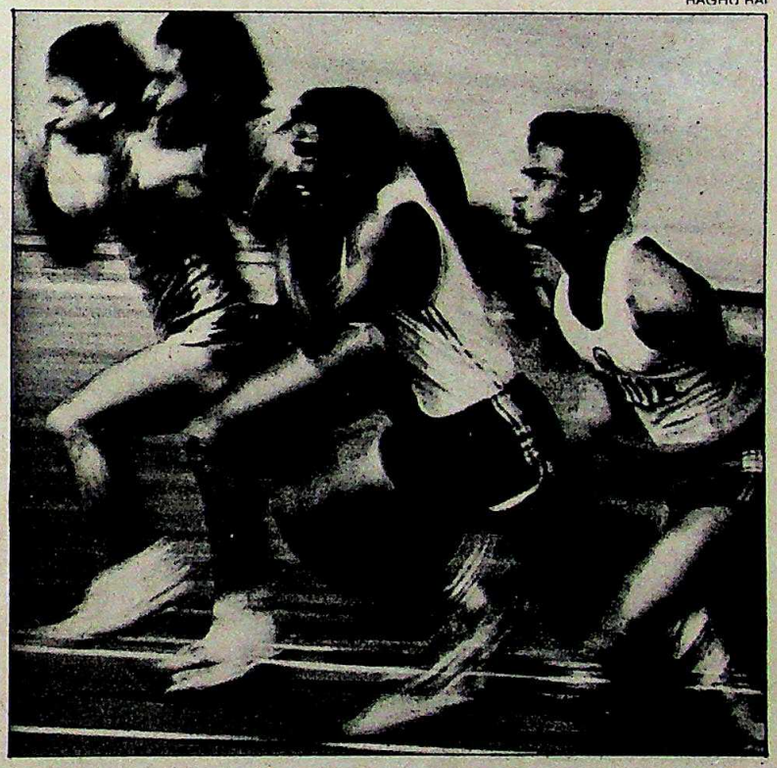
SPORTS

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

It proved to be a decisive decade for Indian sport, largely thanks to the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi and the infusion of new stadia, training methods and technology. Since then, Indian sport, with very few exceptions, has been on a gradual upswing and there is now a new confidence and vitality that offers considerable hope for the future.

RAGHU RAI



Not only did the Asiad give India the confidence to stake its claim for the 1992 Olympics, but it also provided Indian sport with the thrust it so desperately required.

A PRANCING elephant called Appu and the geometric shapes of the Jantar Mantar were perhaps the most dominant symbols of Indian sport in the last decade. Appu was the mascot and the Jantar Mantar the logo of the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi that eventually came to symbolise the dawn of a new era in Indian sport. It was an organisational triumph that overshadowed all else. The Asian Games put India firmly on the international sporting map, with even Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, hailing it as "a fantastic effort". The building of new state-of-the-art stadia in record time, the installation of high-tech equipment and facilities, the systematic training given to Indian athletes before the Asiad proved decisively that Indian sports administration and management had arrived.

Not only did the Asiad give India the confidence to stake its claim for the 1992 Olympics, but it also provided Indian sportsmen with the thrust they so desperately required. Since the Asiad, Indian sportsmen and particularly sportswomen have shown a spectacular improvement in track and field, even though per capita expenditure on sports remains a dismal 10 paise. Finally, athletics surfaced alongside cricket and tennis as a glamour sport. Sriram Singh, Geeta Zutshi, Suresh Babu, Charles Borromeo, P.T.Usha, M.D.Valsamma, Chand Ram and Shiny Abraham became names as familiar as Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri, Sunil Gavaskar and Vijay Amritraj. Admits India's

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aquatic star Anita Sood: "Athletics has only recently become as glamorous as cricket."

But none of them epitomised the changing scene more forcibly than P.T.Usha. Her narrow miss of the Olympic bronze in Los Angeles and her stunning five-golds performance at the Asian meet in Jakarta represented the high point of eight years of determination, dedication and single-mindedness. The decade also saw the birth of a new confidence among Indian athletes. A month before the Asiad, Valsamma had coolly predicted: "All that stands between me and the Gold are ten hurdles," and went on to win the event with effortless ease in a new Asian record. Borromeo also lived up to his pledge of finishing the 800m in less than 1m 47 secs.

The Asiad also ushered in a sea change in the attitude towards training and targets. Shiny Abraham now talks of "workouts" instead of "coaching" and is currently in single-minded pursuit of her avowed goal of becoming "the first Indian woman to run the 800m in under two minutes." With that kind of new attitude, it is hardly surprising that the most significant development in Indian athletics during the last decade has been the overshadowing of male track stars by their female counterparts. In Jakarta, they won seven of the 10 gold medals bagged by India and recent track record analysis has proved conclusively that Indian women athletes have been performing consistently better than the men and are rapidly narrowing the gender gap.

The new emphasis on mental preparation, training and diet, was felt equally keenly in the weightlifting arena with national records being broken no less than 79 times in 1982. Indian weightlifters showed their vast improvement in the Commonwealth Games in May 1985, where they won the team title for the first time.

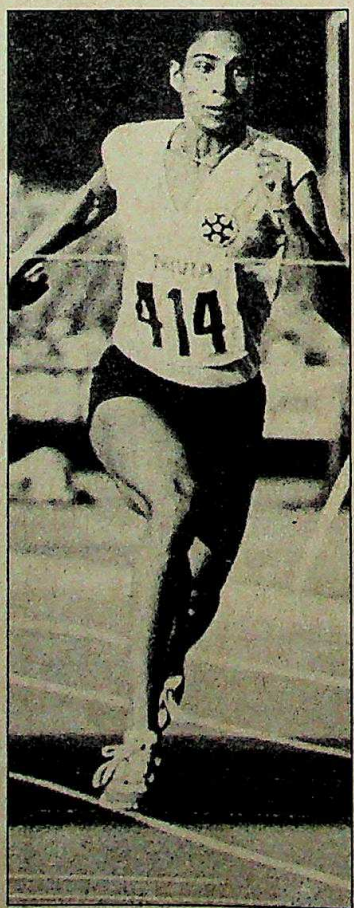
But despite the new awareness and recognition for athletics and athletes, cricket remained the biggest draw in terms of crowd support and financial reward. One-day cricket, like elsewhere, arrived during the decade and is here to stay along with private sponsorship pioneered by the Wills Limited Overs Championship introduced in 1977. India's supremacy in the one-day game was firmly established during the World Series in England in 1983 and Australia last year with Ravi Shastri earning the biggest bounty in Indian Test history—an Audi car.

The decade, however, belonged to Sunil Gavaskar and Mohammed Azharuddin. Gavaskar surpassed Bradman's record of 29 Test centuries while the young Azharuddin became the first batsman in history to score three consecutive centuries in each of his first three tests. It was also a decade that saw the subtle—and often subversive—introduction of professionalism into the game on the level it has existed in Calcutta

The Asiad ushered in a sea change in attitudes towards training and targets. Shiny Abraham now talks of 'workouts' instead of 'coaching' and pledges to become the first Indian woman to run the 800m in under two minutes.

CHARLES BORROMEO

P.T. USHA



SHINY ABRAHAM

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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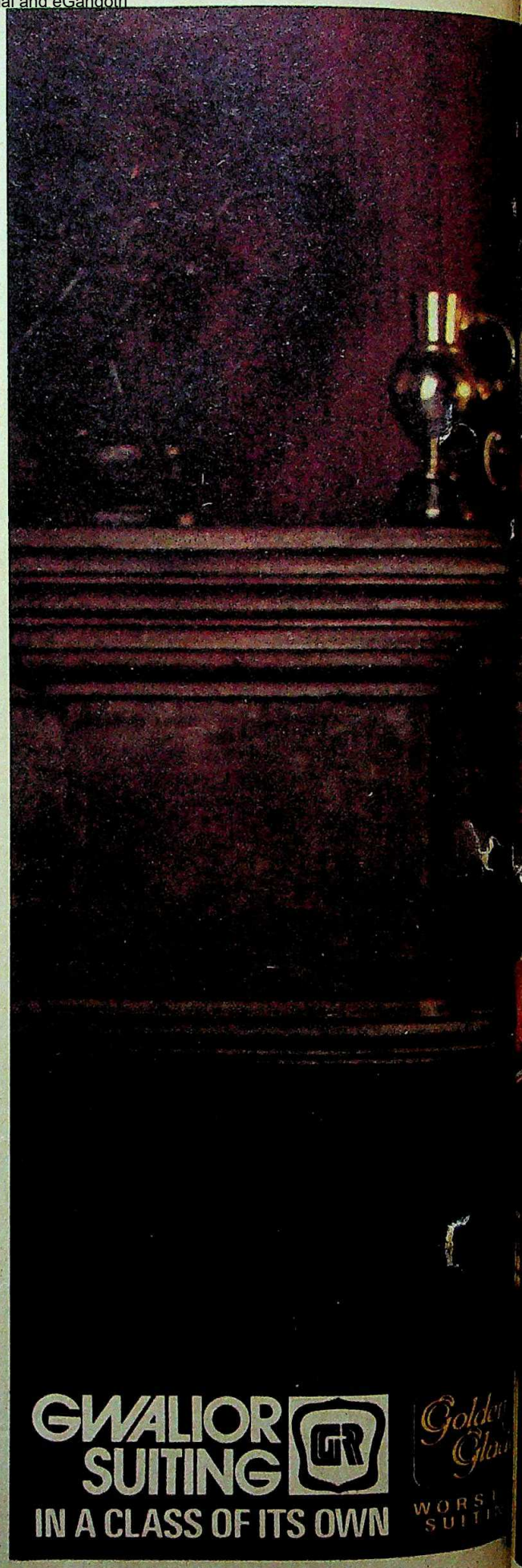

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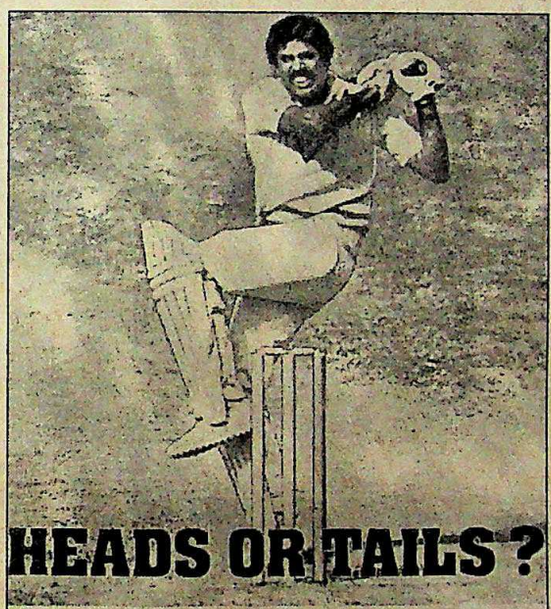
football. Cricket stars like Kapil, Gavaskar, Shastri and Sandeep Patil became regular faces in advertising campaigns, endorsing everything from suitings to sportswear and shaving cream, apart from earning remunerative sums for appending their names to newspaper and magazine articles.

The result was that most sports officials and the sportsmen themselves are confused about the sensitive issue of amateurism with the dividing line between amateurism and professionalism becoming increasingly thinner. Cash incentives to sportsmen was disguised under the legal-sounding "scholarship", and job offers like the one made to sprinter Rami Reddy by the Food Corporation of India after his wins in the 100m and 200m at the National Games, or even instant promotions to athletes after a winning performance in the field, is merely thinly disguised professionalism. "Professionalism is the dirtiest word in Indian sports. In spite of that, organisers woo sponsors for money and other help. To accept money from a sponsor and pay the players from that is professionalism," says Jimmy George, former Indian volleyball captain who turned professional after an offer from the United Arab Emirates in 1978.

It was a decade that also saw the subtle introduction of professionalism into sport. Cricket stars like Gavaskar, Kapil, Shastri and Patil started endorsing everything from suitings to shaving cream.



HEADS OR TAILS?

Happily it was 'heads' for India who finished way ahead of the West Indies with a 43-run victory to claim the World Cup. But the fate of the 60 overs world cricket tournament is still a matter of heads or tails. Prudential Insurance have declined to sponsor it in the future. Does this mean the end of the 'World Cup'? Prudential or no Prudential — the one-day tournament is here to stay. India and Pakistan have, among others, volunteered to sponsor the event as reported by The Sunday Observer. 1987 will hopefully see us again defending the title.

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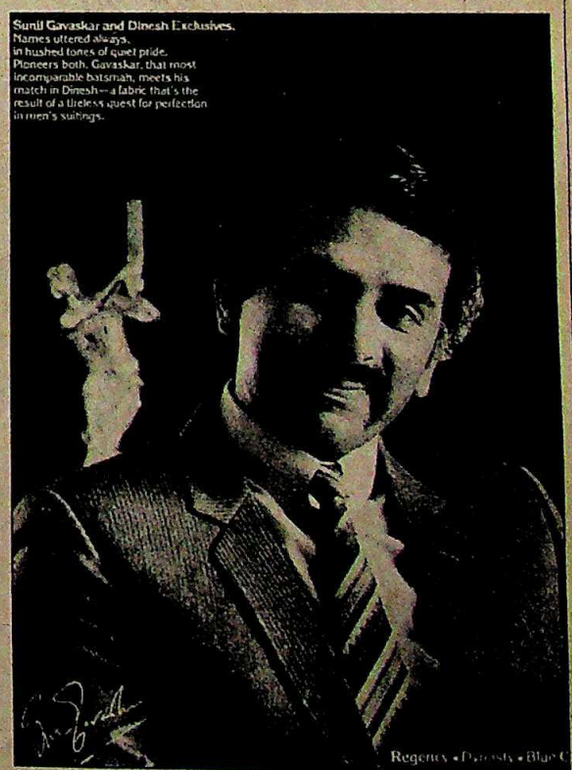
Yet, sponsorship became a growing phenomenon with more and more private companies like Cadbury's and Vazir Sultan joining the ITC in sponsoring sporting events and concepts, including less popular sports like motor rallies and chess. Companies like the Tatas and the JK group have set up exclusive sports foundations and ITC, in 1981, sponsored the $100,000 Tennis Classic which brought such international stars like Ivan Lendl, Vitas Gerulaitis, John Alexander and Wojtek Fibak to Calcutta and last month, Colgate-Palmolive sponsored the National Games in Delhi including the television coverage.

On the chess front, the Sakthi group of companies hosted the Asian Junior Championships and offers prize money for competitions as well as pays part expenses for Tamil Nadu chess stars like Ravi Kumar, Raja Ravisekhar and T.N. Parmeswaran, all three international masters. The new interest and money in chess has led to India having five masters, the other two being Pravin Thipsay from Maharashtra and prospective Grand Master Dibeyandu Barua from West Bengal. Earlier, the only Indian chess master had been Manuel Aaron back in 1961.

Similarly, the recent upsurge of interest in long distance running is mainly because of the makers of Rath Vanaspati, sponsors of the regular Rath



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Sports, television and sponsorship form a triangle without which modern sport cannot grow and it has certainly helped in the growth and awareness of sport in India in recent years.

Marathon. And the Sports Authority of India getting into the act with their "Run for Fun" programme. Easily the most outstanding product of the new environment in long distance running is Asha Aggarwal, striding ahead of the rest with two Asian titles under her tiny belt and the promise of becoming a major force in international marathon events.

All this has been a welcome development. Sports, television and sponsorship from a triangle without which modern sport cannot function and grow and it has certainly helped in the growth and awareness of sports in India in recent years. Major international sporting events like Wimbledon and the World Cup football have become regular sponsored fare on Doordarshan and now various sports federations are demanding a share of the profits from Doordarshan for providing vantage location points for their sports coverage.

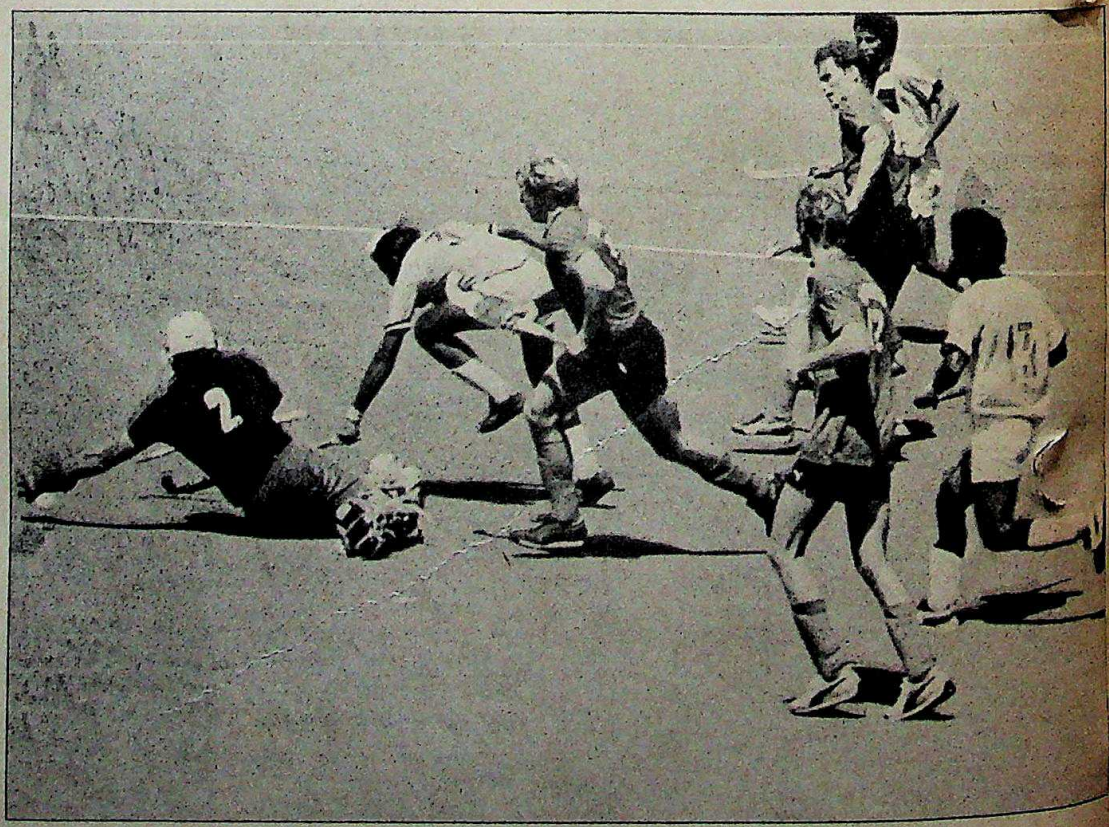
Despite that, the paradoxes that have dogged Indian sport remained intact. Players of the country's national game, hockey, are still the most neglected in terms of financial rewards and private and govermental aid. True, till last fortnight's win in Malaysia, Indian hockey has gone through a dismal patch since the 1975 World Cup—the 1980 Olympic Gold was of little international consequence because of the boycott. But the neglect of the sport's management and promotion is epitomised by the fact that the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) had to step in to take over control from the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) thrice in the last decade. The bitter wrangles between the IHF led by Inder Mahajan, and the IOA had a disastrous effect on the game and the players with indiscipline running rampant. Six top Indian players were banned for five years for attacking an umpire during the Asian Championships in Dhaka in 1985. But industrialist and racehorse owner M.A.M. Ramaswamy, now back in the IHF saddle, is confident of recovering lost ground and says he has ambitious plans on the anvil.

Indian sports stars, however, continued to shine brighter as individuals than as a team. Badminton ace Prakash Padukone, nine times National champion, won the Commonwealth title in 1979 and the World Title in 1980 in the All England Championship. But it was in billiards, that India excelled with Michael Ferreira taking the world championship in 1977 and 1981 and Geet Sethi winning it in 1985.

In the final analysis, it has been an encouraging decade for Indian sports with the formation of a separate Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India entrusted with the task of talent hunting and setting up training schemes. The new policies and goals are no longer short-term ones as was the case earlier, but aimed at preparing a blueprint for the future. With the National Institute of Sports expanding from its base at Patiala to open regional centres in Calcutta and Bangalore, and two other centres for high altitude training in Himachal Pradesh and Manipur, the prospects for Indian sports look considerably brighter than at any previous time.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

THE NEW-LOOK INDIAN HOCKEY TEAM IN ACTION DURING THE ESANDA TOURNAMENT IN AUSTRALIA



The new policies and goals are no longer short-term ones but aimed at preparing a blueprint for the future.

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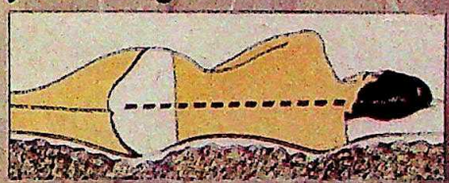

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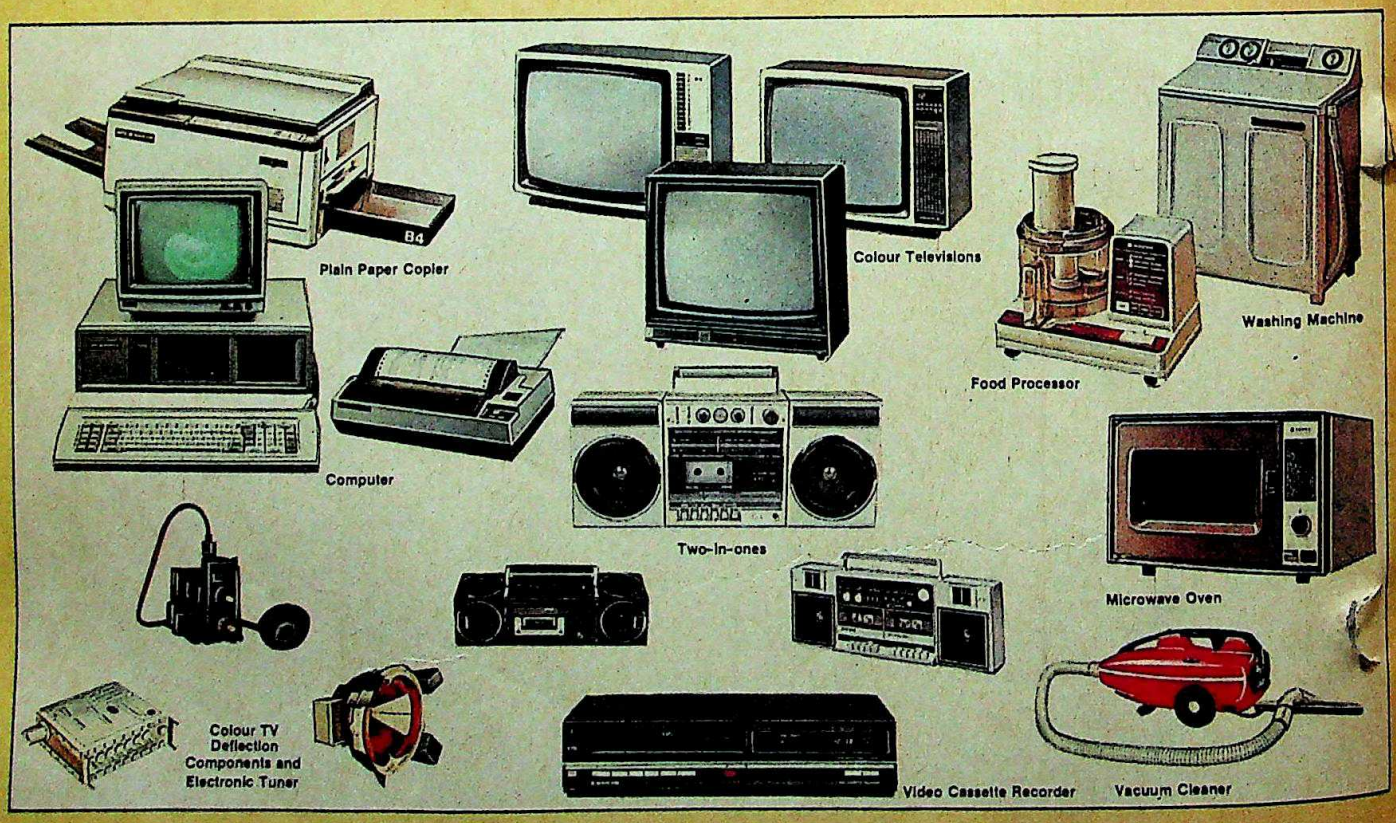

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* Maximum recommended retail price excluding all taxes for 5 litre capacity. With separators, Rs. 50 extra. ™ Trade Mark. Patent pending. © 1985 Copyright by Pressure Cookers & Appliances Ltd.

46% faster than microwave cooking

faster than Crowave

unbelievable though it sound, it is true! The kins test kitchen under- a series of comparative ing trials. 19 recipes soups to desserts, inclu- fish, chicken, lamb, beef, rice, pasta and tables, were cooked in al quantities in a mic- ave oven and in a Haw- pressure cooker. In cases, the food was d by an expert panel to re that it was cooked e same proper extent. total average cooking for these 19 recipes microwave oven was inutes per recipe and Hawkins pressure er, 24 minutes recipe.

t believe it? se write for a let showing the l cooking time for of the 19 recipes.

n Way to Tasty Food

book given free with Futura contains 119 national and 18 Indian d and tasty recipes. Be ternational gourmet me!

Jewel-grey LON® Finish

ra has a beautiful, -grey Satilon finish n will not tarnish and rder than steel. It is r than stainless steel se it is stick-resistant has 13.7 times better al conductivity.

Greater enience

a has a wide mouth shallow body for easy ng and cleaning. It 6.3 mm heavy base stays flat on your and is ideal for frying ressure cooking.

Hawkins
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The safest, fastest way to tasty food.

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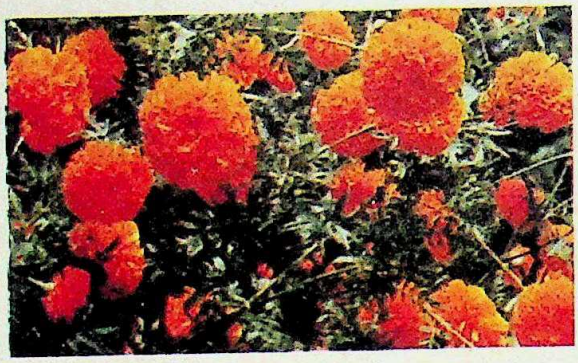
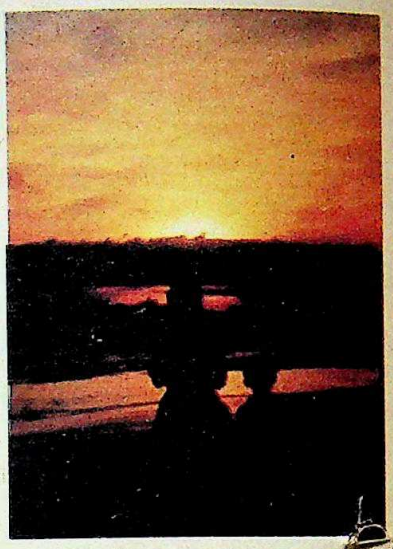
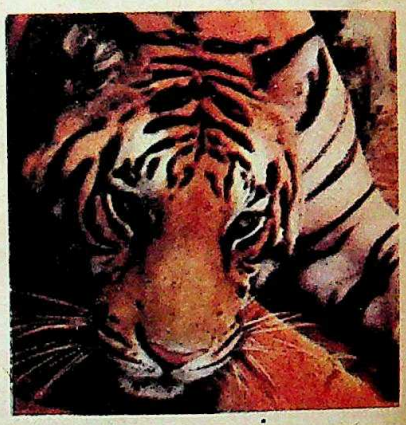
Kerala







WHEN THE NORTH WIND BLOWS KERALA GLOWS WITH WARMTH

October, November, December... Brrr... The temperature makes cold hearted plunges in Northern India, while KERALA bathes in sunshine and warmth.

Run away from dreary Winter chill and chilblain. Come to KERALA where there is no Winter. And the sky is blue, the Sun a mellow gold, and the beaches inviting.

KERALA lies hugged by the Arabian Sea down her full length. Dimpled with some of the best beaches, lagoons and coves on Earth. Not far from the coastline you have the breathtaking beauty of backwaters.

Kerala breaks the cold spell for you, with a gift of warmth this Winter.

For more details, contact: KERALA TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE, (Department of Tourism, Kerala), 219, Kanishka Shopping Complex, Ashok Road, New Delhi 110 001 • 28, C in C Road, Madras 600 105 • Park View, Trivandrum 695 033, Tel. 61132 • Kerala Tourism Development Corpn. Ltd., P.B. No. 46, Behind Secretariat, Trivandrum 695 001, Tel. 64261, 64705 or your nearest Govt. of India Tourist Office.

Kerala
Sunny southern state

Topads T. DOT 3985

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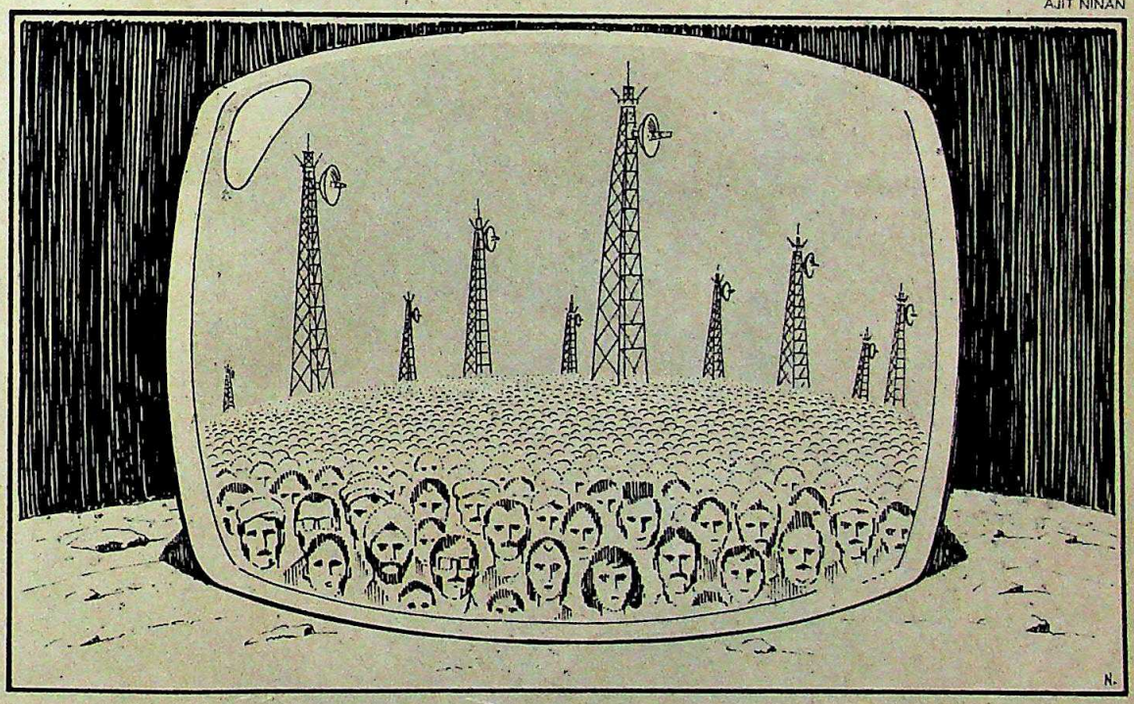
TELEVISION

THE SPREADING SCREEN

It started with a whimper but by the end of the decade, Indian television had arrived with a bang. The New Delhi Asian Games opened the floodgates for the small screen revolution, introducing new and far reaching horizons in communications and overnight altering priorities for sponsors and advertising agencies. In terms of sheer growth, the television industry had no equal.

AJIT NINAN



With two million sets—including 800,000 colour sets—crossing the shop counters this year, at least four Indian homes are acquiring TV sets every minute of the day.

WHEN the then prime minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency at midnight on June 25, 1975, and went on television the next evening to justify her desperate action, only about five million Indians could have watched her in awed suspense. This year, when Rajiv Gandhi put up a virtuoso performance at the National Press Club in Washington, it showered down live on nearly six million TV sets with 60 million Indians watching and the setting ranging from rural community viewing centres to cozy living-rooms.

Ten years ago, viewers grew weary of watching Mrs Gandhi cutting ribbons and deplaning at airports, with the only respite being provided by the weekly Chitrahaar and the Sunday feature film. Caustic critics nicknamed it "Devidarshan" and sent up slogans like "Tedium is the message." Today, the range is phenomenally greater with the plethora of sponsored programmes—good, bad and indifferent. Indians are now witness to the television star phenomenon, something just not possible five years ago, and Indian children can now track the adventures of their favourite Walt Disney characters in live animation rather than from comic strips.

Ten years ago, TV sets were mere status symbols, to be shown off than to be seen. The

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"Good programmes are like a habit-forming drug and we have injected that into society. Now watch the reaction."
V.N. GADGILL
minister of state for Information and Broadcasting

presence of a lone TV antenna atop a building turned the neighbours envious. Today, even a slum like Dharavi is crawling with antennae and even colour television has ceased to be an oddity.

The statistics are mind-boggling. From a mere 404 licences issued in 1965 and 4,55,430 in 1975, the number of sets was counted at 5.2 million when the licensing system was abolished early this year. And, with two million sets—including 800,000 colour sets—crossing the shop counters this year, at least four Indian homes are now acquiring TV sets every minute of the day. Even in 1982, just before the Asiad, there were only 16 transmitters beaming programmes to less than 8 per cent of people who could receive it on their sets. Today, 180 transmitters raise their steel torsos across the country, transmitting signals or beaming them via satellite to a potential audience that is 70 per cent of the nations's population. From being a strictly evening ritual, the transmission hours now spill late into the night on weekdays and take up almost the whole of a Sunday. And the electronic deluge that has covered only 50 million Indians so far promises to swamp 300 million of them in another five years when an astounding 30 million sets will go into operation.

Few countries in the world have seen such expensive bouts of television expansion. The Indian television industry's rate of growth is nearly 50 per cent for this year alone. This, over an already impressive base of six million—only two million short of the number of TV sets in Britain. By 1990, India will have drawn close to China with its estimated 35 million sets. "The growth of the television medium in India," says Granada network chairman Sir Denis Forman, "is a stupendous phenomenon and the country has turned into a laboratory for communication experts."

But the real success of Indian television and Doordarshan, the Government authority that has been its midwife as well as possessive mother, lies in having turned the box from a propaganda platform into a major money-spinning entertainment arena. "Good programmes are like a habit-forming drug, and we have injected that into the society. Now watch the reaction," boasts Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting V.N. Gadgil, himself a TV addict. And the 'drug' is coming not in niggardly doses but in torrents, largely because of the involvement of the private sector in making programmes for the box.

YEH JO HAI ZINDAGI: RECORD AUDIENCES

In 1976, the Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB), a prominent market research organisation, found only three programmes watched regularly by over 70 per cent of the viewers: *Chhaya Geet* (Bombay's name for *Chitrahaar*), a melange of clips from singing scenes in popular films; *Phool Khile Hain Gulshan Gulshan*, a trivial and tacky talk show on film personalities interspersed with film clippings, and of course the weekly Hindi feature film. But last fortnight IMRB published a new television ratings points study (TRPS) which showed even the light sitcom *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* making it to the top of the charts at many places, including Bombay. Meanwhile, the survey shows that the feature film has slid down the ladder to the ninth position in Bombay, eighth in Delhi, and fifth in Madras while *Phool Khile* barely makes it to the bottom rung and that too only in Calcutta.

"Television sneaked quietly into Indian life as a leisure alternative," says Amit Khanna, a

"The growth of the TV medium in India is a stupendous phenomenon and the country is a laboratory for communication experts."
DENIS FORMAN
chairman, Granada network

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Sheer perfection. Worth its weight in gold.

24 Carats

A fan so splendid,
It would outclass all your
exquisite possessions.

Only for those who have taste & money.

Created & Perfected by

POLAR

Polar Fan Industries Ltd.
World Trade Centre
Calcutta-700 001.

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You never felt this free before!

OBM 9242

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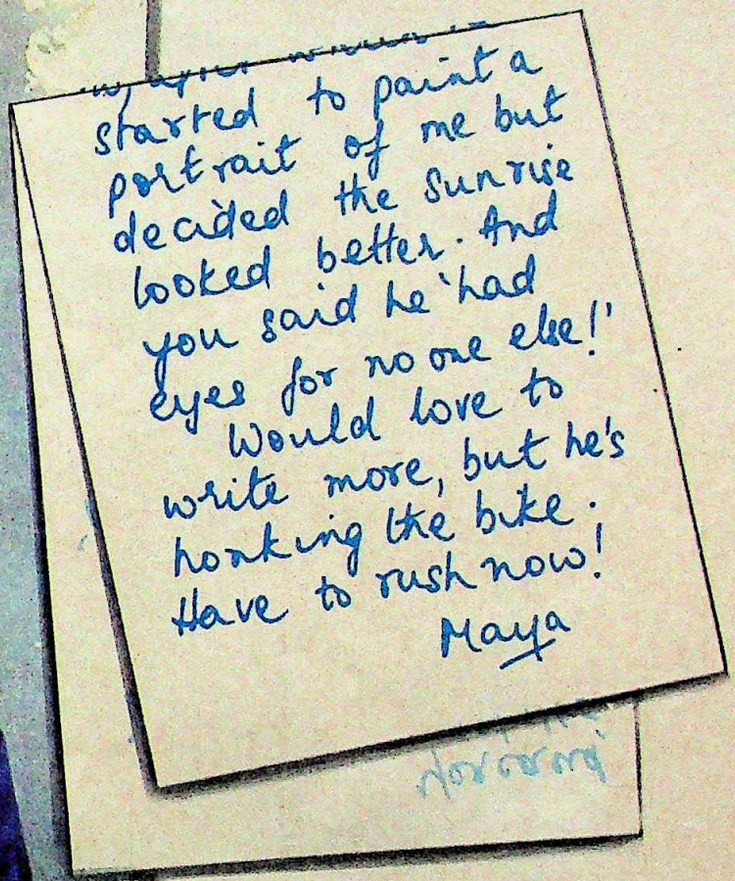
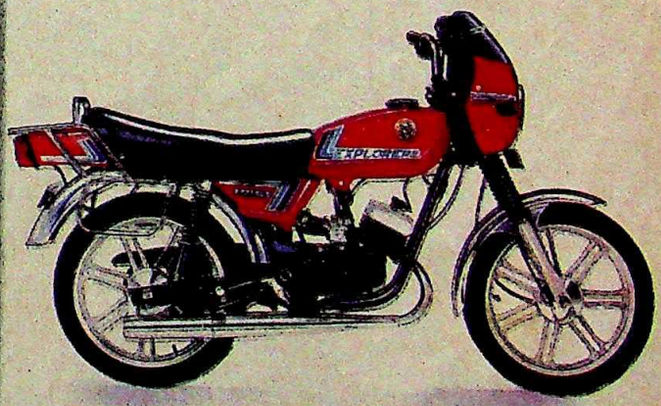


started to paint a
portrait of me but
decided the sunrise
looked better. And
you said he 'had
eyes for no one else!'
Would love to
write more, but he's
honking the bike.
Have to rush now!
Maya



Explorer by ENFIELD

So safe to ride, so easy to handle

Explorer: 50 cc • 3.3 bhp • 3 gears • die-cast wheels • 65 kms per litre • Rubin Red or Strato Silver

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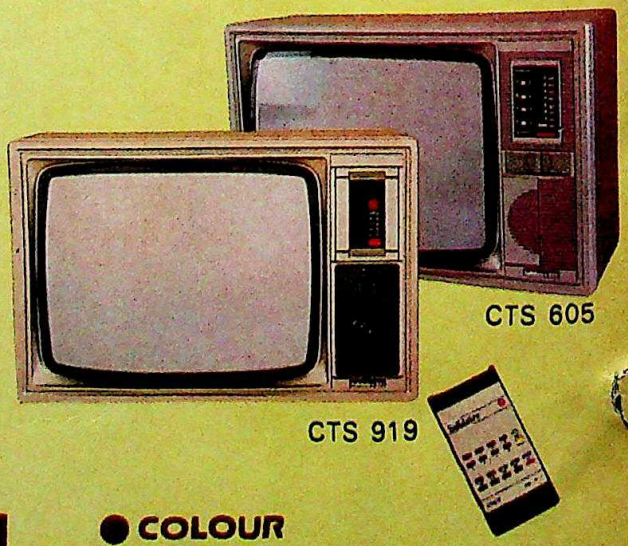
If the eyelashes of the news-reader are clearly visible

it must be Solidaire!

Yes, a claim Solidaire alone can claim. With confidence. Since it has won acclaim from its proud owners. Leading to make more and more people buy Solidaire. For its picture clarity, perfect colour and the right contrast.

And to judge the picture quality, you must do it when the news is being telecast. Because it's live and the news-reader faces the TV camera under proper lighting. It means there's no chance of bad focussing. Now watch the same on different TVs and compare it with Solidaire. On a Solidaire TV you can see every minute detail like the eyelashes of the news-reader. And all in the right, natural tones.

Such picture sharpness in Solidaire is the result of using error-free components from ITT & Preh, West Germany. For instance, components like the LOT, Electronic Tuner, Colour ICs, SMPS etc used in Solidaire are among the most advanced designs in the world.



Solidaire COLOUR
-that seldom fails!

Model Courtesy:
Gitanjali S. Aiyar, Newsreader, Delhi Doordarshan

Insight-DE-241

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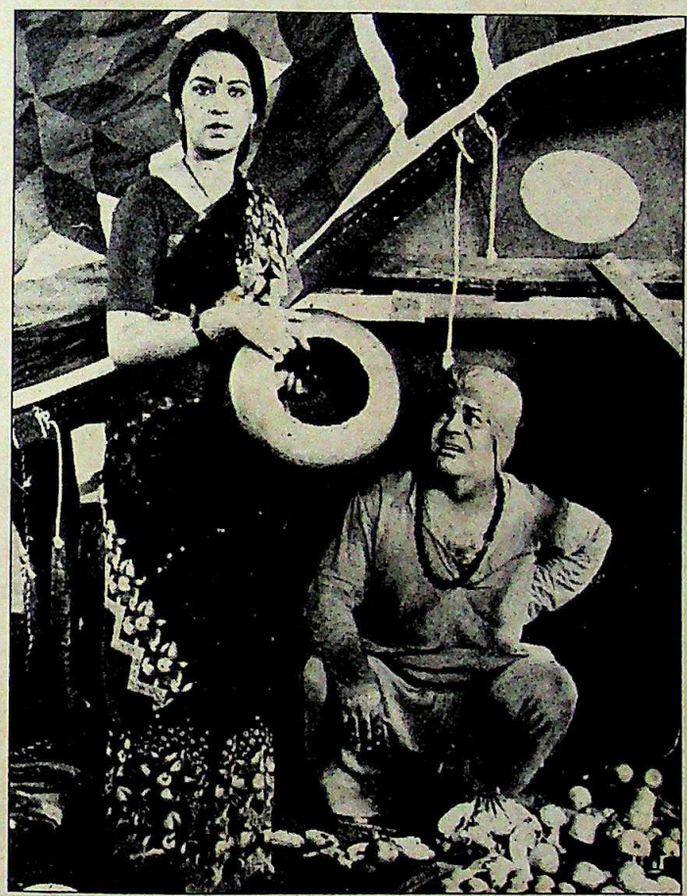
The cash registers never stopped ringing. Doordarshan, which had netted only Rs 77 lakh ten years ago, recorded a commercial revenue of Rs 32 crore last year alone.

painstaking chronicler of the industry who himself makes television programmes now. "But when television came, the whole family was sold over to it. You watch as long as you like it. When you don't just flick the button."

But millions of families refused to flick the button when the possibilities of the medium first began to unfold. First came the coverage of the Montreal Olympics in 1976 and then the draw of the live telecast of cricket Test matches. For the first time film producers began talking about "low collection" because of cricket telecasts and started adjusting film release dates accordingly. The five-day match telecasts seemed boring to some but to many others it opened new opportunity for watching pleasure.



TV CRUSADER RAJANI: RAISING SOCIAL AWARENESS

"The live sports coverages were only a precursor, a sign of the times to come," says Harish Khanna, debonair director-general of Doordarshan who was imaginatively chosen by Indira Gandhi in 1984 so that he could apply to Indian television the broadcasting experience acquired by him in the BBC where he had worked. The real lift-off was in end-1982 when the challenge of telecasting the Asiad in New Delhi spawned all the trappings of a modern television society.

Enter colour, shakily at first with the intensity of definition often fluctuating, but more assuredly with time. The number of transmitters went up from 16 prior to the Asiad to 41 during the games. The camera units began moving out of doors, their mobility greatly enhanced by newly-acquired outdoor broadcasting (OB) vans.

Khanna recalls that the "insatiable hunger" for quality programmes was felt as early as 1975 when India decided to try the "slower option" by availing itself for one year only, the facility of satellite hook-up offered by the geostationary American satellite ATS-6. The programme called Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was beamed to community sets in six rural clusters. It was an instant success.

Says Gadgil: "The writing on the wall was very clear. Through television we have always wanted to educate people, to entertain them, and to inform. But after the expansion during the Asiad we reached the conclusion that none of the objectives could be fulfilled if the programmes lacked life." But even after attaining a sizeable reach, tedium was the sum total of its message throughout 1983 and most of 1984. Its news broadcast was (and still largely is) a grim litany of ministerial activities and an unending catalogue of ribbons cut and homilies uttered by the political master of the day. Its documentaries, barring a few golden exceptions, reeked of mindless bureaucracy. Reminisces S.S.Gill, who retired as information and broadcasting secretary last fortnight, but not before he had played a pivotal role in changing the face of television in the country: "After the Asiad we began having everything for television except only one thing: soul!"

Two years later Gill was decorated with the Padma Bhushan for his epochal contribution to Indian television. It was during Gill's stewardship of the ministry that the biggest breakthrough came when Doordarshan started accepting privately sponsored programmes. The advertisers were not even curious in the beginning and were happy with a flood of commercial spots, all cluttered before and after the film-based programmes. Thus, when *Hum Log* began 16 months ago, Gill was camping in Bombay, imploring companies to sponsor it.

However, *Hum Log* caught the imagination of television viewers and triggered off a tornado of change. Software making companies mushroomed overnight. From virtually no takers in the middle of 1984, there are now 15 contenders on an average for each of the prime-time slots that Doordarshan can offer. From purely a buyer's market, air-time entered the seller's market. "It is the most persuasive, the most cost-effective and the quickest medium," says Mike Khanna, the chief of Hindustan Thomson Associates (HTA), the

"After the Asiad we began having everything for television except only one thing: soul!"
S.S. GILL
Former secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

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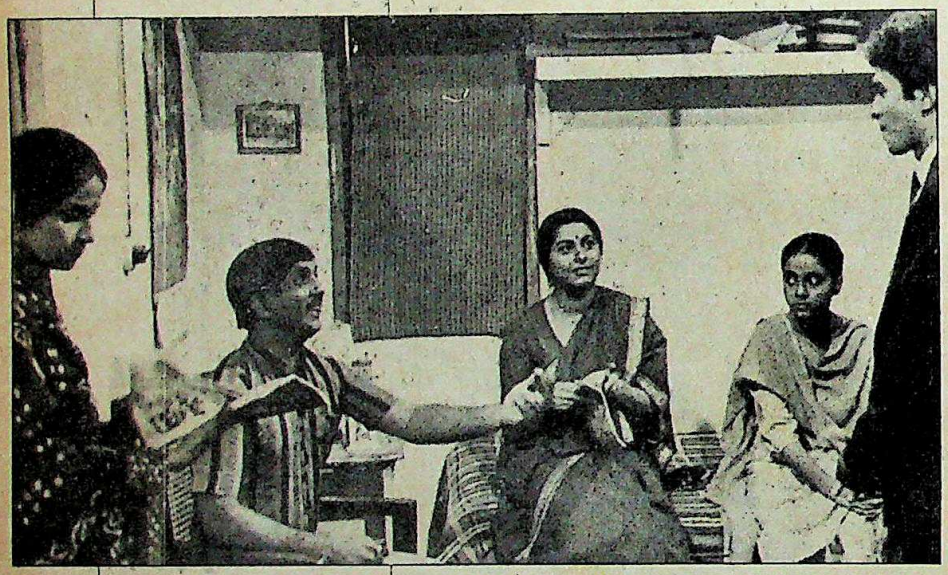
"The small screen is big business today, bigger than the Rs 110 crore movie industry."

AMIT KHANNA
film maker

advertising agency which enjoys top billing in the country. "No other medium offers such a high recall value," echoes A.G. Krishnamurthy of Mudra Communications which sponsors *Rajani*. As late as 1983 Lakme Industries, one of the cosmetic leaders were spending only 25 per cent of their advertising budget on television campaigns. This year they are spending 80 per cent.

But while advertisers were chasing targets of sales—and a maddening assortment of consumer products—an altogether new range of sponsored programmes began unravelling on the box, some good, some not-so-good, but nearly all finding niches in the popular mind. "The small screen is big business today, bigger than the Rs 110 crore movie industry," quips Amit Khanna. But more than business the box began beckoning people to a new horizon of communication.



HUM LOG: THE PATH-BREAKING SERIAL

Ten years ago, it was an extended public address system for politicians. Today, it is a gigantic window through which 50 million Indians peer at the world.

The first and most direct impact of this change was on people's life-styles. The number of products jingling their way through ads saw the growth of an increasingly consumeristic social attitude. Things looked good up there and the new commercial idiom was hard-sell.

At the same time, TV and video dealt the cinema a blow from which it still has to recover. While the family clustered around the idiot box, movie halls began noticing a gradual but alarming drop in collections. The final proof of the film industry having succumbed to the threat of television came when established film makers like Mahesh Bhatt and Govind Nihalani premiered their *Janam* and *Party* respectively on television.

But particularly significant was its subtle impact on politics. Rajiv Gandhi realised it from day one, when the lingering last shot of Doordarshan's telecast of Mrs Gandhi's funeral, silhouetting the young and handsome new prime minister against the setting sun, formed an everlasting image. But propaganda was not its only use and thankfully so. A breakthrough of sorts came with *Janvaani*, an on-screen inquisition of ministers which had a cathartic effect on the audience, offering them a token reassurance that inefficiency would find no place under the new dispensation. The television camera followed the prime minister on his tours of tribal areas and foreign soil, admittedly with much more professional skill than in Mrs Gandhi's time. Television had come of age as the most potent tool for the manipulation of minds.

While the Government tended to handle it politically, flinching from every suggestion of granting it autonomy ("It is irrelevant," said Gadgil) air-time was choc-a-bloc with sponsored programmes—*Khandaan*, an Indian variant of *Dynasty*, a serial based on an adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a private-eye serial called *Karamchand*, the news-based *Newsline*, a Sunday quiz show, *Darpan*—a serial based on short stories in Indian languages—and a host of other serials, besides the highly rated sitcoms, *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi*, *Rajani* and *Hum Log*.

The private sector was cautiously allowed to nibble at current affairs, hitherto a closed preserve of Doordarshan. And the cash register never stopped ringing. Doordarshan, which had netted only Rs 77 lakh ten years ago, recorded a commercial revenue of Rs 32 crore last year alone. Doordarshan Director-General Harish Khanna forcefully argues that the revenue has grown without any strings attached. "Only 4.8 per cent of TV time is used for commercials," he says. But with the distinct possibility of nearly Rs 50 crore in revenue next year—a quarter of the money to be spent on advertisements for consumer products nation-wide—advertisers do not want to take chances. "As matters stand now," says Mike Khanna, "the agency and the advertisers are kept only on the fringe for sponsored programmes. The producers deal directly with Doordarshan, get concept approval and air time allotted and then shop around for buyers."

The advertisers want more of the "message", much more than what Doordarshan now allows by way of 90 seconds of free time for 25 minutes of sponsored programme. So far Doordarshan has resisted the pressure, but it cannot hold out for long if the gap in programme value between its own product and that implemented by the private sector widens. And to make it possible, Doordarshan has to yank itself out of the Government-job syndrome, paying its staff fair wages and not just government pay scales and raise their level of training and intellect.

But the winds of change are inexorable. Sponsored programmes with their sheer mass appeal have given Doordarshan a competitive edge. And the overwhelming power of the idiot box is being felt like never before. Ten years ago, it was an extended public address system for politicians. Today, it is a gigantic window through which 50 million Indians peer at the world.

—SUMIT MITRA

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An extraordinary experience for the men in India Today

A NEW PRODUCT has just been introduced in the Capital. One of the most exclusive personal care products ever made for men.

ARAMUSK. A bath soap that is as uncompromisingly male as a Cuban cigar.

ARAMUSK. A bathing experience that will pleasure your senses. Envelop you in the timeless aroma of musk. Magic that's rarer and costlier than gold.

A Shaw Wallace offering happily in time for India Today's 10th anniversary

Aramusk

BATH SOAP FOR MEN

Now available at select stores in Delhi only

Response

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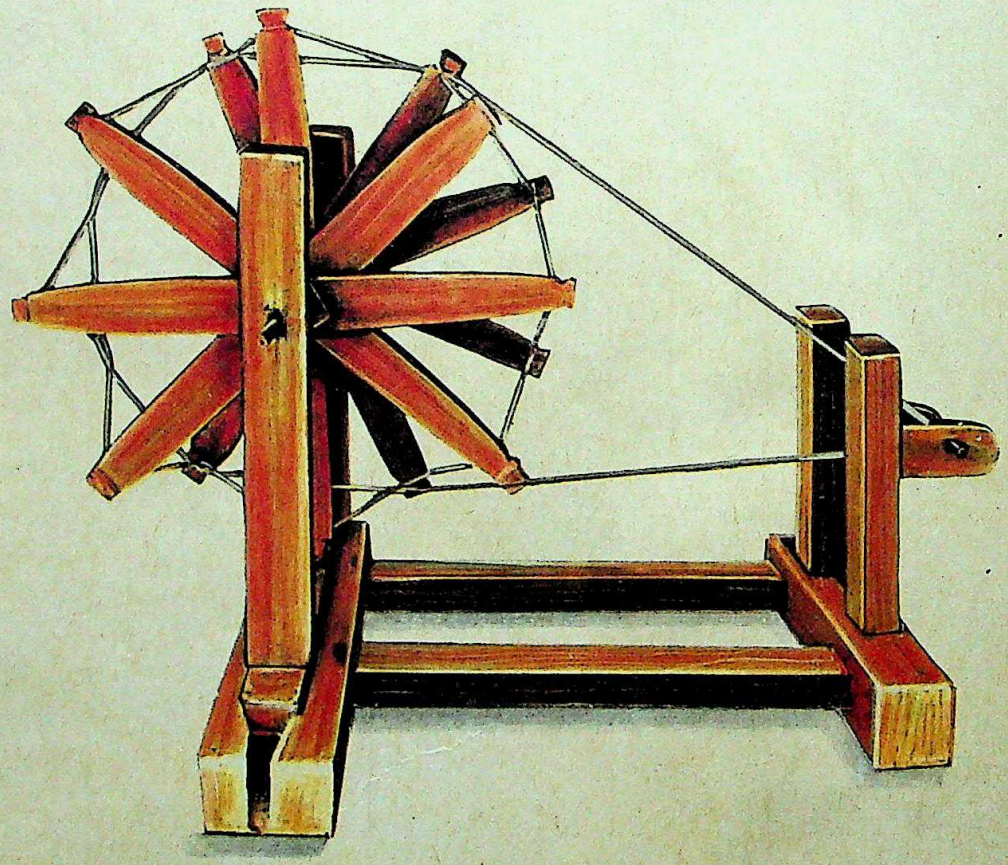

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nity of our nation as spun on wood

If we grow wood only for fuel, look what we lose

Where would we get wood for the necessities of life ?

For cradles.
Ploughs.
Doors and windows...

After all, nature does provide alternative fuels — but there is no substitute for wood.

So what can we do? The answer is simple.

We can — and must — grow more forests.

And when we do, we must concentrate not only on the number of trees we plant, but also on the species of trees we plant.

In short, we must go in for Mixed Forestry.

Mixed Forestry simply means planting a balanced mix of trees. To meet our undeniably important fuel and fodder needs — as well as our industrial timber needs.

And, to further enhance conservation, we must make the best use of our forest resources.

As plywood does.

Because one unit volume of plywood serves the purpose of three unit volumes of sawn timber — a saving of 200%.

This means in turn that pressure on the demand for sawn wood is reduced — and our forest resources conserved.

All over the world forestry is becoming a priority — let's act before it's too late

OBM 9772 A/1

Duraply

Plywood conserves forests

Sarda Plywood Industries Limited

Issued in the interest of national awareness

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"Geometric designs have always been there. Right now they are on top."

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078613

The geometry factor in art, introduced by early Egyptian architects and artisans, has had a g impact on aesthetic concepts of today.

In fashion, the elements of geometry come as a liberating relief from the dominance of floral rns. The geometric line becomes the fashionable stripe, the point and circle, a dot, the square, a k. Add to these the cube, zig-zag, diamond and arc and we have a panoply of shapes, simple ermanent. Since these shapes are fundamental, they allow ground colours to have full play. "Geometric" is the new story line for Garden-Vareli fabrics — trendy, futuristic...in keeping with hage of the modern woman as a liberated one."

Praful A. Shah, Managing Director, Garden Silk Mills Pvt. Ltd.; Chairman, Vareli Group.

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NEWSMAKERS

For all the dramatic highs and lows of the last decade, in the end it was the individuals who counted and made it the most newsworthy decade of all. Whatever their chosen field, Indian men and women succeeded in conquering new and uncharted frontiers. Below are pen portraits of the most prominent achievers.

AZMI: PLAIN TALENT

SHABANA AZMI

◆ Achiever of the Decade. Bulbous nose and ungainly pout notwithstanding she now stands at the commanding heights of Indian cinema. Unknown until her debut in *Ankur* as the Harijan mistress of a nawab, superstar Azmi has won the national award for best actress four times—first for *Ankur*, then for *Arth* in 1983, for *Khandhar* in 1984, and for *Paar* this year. In addition, *Filmfare* has heaped honours on her for her sensitive performances in *Paar*, *Arth* and *Swami*. Her private life spilled into the gossip columns after she married already married scriptwriter Javed Akhtar.

JAGJIT AND CHITRA SINGH

◆ Duet of the Decade. It's hard to believe that this dynamic duo of the Indian ghazal scene were unsung voices just 10 years ago. For even though they are still at their versatile best the very mention of their names conjures up the kind of old world nostalgia that it evoked by their haunting number, "Woh baarish ka paani". Before their debut the ghazal was in its death throes. Earlier Begum Akhtar had battled hard to bring ghazals out of the *kothas* and into the homes of ordinary people. But the art languished in limbo until Jagjit and Chitra breathed a new respectability and vitality into it. Ask any school or college boy who hums "ahista ahista" on his way to the bus stop, without of course understanding a word of it.

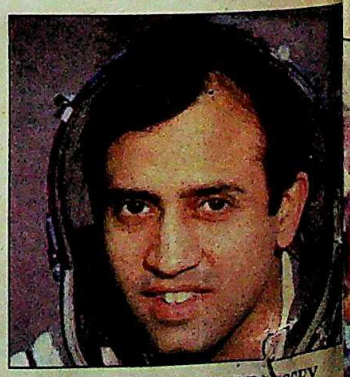
JAGJIT-CHITRA: GHAZAL POP

SALMAN RUSHDIE

◆ Child of the Decade. He carved out an unchallenged literary niche for himself in the world of serious contemporary fiction with the publication of his first novel *Midnight's Children*. The Bombay-born expatriate who now resides in London was showered with international honours including the coveted Booker Prize. The attention came as a surprise to Rushdie who hardly expected a book on the hopes and dreams and disappointments of post-Independence Indians to win awards, leave alone become the best seller that it did. His latest work *Shame*—a follow-up—has established Rushdie as the leader of the literary pack that includes Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Ruth Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Ved Mehta.

RUSHDIE: MIDNIGHT MIRACLE

RAKESH SHARMA



SHARMA: SPACE ODYSSEY

◆ Orbiter of the Decade. Jockey-like in stature, unassuming, almost shy in temperament but with a heart the size of the globe is how friends describe India's first man in space. Cosmonaut Sharma's week-long odyssey aboard the Soviet space laboratory Salyut 7 symbolised

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dia's own take-off into the enty-first century. Travelling 24 times the speed of sound, pulse rate increasing by 30 ts within seconds after blast- Sharma became the 138th smonaut and India the 14th tion to have a man in space. his passes over india, Sharma mmented: "As we moved from th to north the blue of the an merged with the green of plains and the view turned wn over central India and o a glorious beauty over the caps of the Himalayas. But m here there are no borders. e whole planet is one."

SHYAM BENEGAL

Director of the Decade. Just en the afficionados of the seri- s cinema were becoming con- ced that in the absence of new ectorial talent the celluloid n, as it had risen, would also on Satyajit Ray, a new and dern film maker arrived on horizon. Shyam Benegal, for- r ad executive, burst on to the ge of modern Indian cinema h the release of his film kur—a phenomenal success t also made a star out of na Azmi. Benegal demon- ed with *Ankur*—and later h *Nishant* and *Manthan* that t" films need not be unprofit-

BENEGAL: A NEW VISION

able ventures catering to the selective tastes of coffee house intellectuals but that they can be entertaining and able to rivet the attention of mass audiences.

MOTHER TERESA

◆ Saint of the Decade. God's love won this Polish-born nun the Nobel Peace Prize for 1979 for caring for lepers, the dying and the wretched of the earth of Calcutta. She has become a familiar sight and landmark in her blue-bordered sari followed by her nun brigade on the streets or slums or during a gas tragedy in Bhopal or a massacre in Nellie. Her views on birth control—she condemns modern methods of contraception—has embroiled

RAGHU RAI

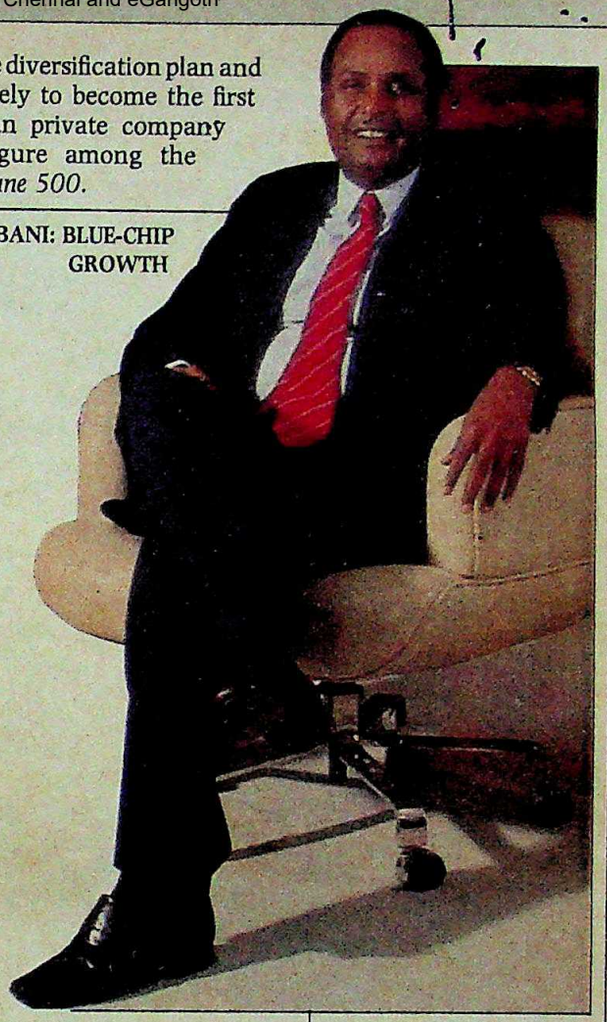
MOTHER TERESA: GOD's GIFT

her in mild controversy. But she is living proof that charity doesn't begin at home.

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

◆ Tycoon of the Decade. Artful manipulation, a fierce doggedness of spirit and determination, and a visceral instinct for the megabuck catapulted Dhirubhai Hirachand Ambani to the top of the third largest but most profitable industrial empire in India. The son of a village schoolteacher, he started the Reliance corporation with Rs 15,000 in borrowed capital. Today the market value of Reliance shares is more than Rs 10,000 crore. Ambani's personal net worth is estimated at a whopping Rs 150 crore. Notwithstanding recent setbacks, Reliance is continuing with a multi-crore diversification plan and is likely to become the first Indian private company to figure among the *Fortune 500*.

AMBANI: BLUE-CHIP GROWTH



VERGHESE KURIEN

◆ Developer of the Decade. His tenacious travails in the field of cooperative dairy farming are largely responsible for making

KURIEN: THE DAIRY MAN

the automatic milk vending booths a familiar sight to millions of people. Kurien believes staunchly that economic development means the development of people and that the best instrument for this is not government but voluntary organisations. Using the National Dairy Develop-

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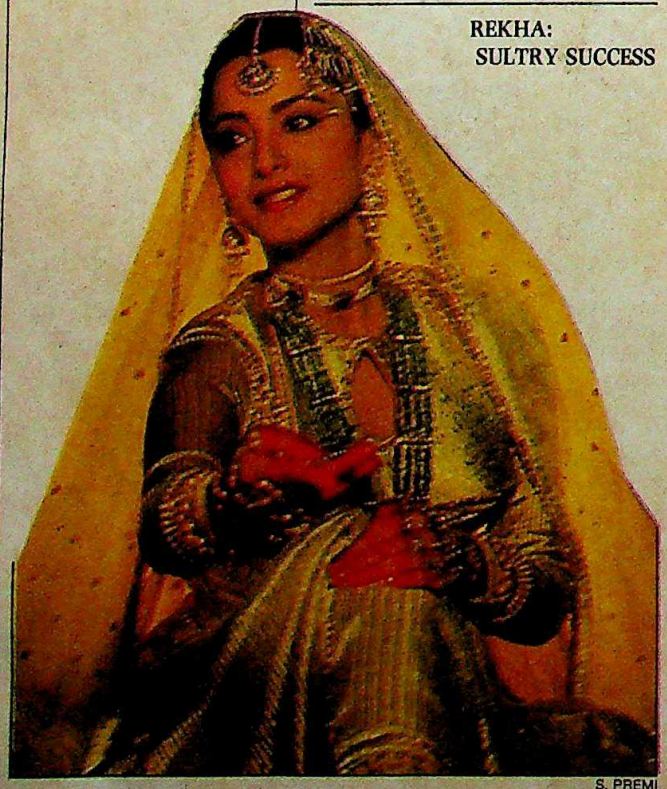
ment board as an umbrella Kurien has been able to organise millions of farmers into milk producing cooperatives and launch the white revolution. The crowning glory of his efforts is the 60-acre AMUL complex that has now become the nucleus for India's dairy industry.

REKHA

◆ Heartthrob of the Decade. The eyes that launched a thousand sighs. When she sang and danced in *Umrao Jaan*, every member in the audience seemed to be personally transported into her alluring ambience. While hardly in the same histrionic league as Shabana Azmi or Smita Patil she has displayed a gripping dramatic ability in films like *Khubsoorat*, *Kalyug* and *Utsav*. For the better part of the decade she reigned alongside male counterpart Amitabh Bachchan as the matinee devi of Indian films. And when the two fell head over heels in affair, the Amitabh-Rekha-Jaya Bhaduri triangle created the true-to-life film version—*Silsila*. She recently anounced—and then recanted—her retirement, surely to public cries of, *Dil chees kya hai aap meri jaan leejiye*.

REKHA: SULTRY SUCCESS



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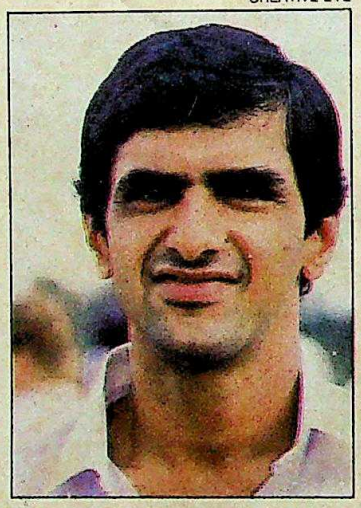
PRAKASH PADUKONE

◆ Racket of the Decade. He made shuttlecock smashing look like child's play. He won the National Badminton crown eight years in a row from 1971 to 1978 and then again in 1980. During the Commonwealth games in 1979, as a gangling lad of 23, he won a gold medal. The following year, in 1980, he scooped up the prestigious world title in the All-England Championship. He won the Arjuna award when he was barely a teenager. But his shuttle from victory to victory has gone into a recent slide from which he is still to recover.

CREATIVE EYE

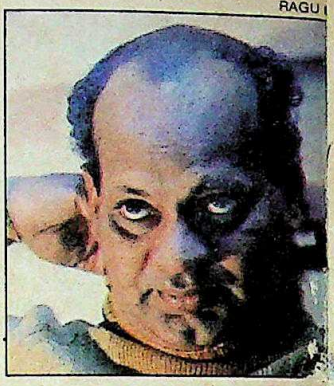


PADUKONE: ACE RACKET

DATTA SAMANT

◆ Striker of the Decade. Make way George Fernandes Datta Samant is here. George the killer of the giants of Maharashtra's industries was always a tough act to follow. Until Samant started wielding his rhetorical prowess. The firebrand polemicist and orator—who gave up a flourishing medical practice and plunged headlong into trade unionism—was able to out-George George. He held Maharashtra's textile mills to ransom for the longest ever period of time—from 1981 to 1983—almost singlehandedly. He organised some 16 lakh workers in various sectors of industry and spearheaded several strikes, big and small, over the decade. After medical practice and personalised trade unionism, he now has a third career—politics as a member of the Lok Sabha.

RAGU

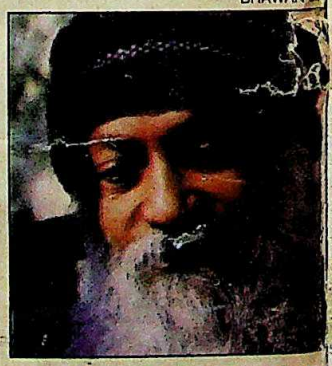


SAMANT: LABOUR PA

RAJNEESH

◆ Scream of the Decade. N amount of primeval scream ing—as the Bhagwan of the la back me first culture had a vocated to his *chelas* as a meth of overcoming odds—cou keep Rajneesh out of the clut hes of American law. Banish from America and from his as ram in Oregon after havi pleaded guilty to violations U.S. immigration laws, the Gu of the feel-good-about-sex cade returned to India a forlor bitter man, sneezing fitfu from chronic allergies trigger by stints in dusty American prison cells. He left behind orphaned American townsh of mourning disciples and a fl of 93 Rolls Royces which a now on the auction block. concocted prescription of b and hope kept him on the fr pages for most of the deca Now in Kulu the Bhagwan contemplating return to time godhood.

BHAWAN SI



RAJNEESH: ORANGE TRAIL

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